
Interview: Jacques Cheminade

French Presidential Elections Show, The Elites Are Running Scared

Former French Presidential candidate Jacques Cheminade, known throughout France as a good friend of U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, spoke at length with Elisabeth Hellenbroich of EIR on April 8, shortly after being denied ballot status for the first round of voting. He has announced that he will run for President in the 2007 elections.

EIR: You were a candidate for the Presidential elections in 2002—the first round of which will take place April 21, and the second round on May 5. You were able to collect hundreds of signatures from mayors, but then a very dirty operation was launched against you to sabotage your campaign. What has happened?

Cheminade: The French elections require the candidate to get signatures from more than 500 grand electors, who must be elected officials. This includes mayors, but also National Assembly deputies and regional councillors. The main parties control the mayors of the major cities. Therefore, new candidates must convince mayors from towns and smaller cities, who are not under direct political control, to sign nominating letters for them. We—that is, the Solidarité et Progrès group, which supported my campaign—started to obtain pledges from mayors as early as mid-June 2001, for an election which was to take place on April 21, 2002. So the gathering process has to begin pretty far in advance.

We had a team of about ten people calling the mayors—six hours per day, at the end of this process—and we had given our candidacy a high profile with a widely distributed policy declaration that called for a fundamental change in policy: a change in foreign policy, and above all, a change in economic and monetary policy, so as to create a more social, more just economic development policy inside France. As a result of our campaign, by the end of February, we were able to obtain 525 commitments to sign nominating letters from French mayors. Once one has the commitments, then, the candidate must send out the official nominating document to these mayors, which they officially sign for the candidate to whom they have given their pledge. These documents became available on Feb. 26. . . .

On Feb. 20, an article appeared in a publication called *L'Hebdo*, which is owned by a minor candidate named Nicolas Miguet, who said that I was the “leader of a cult,” and that the mayors who had pledged to sign for me would lose their

[state] subsidies, because . . . my party—“Solidarité et Progrès”—was mentioned in a Parliamentary report on cults. This slander was followed with more articles in *L'Hebdo*, which was sent out to all the mayors for free—40,000 copies—saying that I have a “*casier judiciaire chargé*,” which means that my judicial files are heavily burdened by condemnations in court. And that I have a “sulfurous” reputation.

So, this operation was designed against my candidacy. A lot of mayors did not believe what was written, and signed for us—most of them, 366 mayors, did sign. But others were in trouble, because they were under pressure from their town councils, or people around them, or their families, while others were afraid that they would get problems in their commune [town].

So, these articles were designed to create a lack of confidence around my candidacy among about 150 mayors, who were not courageous enough to keep going. We called these people back, and most of them told us that they withdrew their pledge of honor for the candidate because of the slander articles in *L'Hebdo*.

We had thus been able to nail down an operation, which was designed to disrupt my candidacy. We managed, despite that, to continue collecting signatures from mayors—we got 35 new ones; and keep in mind, this was the end of a long process, and we ended up with 401 signatures.

There are now 16 candidates participating in the Presidential elections. We were among the candidates, together with [former Interior Minister Charles] Pasqua, who did not make it; well-known candidates, like the former head of the Green [Party], all of whom failed to get the 500 signatures. . . .

Another factor was the Association of French Mayors (AMF), which, at the end of October 2001, declared that mayors were not compelled to sign, and that they could very well refuse—and they were, in fact, enticed to refuse. The head of this association is Mr. Delvoix, who is the head of President Jacques Chirac's RPR party. Then, the head of the Association of Rural Mayors, who is from the center-right and de facto supports Chirac, proclaimed, “I myself don't support anybody, and I am against the support, and against this mechanism.” Finally, at the end of the process, we discovered that Prime Minister Lionel Jospin had said that . . . the one thing amiss in the 1995 [Presidential] campaign, was the case of Jacques Cheminade. [In 1995, the first Presidential elections



Former French Presidential candidate Jacques Cheminade with volunteers in his campaign office in Paris.

after 14 years and two terms under François Mitterrand, Cheminade made a come-from-behind bid, assembling 500 mayors' signatures, and achieving ballot status. With the elites' chessboard kicked over, the leading press made scant mention of Cheminade except to unleash a torrent of abuse against him and LaRouche—ed.]

So, why all these operations?—and the last one, launched by Miguet, is the most visible, and we went to court against that. It is all very simple: It's because the issue of foreign policy and European policy, and the fact that the world economic, financial, and monetary system is collapsing, must not to be put on the table in this campaign. There was an agreement among the French elites not to put these questions on the table.

And, finally, the French elites did not want to be caught in their game—which is to publicly oppose the Anglo-American fascist order, the imperial policies, but, under the table, make arrangements with and submit to those policies. So, they didn't want to be caught in that, because, then, they would have to acknowledge that they are submitting, and since they do not want to make a clear policy choice, they wanted to get me out.

EIR: How do you proceed against Miguet's campaign?

Cheminade: Miguet is a guy who many years ago, set up a stock market operation. He makes a lot of money on the stock market, by giving advice to the people, to middle-class people, and he is connected to certain extreme right-wing circles in the RPR in particular, who called to sign for him. He has a lot of money—his image was all over France for many weeks in 2001 and this year, which is not permitted

by the law. You are not allowed to commercially promote yourself in an pre-election time; but he did it nonetheless, not caring about the law. And he pretended to be a candidate to the legislature; in fact, he was also running in the Presidential elections. He showed up at the Constitutional Council, claiming to have 509 signatures, when, in fact, he got only 261, with all the means and money he has. So, therefore, you can say that his candidacy was launched to “torpedo,” or to kill my candidacy.

The case was brought before the court. The issue is: Were we in an election campaign period, and were we in a position to protest? The issue was: Saying that somebody is member of a cult and that he is mentioned in a parliamentary report, and threatening the mayors that they will lose the subsidies, if they sign for me—is this considered as defamation, and blackmail and intimidation, and pressure on our elected officials? That's the issue.

EIR: And what about the Parliamentary report?

Cheminade: We were never mentioned in any Parliamentary report.

EIR: So, it is all a total lie?

Cheminade: Yes, it is a total lie. It's a lie as to fact. The prosecutor said, to call somebody a member of a cult today is not defamation, because it's so usual. But, in fact, it is defamation to say that a Parliamentary report—which is a precise fact—mentions you as a member of a cult. That's defamation and the French courts have to say it so. I don't know whether they have the courage to say so, and to create a legal precedent in a Presidential election.

EIR: Coming back to the economic situation. They obviously did not want to have you around with a high profile in this campaign, since you, unlike the other 16 candidates, would point to the truth of the actual global financial and economic crisis and present a programmatic alternative. What is actually economically and socially going on in your country?

Cheminade: The first fact to mention is that 58% of the French population is absolutely disinterested in the Presidential elections, and 75% think that the Jospin and Chirac programs are nearly identical. So, this election, in a way, is a joke. It's based on personalities, on an American type of promoting candidates. And it's ridiculous. There is no substance to the election. At best, everybody puts the question of the Maas-tricht Treaty at the end of their proposals, as well as the question of the Stability Pact and foreign policy. So, it's like a doctor who sees a cancer, and treats some skin pimples. That's exactly what's happening.

There is discontent in the country. But not represented by the unions, because the unions, like political parties, are in the process of disappearing. For example, in a country with 62 million inhabitants, there are roughly 400,000 dues-paying party members; the average membership in trade unions is 12-13% in the public sector, and between 4% and 5% in the private sector. So, this is a disunionized and unpolitical country, at this point. In that sense, all kinds of conflicts erupt, and there is no filter or association to organize them.

So, it erupts in all directions, and it went very far in the recent weeks and months. Take the example of the Gendarmes, which are military, and run by the Ministry of Defense. The Gendarmes went out into the streets in a protest, in uniform, which has never happened before. That's new. It's as if Italy's Carabinieri would go on strike and protest in the streets. There were demonstrations by the *aides maternelles*, the women who care for young babies, who had protested strongly—including Jospin's mother who is a nurse. Then the nurses started demonstrations—there are not enough nurses in France, and their status is very low. The French health-care system is still one of the best in the world, but it is being degraded very, very fast. Throughout the country, which is heavily bureaucratized, there is an internal process of degradation, which is creating all those reactions throughout the country.

Add to this the fact that the Jospin government—with its claim to be “Socialist”—has done more privatizing than the previous Balladur and Juppé right-wing governments put together. This privatization creates problems in various sectors and is leading to revolts. Take the example of Moulinex—the company was destroyed. Or, Alcatel, which is going to lease or sell its industrial plants, and these are bought by some type of Taiwanese or American sharks, who resell them after kicking most of the people out of the firm. You have all that kind of degradation, although it's not yet a generalized process.

Coinciding with the collapse of the world financial and monetary system, this whole process will accelerate after the Presidential elections. Everybody says that the next President will be elected with less support than ever, and will face the largest wave of frustration that we have ever faced in France; that it would be a very turbulent Presidency, and there are years of tumult ahead of us.

EIR: This parallels events in Germany—where just some weeks ago we were confronted with a wave of bankruptcies, including the construction company Philipp Holzmann, the media conglomerate Kirch, and the aerospace manufacturer Dornier Fairchild, construction equipment producer Mühl, and office equipment producer Herlitz, to name a few.

Cheminade: It's not at this level yet—but there is a step-by-step destruction of the industrial productive base of the country. But step by step; it has not not been in big waves so far. It's certain to come, nobody knows exactly when, but, it will be in a relatively short period, probably less than a year.

EIR: Take this together with the unemployment situation in your country, which seems to be steadily rising.

Cheminade: Yes, it is steadily rising, again, especially in the last five months. There was a decrease of unemployment between 1997 and 2001—a decrease of between 800,000 and 1 million fewer unemployed—but, now it's increasing month by month, again.

EIR: How will the voters decide in the upcoming election?

Cheminade: People are going to vote “against” somebody. There will be a lot of abstention, which means that a third of this 58%, who display disinterest in French politics, are probably not going to vote, and a lot of persons are calling for abstention.

EIR: The image of the statesman, who represents the art of statecraft—*l'homme d'état* in the tradition of Jean Jaurès or Charles de Gaulle—it seems as though this quality of character in policymaking, no longer exists in French politics.

Cheminade: What you have is careerists, and most young people today who adopt a policy and go into political parties to make a career. They no longer have the conviction of undertaking the noble tasks of responsibility for the state. Politics is considered a career. What de Gaulle called “*le caractère*” has disappeared. Nobody would forcefully oppose something, if their political career is threatened: They prefer the career to the truth.

EIR: Tell us about your political program, for France and Europe, in response to the unfolding global strategic crisis.

Cheminade: The key is to defend the physical economy. And through the defense of this physical economy, it is necessary to create a Euro-Mediterranean policy, connected to the Eurasian Land-Bridge, and to create a Euro-African

policy, which is also connected to the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Europe, in these three-pronged directions, has to confront the Anglo-American oligarchy, which they don't want to do. My association with Lyndon LaRouche put the fear into the elite that I will put this issue on the table. They don't want that. They don't like the idea that Lyndon LaRouche would say what he has to say about the present crisis and what alternatives must be taken on French territory—be it either indirectly through my voice, which they see as representing LaRouche—or to have LaRouche directly come to France. This they don't want.

Look for a moment at what Europe is doing now. Europe is not credible. When you send a Jaime Piqué, Spain's Foreign Minister, and this European Union envoy Javier Solana to Israel, you are not credible. These two Spanish persons are not particularly known for their courage, or their capacity to confront a situation as grave as what we are facing in the Middle East. What happens in reality, is that Europe gives way completely, to let the Bush Administration become the controller of the Mideast. They are letting the extremists around Bush run amok. President Bush does not have a handle on the situation. The Europeans do not have a handle on Bush, and, as a result, nobody controls anything. So, by default, the extremists prevail.

Europe is not proposing anything in terms of a sound economic reconstruction program for the Middle East, and there is a fear of confronting the issue of the Anglo-Americans, and also of Sharon. For example, there were a lot of anti-Semitic incidents in France in the last weeks, and there is a fear to confront Israel. It's a very dangerous situation, because if you don't confront the policies of today's Israel, you will have a very unbalanced situation. And something has to be done by France, and by the other countries of Europe, to lead the fight against Sharon: Not just with words, there have to be concrete proposals for a peaceful solution for both the Palestinian and Israeli populations.

However, at this point, there is no offensive view. The French, even if they don't like what the present American administration and the Anglo-American oligarchy are doing, are making all kinds of accommodations to their policy. And this is also true for Germany. You have very nice words in public, but there is no substance to it. And what I saw as my mission in this electoral campaign, was to address that question.

France has to obviously face the challenge of the collapsing global monetary and financial system. And what is needed, is to adopt a policy which LaRouche refers to in terms of a "Global New Deal," which Roosevelt was calling for. A policy of "rupture," which is going to change the rules of the game. Concretely, this means, as I have been outlining in my electoral and policy program: 1) We must immediately implement a New Bretton Woods system. 2) This must go together with Europe focussing its attention onto great infrastructure projects, like the Eurasian Land-Bridge. And, 3) we

need to promote a "Dialogue of Civilizations," a dialogue, organized on a serious basis, which puts in common the best of all in the accomplishments of these cultures. This must be in coherence with a sound educational policy, a clear public health and research and development (R&D) policy; as well as military policy, which cannot be based on participating with NATO and the Americans in expeditions which are imposing imperial designs, but must be based on the defense of France and Europe. This means developing advanced aspects in physics as a true basis for a policy of defense.

EIR: You were recently invited to speak in Moscow at the Diplomatic Academy, and you had the chance to talk to various leading Russian politicians. What is the Russian view of Europe?

Cheminade: They expect something from Europe, and they asked why Europe is doing nothing. There is a weakness in [Russian President Vladimir] Putin, but it could be converted into a force only if Europe thinks in terms of a common policy for a common design—a community of purpose—which goes together with a Eurasian perspective that would include China, India, and, if possible, Japan and the Koreans. Russia expects that somebody in Europe would push for that kind of policy. You can start to develop culturally and economically a certain community in the approach, and create a community of sovereign states, oriented toward a common purpose.

EIR: This underlines all the more, the need for a Renaissance, which is the necessary cultural basis for the kind of mission you are talking about.

Cheminade: Take the example of the youth, today. You have to give them a sense of the future, and of those who did accomplish important things in the past. Most young people plunge into the present, but have lost the capacity to see and hear. When you go into prehistory, the origin of man, this is a challenge for the young people. If you introduce the fact that pre-historic people were cognitive, and show how they were able to intervene and change the laws of the universe, then the youngsters get very excited. So, it is absolutely indispensable to have Classical culture, in singing, poetry, and painting. There is, in other words, the need to bring, as Friedrich Schiller underlined in his *Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man*, reason into harmony with the heart.

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