

The French 'Imperial' faction: Mitterrand inherits the mantle of history's cuckold

by Laurent Murawiec, European Economics Editor

What has come to power with the arrival of François Mitterrand in the Elysée Palace? Is it "the people"; is it the Left, which undeniably provided the troops? The new president of the French republic, even though he has used them extensively, does not represent them in the slightest, and his regime will demonstrate this.

With the election of Mitterrand, through support from the *banques d'affaires*, Libyan money, the City of London, U.S. think tanks, the Zionist lobby, the U.S. State Department, and the Socialist International, what has returned to power in France is the old aristocratic "Empire" faction whose follies have nearly destroyed France countless times in its history.

To understand Mitterrand, one has to look back to 1958, to General de Gaulle's return to public affairs. The Fourth Republic had turned to chaos, embroiled in the ruinous quagmire of the Algerian war, its body politic struck by paralysis. Virtually all forces in the country then turned to the hero of 1940.

The men of the Fourth Republic were all convinced that the man who had retired to Colombey-les-deux-Eglises would march to their tune, and then return to the hospice after having resolved the imbroglio in the Mahgreb to their satisfaction.

Similar expectations were silently harbored by many Gaullists, who shared few of the general's views, but who—representing a cross-section of the political spectrum—were bound by an uncompromising personal loyalty to the lofty figure they had rallied around.

In ruling circles, some hoped that de Gaulle would crush the Algerian rebels, the "fellaghas," and safeguard "the Empire." Some hoped that he would break the back of the army. Some saw him sparking off civil war against the Communist Party, while still others thought he would return the unruly Fourth Republic to calmer parliamentary functioning.

But all agreed that he should be retired after two or three years of faithful service. Except for the Communists, except for former Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-

France, who postured as the savior of last resort, and except for François Mitterrand, whose earlier record as a British wartime agent excluded him a priori, they all joined the general's first governments, until they realized that a superior mind had outwitted and outmaneuvered them, and captured for his own use the energies they designated for other purposes.

And, if at times it seemed that de Gaulle was carrying out the policy of the "left," and at others that of the "right," his was really the policy of France. His judgment that the tragedy of France is "a left that has a sense of the nation, but no sense of the state, and a right that has the sense of the state, but not that of the nation," shows why he used everything available to accomplish the higher purpose—*that of the nation-state*.

The Fourth Republic and the Empire

What in truth was the Fourth Republic, whose whole lifespan had been overshadowed by an "Empire"?

National reconstruction after the devastation of World War II had been achieved through the thankless toil of the working class, but the instability, incoherence, and anarchy that presided over public affairs were throwing it into jeopardy.

The "dirty wars" in Indochina and Algeria were debilitating not only public finances, but also the armed forces and the public morale. In whose name were the socialists, "moderates," "independents," and Christian Democrats—together a large majority in the all-powerful Parliament which did and undid governments on a moment's notice—carrying out these wars? Beneath the nationalist rhetoric lay *the preservation of this French Empire*, based, like its arch-rival the British Empire, on the wholesale looting of colonial riches, the merciless exploitation of native labor, and the drug traffic, in which official French monopolies cultivated and freely sold opium in Indochina and hashish in Northern Africa. In this empire, on which sat the geopolitical power of France, education was minimal, infrastructure



French citizens acclaim de Gaulle at Bayeux in June 1944, just after Liberation.

construction rare, industry a luxury. That was French imperialism.

“French Empire” policy was a far cry indeed from the Grand Design of late 19th-century *coloniste* republican leaders such as Jules Ferry and Gabriel Hanotaux, whose policy was “civilization” and “integration,” meaning the development of the colonized peoples and transmission of what the French nation-state could offer in terms of economic, social, and cultural transformation. The Empire faction’s policy was also in conflict with the policy heralded by the heir of the *colonistes*, Charles de Gaulle, in his 1944 speech in Brazzaville, Congo. De Gaulle’s policy was *creating nations* committed, like his own, to generating the progress that makes of each citizen a responsible member of society.

The policy the Fourth Republic clung to was a relic of geopolitical power rapidly being destroyed by the surge of another kind of power, industrial power as exemplified by the United States, West Germany, or Japan. The latter type of power needs no *lebensraum* where fixed resources wait to be looted. Through science and technology it achieves far more than the ruthless squeezing of agriculture and raw materials in countries artificially maintained in backwardness.

A certain awareness of reality seeped into some sections of the French elite. Among the leading boosters

of the Empire—Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas (Parisbas), which ruled Morocco, was a factor in the Near East, powerful in Egypt and the Gulf; Banque de l’Indochine, which financed all manners of trafficking in Southeast Asia, from piasters to opium; Banque Lazard, Rothschild Frères, Banque Worms, Banque Rivaud—there was concern at the decline that had set in since 1914, and which Vichy France completed.

Some frightened Imperials were demanding a retrenchment. Let us get rid of what has become the colonial burden, they argued: let us shed the huge military and administrative costs it entails, grant some appearance of political independence, and let the priority be the reindustrialization of mainland France.

Some thought that the most efficient way was to hand out large tracts of the colonial domain to the not-too-innocent “friends” across the Channel and the Atlantic; such was Pierre Mendès-France’s policy, today both the elder statesman of the Left and François Mitterrand’s regime, as well as a Brandt Commission member; others, like then Minister of the Colonies Gaston Defferre, the mayor of Marseilles, and old “acquaintance” of U.S. drug enforcement authorities and today Mitterrand’s minister of the interior (which in France controls law enforcement and the duties of the FBI) argued that it was better to “open the windows” with a liberal policy, but keep most of the power in the colonies. Still others were highly sensitive to Israeli interests, and only saw the Algerian conflict through the eyes of rabid anti-Nasser sentiment.

Depending on their respective evaluation of present strengths and weaknesses of mainland France, they were ready to arrange compromises with the powers that be.

Jean Monnet, the planning commissioner, proposed a virtual merger of the old nation into an integrated supranational unit. He pulled together a team of senior civil servants and set out to rebuild the French economy, organizing it in such a way that it would readily be plugged into the supranational mechanisms then set into place, the OEEC (later OECD) and the European Community. When Monnet’s Anglo-American sympathies carried him too far, orthodox Imperials refused to sacrifice their instrument, France, and stopped him dead in his tracks: the European Defense Community and the European army projects collapsed.

Mendès-France played a role in boosting military and civilian nuclear development during his tenure as premier in 1954-55, while he never spared his assaults against both when it was de Gaulle who wielded them.

Empire versus de Gaulle

Undeniably, under the Fourth Republic, but not because of it, economic growth went on, in a favorable international environment, with the top levels of the

civil service organizing it, the nationalized infrastructure industries supporting it, and the mistreated working class producing it.

Under de Gaulle, social energy, adrift and dissipated under the “regime of the political parties” was suddenly given a direction, and thus acquired a power that it lacked before. This was brought to bear domestically and internationally.

As for all the clever boys who had bragged about their anticipated manipulation of the general, a masterful de Gaulle sliced their factions away one by one with every lurch he imposed in policy. The painful fact started to sink in: de Gaulle would respect none of the agreements reached with this or that international “friend” or “protector.” He would have nothing of supranationality, be it complete or partial.

Algeria policy strikingly demonstrated the case: the general’s design—given the situation he had inherited—was to help the new Algeria to become a nation-state, and one friendly to France. His speech in Constantine, Algeria in 1959 and the global plan for the economic development of the country it included remain as a model for proposals of entente between two sovereign republics.

What about the “Left” and the “Right”? With the exception of a few individuals or factions (the most notable of which was the Communist Party), both got together to set up a shadow government to take over as soon as the extreme right-wing terrorist gang of the OAS eliminated “the tyrant.” That was the subject discussed at the famous Déjeuners de l’Alma, a series of political luncheons convened by banker Pierre Uri of Lehman Brothers, Europe (an assistant of Edmond de Rothschild and today Mitterrand’s fiscal affairs adviser). The sessions featured the same gang around Mitterrand today: banker Pierre Moussa, then close to Robert McNamara at the World Bank and now the chairman of the Paribas Bank; Socialist Guy Mollet; Independent Antoine Pinay, an old pro-Vichy hand; Christian Democrat Colin; centrist Maurice Faure, fresh from the Jean Monnet team and presently the justice minister; trade-union leaders close to Jay Lovestone and Irving Brown; and “progressive” left-Christian farmer leader Jean Debatisse, now a Trilateral Commission member. A lot of planning was being done in Paris in the early months of 1962, as the OAS bombs were shattering the city and killing indiscriminately.

There were higher interests binding these parties and their leaders. Both right and left were set to exploit the class-based sensibilities and mythologies of their various constituencies and channel them in the direction required by their international alliances with the powers that be.

For in fact these parties were the updated expression of ancient links of feudality and loyalty, of networks of

influence and power woven across the centuries of French history. At the highest level, that of actual long-term strategic decision-making, the level where top financiers and the upper crust of the civil service meet the intellectual, the upper hand was still with the cast made of the increasingly merged *noblesse d’épée* (the medieval nobility), the *noblesse de robe* (ancien régime royal administrator-families), and the high financial, industrial, and judicial society of the 19th century—in sum, the *grandes familles* which properly constitute the imperial elite of France.

De Gaulle used the stick, and they went along, under compulsion. A fair number of individuals who were originally groomed to belong in the Imperial camp were elevated by the influence of the general, while the mass of the French population responded enthusiastically to de Gaulle’s calls to action.

This was going too far. A series of putsches failed to topple the general. To protect their threatened geopolitical interests and alliances, some decided to have him killed. To that aim, they received the eager support and logistical, financial, and political help of the Israeli Mossad, the British SIS, elements of American intelligence, and elements of the Socialist International. The international “Murder, Inc.,” Permindex, spared no effort, nor did NATO intelligence.

But even before the failure of the innumerable attempts on de Gaulle’s life, a good chunk of the Imperials had selected another option. In the long run, it was argued in various salons, de Gaulle was no immortal being; the old general would leave the stage, and would be helped out in case of need. Meanwhile, one had to contain his unpredictable policy initiatives, or lessen their effect. He would leave a legacy of a reinvigorated economy, developed industry, and a modernized defense capability. These creative powers of the nation-state could be harnessed, and the position France was acquiring in the world could be used to Imperial benefit. With the harvest of what the French nation-state had sown, French imperialism would be in a position of strength.

This is why, in lieu of the frontal attack led by the OAS and its political cothinkers, that faction engaged in the recycling of its political assets. The elites had failed to stop de Gaulle. The last resort had to be the people. Discontent would be exploited. To do that, it was indispensable to organize the people better than the Fourth Republic had done.

Around Pierre Mendès-France and his news magazine *L’Express*, as well as the more extreme left-wing-oriented *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a “New Left” was created. It trained generations of youth to the “socialist-leaning sensibilities” that constitute so much of Mitterrand’s electoral base. The first attempt at regrouping against de Gaulle, the so-called “Third Force” adven-



Francisco Goya depicts the Imperial mentality in 1808, during the brutal Napoleonic conquest of Spain. His caption: "Perhaps they are of another species."

ture of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber and Gaston Defferre, resulted in failure. The Third Force concluded that it had to change its skin, and turned to François Mitterrand. The latter explained that first a long battle had to be waged against the strength of the Communist Party (a task consummated this spring), and only then could the real job begin.

That task was recently summarized by a leading spokesman for the Imperials as "to be the bridge between the ineluctable role of the nation-state and the increasingly one-world features of the global economy."

The cuckolds of history

The Imperial view of France's world role has a long past. The 18th-century Geneva bankers and their Genoese patrons, who held the better part of French royal and national debt, had already had the design of using the vast resources of the nation-state shaped by King Henry IV, Sully, Richelieu, Mazarin, and Colbert, to pit a "French" Empire against the British Empire—but with the same methods and the same Malthusian looting purposes. While the French humanists, friends of Benjamin Franklin, were helping the American colonies to found the United States as the first genuine

republic in history, the Imperials and their agents, Necker, Mirabeau, and Talleyrand, were thinking in terms of aggrandizing the estate, and increasing the geographical area where the flag could cover the looting of existing wealth.

The Imperials pursued their design until the bitter end: *defeat*. The Battle of the Nations at Leipzig in 1813 was the bell tolling for Imperial dreams, as it tolled again in the collapse of the lamentable 1861 expedition to Mexico. The French rooster had to bend to the lesson: forces already in place for the government of the world had no intention of allowing a duty-free French expansion.

The lesson was forcibly taught again after 1918. Since "Germany will pay" was the long and the short of its policy, the French Empire was relegated to third-class status; it was ruthlessly kept out of the oil-rich regions of the Middle East, and contained by the might of the pound sterling and the dollar. And as the French oligarchy had given up grand projects such as the Baghdad Railway and the Shanghai Railway, they satisfied themselves with clipping coupons and maintaining a rentier imperialism. Their world power declined on a steeper and steeper slope.

The German army then only needed to apply a gentle push for the French oligarchy, elated at the collapse of a republic it had never accepted, to bow to the very junior role the triumphant Nazis ascribed to them in the New European Order scheme. That was the Vichy regime. Still, this castrated capon insisted on gesturing at the remnants of its past glory, the navy and the colonies. The Nazis could be heard snickering at the pretentious servility of the Imperial wheelers and dealers. When the Nazi troops swept the fantasy away by marching into the supposedly "free zone" of southern France, the glorious navy was sunk by its own admirals, without a shot.

It was de Gaulle, the humanist standard-bearer of the nation-state, who alone saved the "Empire" from Nazi and British depredations. The Imperial which fights other, better-situated oligarchies with the same methods, cannot rely on either major inflows of international credit, or territorial sweep, or on the scientific, technological, and industrial resources whose development is slowed by each Imperial reappearance on the throne. This pretentious oligarchy is the eternal cuckold beaten and mocked by its rivals.

Mitterrand's plans and the realities

While French industrialists are generally terrified at the entry of the Socialist International into the government, the oligarchs are rubbing their hands. "Creativity was on the wane; the economy, society, culture were stifled," one of them explains. "Giscard cannot be held

responsible for this; this is the kind of process that goes beyond the four or five years before or after. Change was needed. There is going to be some change, nothing revolutionary or radical, but some change."

In truth, what the Imperials blame Giscard for is *to have learned too much*, to have shaped himself too much after the presidential profile forged by de Gaulle, and to have lifted himself up to the moral level of the nation-state. Let him go! He betrayed us!

Domestically, through the "popular upsurge" associated with the victory of "socialist" Mitterrand—who all the salons and boardrooms will tell you is no more of a socialist than you or I—the ouster of Giscard has been accomplished at the cost of an alliance with the Club of Rome and the Socialist International, to which education and culture have been farmed out in the form of executive responsibilities for the youth and the civil society. The gullible Imperials have reserved for themselves the economy and foreign policy. Hear their nominal allies abroad gloat!

The Imperials nourish the hope of combining nuclear energy, civilian and military, as an indispensable power base, with the introduction of what they call the *télématique*, in the framework of a strategy of controlled deindustrialization. "Sunset" industries (steel, textiles, heavy chemicals, auto) will be gradually siphoned into the newly industrialized Third World countries, while "sunrise" industries centered on *télématique* (office equipment, microprocessors, consumer electronics, information technologies, etc.) will acquire a dominant position. The telematics doctrine is supposed to convey an entirely new mode of social organization and administration.

The industrial proposals issued in the report *L'Informatisation de la Société* (*The Computerization of Society*) presented three years ago to President Giscard by Pierre Mendès-France's associate Simon Nora and young technocrat Alain Minc, now become government policies (see *EIR*, March 31). This is also true of the proposals for social-political reorganization their report included: deindustrialization, deurbanization, decentralization. In short, the dismantling of the nation-state and its pillars, industry and the modern city. France is to be taken into the "technetronic era" of Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Club of Rome, and their French associates of the Association Internationale Futurible of oligarch Bertrand de Jouvenel, whose closest associates, such as Futurible Jacques Delors, now economics and finance minister, are in power.

Externally, Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, the former European Community development and cooperation commissioner, and his friends are confident that they can play a game of halfway supranationality, piling up the "Lomé Convention" agreements and ad hoc

international and regional organizations. They contemplate themselves playing mediators between East and West, between North and South, while pocketing brokerage fees.

Once more, the clever boys are thinking with their feet. But then, they have never known the use of higher organs. The world is not set for growth, nor any sort of negotiable arbitrage between development and Malthusianism. The only leeway allowed to the French Empire fantasizers in the one-world universe thus prepared by Anglo-Venetian oligarchs is to adapt, and shut up.

The destabilization capabilities at the disposal of such supranational forces suffice to demonstrate the inanity of the delusions nourished in those townhouses whose occupants fancy themselves in a Grand Siècle role. The international monetary and financial system is in the hands of the Eurodollar bankers, and the Bank for International Settlements; petrodollars have flown away from Paris, and will not return; the French franc is under threat. The international pillars of the policy of France, as it was led by the Fifth Republic, are plummeting. Giscard's fall threatens to accelerate that of Helmut Schmidt, and thereby jeopardize the credibility of Brezhnev's conception of détente in Moscow. A world shattered by economic depression and regional conflicts threatens to sweep away the whole construction, and, in passing, any grip the "Empire" still believes it holds on men and events.

Moreover, inside France, the "alternative movements" that Peccei brags he is going to steer as a battering ram against the nation-state are now demanding an immediate end to the "tyranny of reason" and its expressions, industry, urban life, science, and progress. The "minorities," the "communities" made arrogant by a Mitterrand victory they regard as theirs, now demand the implementation of the "spirit of May 1968," starting with decentralization, regionalization, the atomization of society.

The Imperials are drawing plans, nurturing grandiose future visions, like the absurd King Picrochole of François Rabelais. They convince themselves that, as usual, they will be able to manipulate Mitterrand, his government, his parliamentary majority, and the credulous masses that voted these into power. And then, so goes the plan, they will call upon a strongman—Jacques Chirac—after the decomposition of nation-state will have freed them from any remnant of Charles de Gaulle's heritage. Chirac will recompose a society better to their liking.

One more time, they believe they can tread a "third way" between the nation-state and the other Malthusian oligarchies of the world. As François Rabelais put it, "cuckolded they will be." *Let us fear that they would drag France along in their fall!*