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## France

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# Economic Crisis Causes Government Implosion

by Christine Bierre

While all attention in France is focussed on the “Clearstream affair”—a French “Watergate” in which Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and President Jacques Chirac are being accused of having used the fraudulent affair to smear Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy and other political enemies—the reason for the collapse of the Fifth Republic is to be found where few are looking: in the economy.

Were it not for the long-term crisis of the French economy, right-winger Sarkozy could never have succeeded in taking control of the UMP, the political party of his enemies, de Villepin and Chirac.

France’s economic weakness began hitting the UMP in the polls in 2004, when the party was dealt defeats by the Socialist Party in two national elections. In the March regional elections, the UMP and its right-wing allies had to concede victory to the Socialists in all but two of the 22 regions of France. In June of that year, the UMP lost heavily to the Socialists in the European Parliament elections, in which the Socialists won a record 31 seats, up from 22.

Such electoral victories by the Socialist Party, which proposes no real alternative to reverse the economic collapse, continued through 2005. In May 2005, the French population rejected the proposed European Constitutional Treaty, a personal defeat from which Chirac has yet to recover emotionally. In November, the spectacular rioting in the French suburbs revealed unemployment rates of up to 50% among the youth in those impoverished areas. The successful struggle by millions of high school and university students early this year—against the proposed “First Job Contract” law, which would have deprived youth of any job security—was the last blow to Chirac’s Presidential power. Sarkozy, an ambitious, pragmatic, and effective workaholic, used these successive UMP defeats to take over Chirac’s party.

Now the Chirac faction faces the prospect of Presidential elections in 2007, with the economy diving.

France now has a real unemployment of more than 12%. Living standards for all but the very rich are plummeting. And the population fears that Charles de Gaulle’s dream of the grandeur for France is all but dead.

A Cevipof poll (Center of Studies of French Life) made public by the Paris newspaper *Le Monde* on May 18, indicates great pessimism about the economic and political future of



European Union photo

*Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy’s real crimes lie in the domain of wrecking the French economy.*

the nation. Of those interviewed, 54% “are having difficulties making ends meet”; 47% think unemployment has grown and that the economic situation will continue to deteriorate; 76% said they believe that the youth will have a more difficult time than their parents; and 75% said that their standards of living have declined.

On the general state of France, 30% said they think France’s power in the world has declined, and 28% said that the nation’s “social pact” has weakened.

Politically, only 28% of those polled said they “trust” their traditional parties, be they left or right. Thirty-five percent declared themselves to be “out of the system.”

### The LaRouche Factor

Clearly, the road is wide open for a real “outsider,” such as LaRouche collaborator Jacques Cheminade, who is a candidate for President. This is what the world’s financial forces will be trying to stop in the immediate period ahead.

Patrick Jarreau, who reported the Cevipof study in *Le Monde*, noted that French voting preferences are almost evenly split between right-winger Sarkozy (46%) and Socialist Segolene Royal (45%), the phony alternatives which the financial media have been promoting for several months.

Jarreau stated unambiguously that the “image of Mr. Sarkozy and that of Mrs. Royal is very similar.” He noted that “it is only logical that the two candidates who favor ‘a break’ from the traditional French social model” are coming to the fore. Nevermind that they both have long held elective and ministerial offices in the current, failed system.

Jarreau, a spokesman for the Anglo-American-French financial oligarchy, concludes by outlining the challenge for these political figures: “It will be another thing for them to convert the defiant electorate. And to neutralize those who are ‘out of the system!’ ”

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