

France in turmoil, may vote down Maastricht

by Christine Bierre

How the enemies of France—those in the Anglo-American camp above all—must rejoice to see what is happening to that country. Slightly over ten years of President François Mitterrand's reign have brought the "French difference"—France's independent economic, military, and foreign policy—to a bitter end. Plunged into a deep recession, rocked by scandals, weakened with internecine strife, France is no longer a factor in international politics as it was during the Gaullist era. A resounding "No to Maastricht" could reverse this situation, but only provided that the Maastricht Treaty's opponents are able to rediscover what the guiding principles of de Gaulle's policies were and why he was able to make a great nation out of France.

Lyndon LaRouche's co-thinkers in France will be playing a key role in catalyzing ferment for the Gaullist design developed by LaRouche for a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals," centered around the Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle, as the motor for a world economic recovery. Jacques Cheminade, the president of the Schiller Institute and leader of LaRouche's friends in France, and three associates were recently tried for "theft" and given suspended sentences of 13-15 months, in a blatantly political frameup; but with the whole country in turmoil, this attempt to silence the brains of the opposition, could well backfire.

The economy

The recession did not begin with the Gulf War, as many believe, but goes back to Mitterrand's 1983 shift toward liberalism. At that time, the traditional Gaullist policy, whereby the state creates a favorable climate for investment into useful production, was replaced by one of favoring short-term financial profits in stock market and related speculation. Financial austerity policies aimed at maintaining a "strong franc" and "price stability," have only made things worse.

Unemployment has soared. Living standards, kept down by many years of Socialist government, have eroded further. Officially there are 3 million jobless—10% of the active population—but unofficially, we are closer to 4-5 million. Meanwhile, benefits are running out. In late July the govern-

ment announced 20% cuts in unemployment checks for those who worked only a few months.

Small and middle-sized firms are chalking up a record number of bankruptcies. Real interest rates are so high that nobody ventures into new investments unless they are state-guaranteed or promise returns above 15%. In the wake of the U.S. and British real estate meltdown, the French market is now reeling. Total bank loans to real estate promoters amount to some 280 billion francs, ten times more than in 1982, yet since the Gulf War, the real estate market has stagnated. The few transactions carried out are often at prices 20-40% below those announced. Fearing a "domino" effect, the banks have closed ranks to avoid real estate bankruptcies, but this limits their leeway to lend for productive investments.

AIDS transfusion scandal

The government, the political parties, and the institutions have been discredited through an avalanche of scandals, both home-grown and fed from abroad.

Among the worst scandals is that of the AIDS-contaminated blood products given by state-run institutions to hemophiliacs. Four government health officials, including the head of the National Center for Blood Transfusions (CNTS) Michel Garretta, are being tried for distribution of poisonous substances. As early as 1983, the state knew of the danger that blood products given to hemophiliacs were AIDS-tainted. In that year, the U.S. company Travenol discovered a heating process to eliminate the AIDS virus from blood stocks, and informed all concerned agencies, including Dr. Garretta, who decided, however, not to do anything about it. In May 1984, the efficacy of this process was confirmed. That same year the World Health Organization strongly encouraged all countries to use it. By May 1985, after the test to detect the AIDS-related HIV virus had been found, the CNTS leaders met to discuss the possibility of withdrawing those blood products which they knew were contaminated, but decided not to do so, for financial reasons. They continued to use those stocks until October 1985. As a result, 1,200 hemophiliacs out of a total population of 5,000 were infected; 250 have already died.

What is especially outraging the public, is that only the health officials have been brought to trial. Yet they can prove that they got their orders from three sources: Laurent Fabius, then prime minister; Edmond Hervé, former health minister; and Georgina Dufoix, former social affairs minister. The hemophiliac associations are demanding that these three be tried as well, and lawyer Jacques Vergès has just filed a complaint against them for "poisoning."

Zionist lobby turns on Mitterrand

The Zionist lobby, after a long truce, has decided to go after Mitterrand himself, using his past in Vichy France in 1940-42. The story goes back to the L'Oreal affair of about two years ago. Businessman J. Frydeman, supported by the

U.S. Office of Special Investigations, a “Nazi hunter” outfit under scrutiny in the United States for having lied for the Soviet KGB (see *EIR*, July 3), took the U.S. subsidiary of L’Oreal to court for anti-Jewish discrimination. The supposed targets of this operation were L’Oreal’s president, François Dalle, and Jacques Corrèze, head of the firm’s U.S. subsidiary who died of a stroke at the Paris American Hospital just hours after having been forced to resign his post. Corrèze had been responsible for the Jewish affairs unit during the Vichy regime which ruled France in collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. The real target was François Mitterrand, a personal friend of Dalle. Mitterrand started his career with L’Oreal back in the days when he was decorated by the Vichy President of France, Marshal Pétain.

This scandal was fomented by Serge Klarsfeld, an OSI-linked “Nazi hunter,” in coordination with periodicals like *L’Express*, *Evènement de Jeudi*, and *Nouvel Observateur*. They used the 50th anniversary of the Vel d’Hiv deportation of 12,000 Jews to the Nazi concentration camps, to try to force France and Mitterrand personally to recognize the guilt of the state for having collaborated with the Nazis. While the deportations were indeed hideous, the war is over and most of the French culprits have already paid for their crimes. The aim at this point seems more to tar all of French with collective “anti-Semitism” than to seek justice.

But Mitterrand is only one target of the shotgun-like scandal pattern. François Leotard, honorary chairman of the Republican Party, with whom Mitterrand was negotiating to become prime minister, has been indicted in a real estate scandal; Henri Emanuelli, the president of the National Assembly and formerly treasurer of the Socialist Party, will be indicted for embezzlement and fraud; the Socialist-linked former treasurer of the Green Party, Etienne Tête, was jailed for having illegally received some \$20,000 in unemployment checks while being officially registered as manager of two firms.

Mass ferment

Many hope that new political institutions and new leaders will arise from the political ferment to replace these discredited leaders. The Rural Coordination movement is a typical example. Composed of the smaller, more radical farmer unions and radicalized elements in the large “official” farmer’s union, the FNSEA, Rural Coordination was set up strictly with the aim of stopping two British-inspired “free trade” measures: the MacSharry reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

When the truckers succeeded in blocking the main access roads in France for a week, the 1968 strike wave that paralyzed France and toppled the government came to mind. The truckers’ strike followed a nationwide mobilization of Rural Coordination, which had successfully blockaded many middle-sized cities and signaled the extreme weakness of the

government by attempting to block access to Paris itself. By the time the truckers’ strike was settled, it was clear that had it gone on any longer, or occurred at any time except during summer vacations, it might well have spread to other sectors. Not only were ambulances and taxis already joining the truckers’ blockades, but most of the French supported the truckers and blamed the government.

The fight against Maastricht

On Sept. 20, France will vote in a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty for unifying Europe under a nation-less “free trade” bureaucracy. As of this writing, it seems increasingly likely that Maastricht may be voted down in France, as it was in Denmark. The “no” votes have risen from 20% before the Danish referendum, to 45-48%. The climate of scandals and social crisis feeds the “no” camp.

The government had to retract an ad campaign for Maastricht from national television and radio because paid political advertising in those media turned out to be illegal. Then on July 28, *Libération* newspaper ran gloomy predictions by the International Monetary Fund of a strong four-year recession as a result of the “adjustment” policies of the Maastricht Treaty, which allow no more than a 3% public deficit and 60% ratio of debt to GNP.

The question is not only whether the treaty will be defeated, but in the name of what policies. Most of those in the “no” camp are about as unpalatable as those in the “yes” camp. Jean Marie Le Pen is a racist with British-liberal views in economics. Philippe de Villiers, a popular “return to values” man and potential presidential candidate, does not oppose the free-market thrust of the treaty but only its violation of national sovereignty. Charles Pasqua and Philippe Seguin, leading the “no” side in the Gaullist party, are less liberal, but play on the chauvinist chord of the French—rejecting the right of non-French European Community citizens to vote in France—to defeat the treaty. Most of the leaders in the “no” camp, including Thatcherite Marie France Garaud, and the communist camp, are anti-German zealots who reject Maastricht because it will create a German-dominated Europe; those who are for the treaty defend it as the only guarantee to control the Germans.

Only Jean Pierre Chevènement, the ex-defense minister who resigned over France’s part in the Gulf War, has a coherent economic policy, echoing Lyndon LaRouche’s Productive Triangle plan. He denounces the Maastricht Treaty as IMF-imposed “adjustment” austerity which will lead to deflation. Chevènement called recently for a European Industrial Initiative, involving credits to build transport networks, creating safe nuclear facilities in the east, launching great industrial projects in Europe east and west, and tying in North Africa. But he speaks for a tiny minority faction in the Socialist Party, and, due to his ongoing ties with nationalist sectors of the Communist Party and Trotskyites, he appears as too sectarian to attract a national, cross-party alternative.