

Presidential Candidate Cheminade Gives France a Sense of the Future Again

by Karel Vereycken

Jacques Cheminade, president of the Solidarity and Progress party, has launched a Presidential campaign for the 2007 election, at a very critical juncture in France. “The ‘Non’ Is Looking for a Name” was the title of a recent article appearing in the Paris daily *Libération*, referring to the 55% vote in France against the proposed European Union Constitution on May 29, 2005. The title captures quite effectively the core of French politics today. France is in turmoil, and its people are hungry for change. The unexpected presence of the chauvinist populist, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in the second round of the French Presidential election of April 2002; the rejection, by the May 29, 2005 referendum, of a “still more free trade” deregulation policy, disguised as a new European Constitution, and the growing rise of poverty-fed urban violence and despair; all these symptoms express dramatically the increasing hunger of the French people, not merely for a different candidate, but for a new, ambitious policy capable of bringing back social well-being, and a sense of the future based on progress, through skilled jobs and social justice. Therefore, any smart candidate, even the power-hungry neo-conservative Nicolas Sarkozy, realizes that nobody can win this election without mobilizing popular support; and today every serious “outsider” candidate knows his time has come.

Its seven-year-long Presidential term had made France’s supreme mandate one of the longest of the planet, until President Jacques Chirac reduced its duration recently, to five years. As a result, four years after Chirac’s re-election, a new Presidential election is scheduled to take place in 14 months, on April 22, 2007.

As an additional feature of his Fifth Republic, President Charles de Gaulle, while greatly upgrading the power of the President, on Oct. 28 1962 instituted a system, approved by popular referendum, giving the French people the power, for the first time, to elect their Presidents through a direct vote. Up till then, Presidents were only elected by a vote of “Great Electors,” a vast body of elected officials composed of members of parliament, senators, general and regional councillors, among others, and especially the large body of France’s 36,000 mayors.

While de Gaulle only demanded 100 sponsoring signatures to present a new candidate, because he wanted an open-ended system escaping the control of party structures, the ruling political families rapidly tried to limit this intrusion

of uncontrolled and uncontrollable outsiders. In June 1978, under the Valéry Giscard d’Estaing Presidency, it was decided to increase the number of signatures to 500, a number thought impossible to attain, for anybody lacking large financial backing, and a major party structure. A supplementary, tricky obstacle that was introduced, is that the Great Electors, or signators, receive the official form they have to fill out to designate their choice, only about four weeks before the closing filing date. While in theory, electors are supposed to turn in their signatures by mail to the Constitutional Council (CC), in practice, most if not all, candidates collect the official forms themselves and deposit them at the CC, the body in charge of all regulations concerning the Presidential election. Through this perverse and needlessly complicated bureaucratic procedure, minor candidates are forced, before the four-week period, to painstakingly seek pledges of a formal commitment by Great Electors “on their honor,” leaving time for blackmail and dirty tricks to be unleashed against the electors.

When Lyndon LaRouche’s friend and co-thinker Jacques Cheminade successfully became a candidate, in 1995, with 556 signatures, the kingmakers of the French political scene were surprised, and furious. In 2002, before losing big, and failing to reach the second round of the Presidential race, former Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin had even stated bluntly on a website, that the needed obstacle of 500 signatures had been “successful so far” to prevent crooks, cults, and mavericks from running, “but had failed in the case of Cheminade.” Everything was done then to silently prevent Cheminade from being on the ballot again. While the Cheminade campaign did gather over 500 pledges, a last-minute campaign of slanders and dirty tricks led several mayors to change their initial commitment. Even though the main counter-organizer against Cheminade was sentenced, eight months later, before a criminal court for his slanders, the damage was irreparable.

Bring LaRouche’s Friend Into the Race

Today, Cheminade, with the support of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) in France, is again mobilizing to be placed on the Presidential ballot. Hundreds of appointments for the LYM are being set up over the coming weeks and months, and signs of great openness are manifest. Most mayors are simply citizens (farmers, butchers, industrial workers,

retirees, teachers, etc.) who took responsibility for the general interest of local communes (the lowest level of administrative division in the French Republic), of which over 25,000 have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. The disastrous policies imposed on France through deregulation, globalization, and outsourcing, have provoked economic breakdown. The dismantling of productive agriculture and industry, and the underinvestment in canal and railroad infrastructure have hurt the French countryside.

Many mayors confirm this picture. One expressed his sadness about having to go to a meeting that was scheduled to decide the closing of seven high schools, while another one, a farmer, indicated that the cheap milk coming in from Bulgaria forced him to lay off his workers. While their productive economy was destroyed, they were told: "Don't worry, it's just a mutation. Services and tourism are the industries of tomorrow." It never happened. Mayors have told the LYM that they were looking for somebody to defend the authority of the republic against dangers, the worst being chaos, while remaining committed to the generosity and justice of the general welfare—i.e., some kind of new de Gaulle. With smiling lips, the LYM answered: "Imagine, we have exactly what you need: Jacques Cheminade!"

So, while far more restricted in scope than the vast constitutional powers of U.S. senators, this procedure, initially destined to limit candidacies, when potently called upon, remains by its nature a powerful system capable of opposing and counterbalancing candidates "invented" by the financial and corporate party kingmakers. One of these "inventions" is Sarkozy himself, who, as reported in the weekly *L'Express* of Jan. 19, has great esteem for Lazard Frères' aging associate Antoine Bernheim, one of the godfathers of the French establishment, and also the current boss of the Generali insurance giant.

While these financiers imagine they can keep things under their control, the most popular elected officials of the French nation, by giving their signatures to a candidate with a "LaRouche perspective," desire to give the opportunity to a candidate who will tell the world how "naked the emperor is," and that his clothes, though invisible, are not without smell.

Documentation

Why I Am a Candidate

The statement excerpted here, by French Presidential candidate Jacques Cheminade, was issued in Paris on Dec. 26, 2005, and was translated from French.

France has lost its sense of the future. The intention of my

candidacy is to give it back to her.

No matter what their qualities, the official candidates cannot do this, because they are emanations of a seraglio which thinks short-term, and acts, by nature, against the common good. . . . Submitting to the rules of the game and to their appetite for power, our leaders cannot resist the financial synarchy which defines their responsibilities.



Jacques Cheminade

My mission, from the opposite standpoint, is to become the catalyzer of a change, including those who will regain a commitment to the future, with neither sectarian exclusion, nor fundamentalism. For that, contrary to the others, I do not begin with an analysis of the existing balance of forces, but from a vision of the future, for which I will do my best to inspire energies in France, and in the world, without worrying about losing status and wealth, which I, fortunately, do not have.

The challenge is not to confront some kind of French evil that we are secreting, but the financial globalization to which we submit. To build a new international financial architecture, to eliminate the tight financial control, which imposes social austerity on everybody, everywhere, is thus our first and most ardent obligation. The choice is between continuing the financial drift, which confronts us with the same consequences as during the 1930s, or reorganize what de Gaulle called the cause of humanity, beginning with the Global New Deal conceived by Roosevelt, but aborted by Truman. The weakening of the Cheney Administration on the other side of the Atlantic, a decisive historical moment managed by my American friends, today offers us a chance to succeed in doing what could not be done before. Letting this chance slip away would be a political crime. My campaign intends to seize it.

The rapid development of big infrastructure projects, financed by long-term public credit at low interest rates, will permit the application of this policy, from the Atlantic to the China Sea. This is the vision of our battle, thus attaining peace through mutual development, and with skilled labor being promoted and shared.

With this lever, we will be able to re-establish, in our internal policies, the priority of education, laboratories, and hospitals, of social protection and economic growth worthy of the name. If Europe is to be redefined, rejecting the strait-jacket of Maastricht, of Amsterdam, of Nice, of the Stability Pact, and of the European Central Bank, and substituting an understanding of sovereign republics, no longer based on money, which leads unavoidably to usury, but on a certain idea of man based on mutual development and a culture of life, then this way, and only this way, will understanding and cooperation among peoples be able to be substituted for today's distorted competition, corrupted by the games of the oligarchies. . . .