

Defeat for Socialists gives France a new opportunity

by EIR Staff

On March 28, in the second round of the French legislative elections, the Socialist Party of President François Mitterrand was dealt a devastating defeat, when 487 of the 577 seats in the National Assembly (84%) went to the Union for France (UPF) alliance—including the neo-Gaullists of the Rally for the Republic (RPR) and neo-liberals of the Union for French Democracy (UDF). This is the largest parliamentary majority in France since 1815. The Socialists will have 67 seats; the Communists 23; the National Front and ecologists will have none.

Socialist regime rejected

Already in the first round in the French legislative elections, on March 21, there had emerged an absolute rejection of the Socialist regime. The presidential majority (Socialists plus left-leaning radicals) collapsed from 37.43% of the total votes in the legislative elections of June 5, 1988, to 19.91% now. "This is a resounding defeat for the austerity drive and the social monetarism under the left-wing colors of Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy and President François Mitterrand," observed Jacques Cheminade, a co-thinker of the American statesman and economist Lyndon LaRouche who headed the independent "New Solidarity" electoral slate in the balloting.

Cheminade pointed out that the victory of the right wing on March 21 was not a landslide. The Union for France (UPF) alliance got 39.47% of the vote, yet was expected to win at least 75% of the seats in the next National Assembly. With barely 40% of the voters being represented by 75% of the deputies, "we will have a situation not unlike that facing the Clinton administration in the United States which won the election with a low vote percentage, and in which the electorate is unlikely to forgive any mistakes made by the

new government," Cheminade said.

"The main question is, then, does the new government have a strategy, the ideas, and commitment to face the challenge of the world crisis and the French situation? Does it have a coherent program to meet the challenge of the economic depression?" asked Cheminade. "The answer is, No. The program of the UPF alliance, called a 'platform' by its authors, is nicknamed by everybody else a 'flatform,' a quite appropriate pun."

Banque de France autonomy?

"Indeed, the main item on its agenda is to grant 'autonomy' to the central bank, the Banque de France, giving it a status similar to that of the U.S. Federal Reserve," Jacques Cheminade revealed. "This means, in the middle of an international crisis hitting Europe and an Anglo-American financial offensive, depriving the French nation-state of its sovereign control of the issue of currency, credit, and control of the banking system. France and Germany, both with 'independent' central banks, will not be in a position to follow independent policies in conformity with their respective national interests. This would be a catastrophe for Europe.

"Furthermore, the parties of the new government have prepared a program of privatization similar to the current one in Italy, the idea being to sell to private interests not only the French banking and insurance sector, but also the railways, the telephone system, and the electricity company, EDF. The point is, they say, to get enough money to pay back the debt accumulated by the Socialist governments. The fact to stress, however, is that this debt is going to be paid to the very same Anglo-American financial interests that are going to buy the 'privatized' companies."

Of course, there is opposition to this policy in part of

the RPR-UDF alliance, Cheminade noted, "but it offers no alternative other than a vacuous form of 'nationalism.' This, in turn, can lead to clashes with the American government over such issues as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) or NATO, which can be dangerous if informed by no other perspective than mere opposition.

"At the same time, there is a growing uproar against the German Bundesbank and its high interest rates, which some see as the cause of the ruin of the French economy. If leaders such as Philippe Séguin, who is calling for closer Franco-British relations and wants to let the French franc float like the British pound, are still a small minority, an atmosphere of animosity toward the present German policy is growing, once again with no real alternative. This means heteronomy in Europe, with no sense of mission or design, a suicidal policy in a period of depression and threats of the reemergence of a dictatorial regime in Russia.

"The charade is that the RPR is nationalistic, but with no Gaullist strategic perspective, and can therefore be turned into an enraged, chauvinistic, and impotent force; the UDF, on the other hand, is pro-European, but supports the neoliberal, monetarist Europe of the European Community's Maastricht Treaty, not de Gaulle's 'Europe of the Fatherlands,' " Cheminade said.

The position of the friends of LaRouche in France, campaigning under the banner of the New Solidarity party, is to support those Gaullist forces who reject the "free-trade" suicide of GATT and demand protection for national agriculture and industry, but also to stress to them that they have to do three things if they want to really face the challenge of history: Propose a program for European development from the Atlantic to the Urals, the Paris-Berlin-Vienna Productive Triangle approach; stop the "privatization" of the Banque de France and the sale of the public sector to the financial enemies of the nation; and set up a monetary union with Germany, based not on high interest rates, but on long-term, low-interest rate credit to finance European development.

Cheminade warned, "Unfortunately, these points are not really understood, because, contrary to Gen. Charles de Gaulle, those who parade about as his heirs do not understand that the survival of the nation depends on the capacity of its leaders to shift to a new set of axioms," as defined by the New Solidarity program.

Fragmented political scene

Cheminade took a closer look at the breakdown of returns in the first round of March 21. "True, the ecologists got 'only' 7.62% of the vote (as against the 15% predicted), but a sizeable part of the youth simply abstained or voted for the right to 'stick it' to the left; they deserted the ecologists because they appeared as too compromised by their association with the Socialists. The Communist Party (CP) got 9.18%, as against 11.31% in 1988, but manages to remain a reference point in working class areas. The National Front

of Jean-Marie Le Pen got more than expected, reaching 12.41%. It got much more than the average in regions stricken by high unemployment: 25% in Provence-Côte d'Azur and Languedoc-Roussillon, and about 20% in northern France. Finally, if we add up the protest votes (CP, ecologists, National Front, and diverse minorities), we reach about 35% of the total vote—almost as much as the official right-wing UPF tally. Because they are not directly involved in alliances, the National Front and the ecologists (more than 20% of the vote) are not going to be represented in the National Assembly."

He added, "The election has shown the degradation of a significant part of the French population. All kinds of slates focusing on secondary issues have appeared, including one for 'Natural Law' (which is the cult of transcendental meditation!) and another one of 'animal lovers' called 'New Ecology,' whose candidates got 2-3% of the vote, even when they had been recruited by mail or classified advertisements. Opinion polls showed that only 20% of the voters had actually read the literature put out by the candidates, sent free of charge by the French post office, and more than 33% only decided how to vote in the last two weeks before the elections. In the Lorraine region, a 'Party of the Fed-Ups' got more than 5%, even though most candidates were unknown and, by their own choice, lacking in any program.

"The mental state of the population, as revealed by the elections, is the main danger. A recent poll of television watching habits showed that the average French TV set is on 4 hours and 59 minutes per day, as against 'only' 3 hours and 53 minutes in 1983. And the most watched programs are American serials." But, "In this situation, the ideas of the friends of LaRouche in France are attracting more and more interest. The coming fall of the right, after that of the left, is their opportunity."

LaRouche: France must take new initiative now

Lyndon LaRouche made his own comments after the results were made known on March 28, "on the significance of the French elections in the light of the ongoing crisis in Moscow and the crisis of confidence in the political establishment of the former Atlantic Alliance."

"Something must be done very promptly about the rapidly deteriorating situation around the world, centered in, obviously, the deterioration in Moscow at the time of a general, downward-spiraling collapse, and the threat of an early international financial explosion centered upon the ballooning derivatives markets," LaRouche said.

"There is a crisis of leadership in the West, in particular, in which Europe is looking to the United States, which at the moment, on present policy tracks, is ill-equipped to do many