
The French Election

How the Financiers Rigged the Game

by Christine Pierre

The electoral process in France should have started with an announcement by the Constitutional Council of the list of candidates in the Presidential election (the first round of voting is April 22). But in fact, the period in which candidates collected the 500 signatures of elected officials they needed to participate in the Presidential race, was used to eliminate any candidate who could challenge the policies the French elite has imposed for the last 30 years.

In particular, that process eliminated Jacques Cheminade, the Lyndon LaRouche collaborator who is the only French political figure whose intervention could have brought back to power a form of republican alliance among true Gaullists, Social Christians, and Socialists. But it also eliminated other republican figures, like National Assembly Deputy Nicolas Dupont-Aignan and architect Roland Castro, who, at different levels, could have usefully intervened in the campaign.

This elimination process was organized in the form of an intensive campaign carried out by the system's mass media to stop mayors from giving their signatures to the smaller parties—holding the mayors responsible for the fact that in 2002, extreme right-winger Jean-Marie Le Pen made it into the second round of the Presidential elections because the mayors allowed too many small parties to run. Thus, exploiting the 2002 trauma, in this year's signature collection period, parties were classed by "notoriety," receiving media coverage according to that status. As a result, there was an ocean of coverage for the established parties, and almost none for "outsiders" who represented a serious challenge to the elite.

This terrorization of the mayors worked so well that a week before final collection of the official signatures of the mayors—between Feb. 22 and March 16—none but the four "mainstream" candidates, Ségolène Royal, Nicolas Sarkozy, François Bayrou, and Marie George Buffet, had enough signatures to run! Realizing that the country would be in an uproar at this lack of democracy; seeing that Le Pen is polling at 20-30%; and seeing that several extreme-left parties have gotten up to 5% in recent elections, candidate Sarkozy declared on national television that he would personally see to it that Le Pen and Olivier Besancennot of the Revolutionary Communist League got the signatures they needed. He called on the mayors to sign for those parties which represent a "real current" in French political life. After this call, lo and behold,

signatures started falling as if from the sky, on the chosen candidates.

Among others, Dominique Voynet and José Bové reportedly got their signatures from the Socialists; Olivier Besancennot from Sarkozy and the Socialists; and Le Pen from Sarkozy's Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). Sarkozy's immediate aim was, of course, to use the ultra-left and green candidacies to suck votes away from his Socialist Party rival Ségolène Royal, and to use Le Pen as a way to destroy the "third man" in the race, François Bayrou.

The Three Main Contenders

At this point, it appears that France's next President will be chosen from the three main contenders: Sarkozy, Royal, and Bayrou. But some observers don't exclude the possibility that the election will be won by a tiny margin, and that those three candidates and Le Pen could each get around 20%.

None of these candidates is proposing any fundamental changes to the present system. In economic terms, Sarkozy is undoubtedly the most liberal—in the sense of pro-free-market—and has the full support of France's great fortunes: Bernard Arnault (the LVMH conglomerate), Martin Bouygues (public works), Antoine Bernheim (Generali Assurance). Royal is more in line with the French-style social-liberal of the post-Mitterrand era, a "compassionate" defender of the population against the greater excesses of the ultraliberal system. Her anti-nuclear policies would deal a blow to France's scientific and technological excellence.

Perhaps even worse than these two is Bayrou, president of the Union for French Democracy, who rose to the position of "third man" in the race. He claims to be in the center, but his economic policies are the most reactionary of all. Bayrou is increasingly accused of being an impostor because, although he claims to be on the side of the lower 80% of the population, his only program is a three-year state austerity assault to eliminate France's functioning debt. His obsession with the balanced budget is such that he proposes to inscribe in the French Constitution language forbidding the government to adopt deficit budgets for operating expenses.

We have "over-consumed" in the last 25 years, Bayrou tells audiences, in accents reminiscent of the wartime Nazi collaborator Pétain. He calls on all parties to stop making promises, and makes them feel guilty about leaving such a debt burden to their grandchildren. Bayrou has also been the most up-front in support of biofuels and the overall green agenda, going so far as to tell the *New York Times* March

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8 that if he were an American, he would vote for Al Gore in 2008.

Bankers: The Real Soul of the Campaign

Why are these candidates so small, their programs so non-existent? The reason was revealed by *EIR*, which was the first to point out that Bayrou's policy on public debt was directly inspired by the debt report assembled by financier Michel Pébereau for the French Economics and Finance Minister Thierry Breton in December 2005. We have overspent in the last 25 years, stated Pébereau in this report, claiming that the debt was not 64% of the GDP but closer to 100%, if one includes retirement pay. (This is a fraud, because it is not today's state, but subsequent generations who pay those retirement benefits.) The report identifies as one of the main reasons for the debt increase the fact that there are too many elected officials and too many elections, which create continual constituency pressure on elected officials to spend money.

This argument is not far from that of the Synarchist bankers in the 1930s, who thrice attempted to impose fascist dictatorships on France, and finally in effect called in the Nazis to impose the Pétain dictatorship.

Le Nouvel Observateur, one of France's main weeklies, stated recently that Pébereau was so powerful as to be considered the second finance minister of France. But who is Michel Pébereau? President of the board of the BNP/Paribas banking group, he is indeed among the most powerful financiers in the world. He is also the president of the advisory council and oversight council of the influential French Aspen Institute, which was revamped in 1994 by former French Prime Minister Raymond Barre, who is still its honorary president.

Some might recall that as Prime Minister to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Raymond Barre imposed the first austerity program of the post-de Gaulle era, making Giscard so unpopular that he lost his reelection bid. Former head of the Trilateral Commission in Europe, Barre is very close to the Synarchist circles which built up the European Monetary Union; he is also close to Generali's Antoine Bernheim, one of the most powerful financiers in Europe and the Americas.

Through his debt program, and a website he created out of the Enterprise Institute which he runs—Debats2007.org—Pébereau became the controlling figure in the French political world, blocking politicians from presenting any program which could be accused of increasing the indebtedness. The Debats2007.org site featured an accounting of the exact amounts of "spending" each Presidential candidate was promising to the electorate. Thus, none of the candidates, states *Nouvel Observateur*, dared to present any ambitious policy. Even worse, Pébereau created an organization called Codice (Council for the Expansion of Economic Culture), where some 15 financial and media influentials elaborated "Ten Commandments" for the Presidential candidates. Number One is explicit: "An economically responsible speech does not make any promises for which it does not propose a



EIRNS/Karel Vereycken

French Presidential candidate Jacques Cheminade, Lyndon LaRouche's collaborator, was eliminated from the race to prevent him from reviving a republican alliance among Gaullists, Social Christians, and Socialists.

source of financing."

Among the other economic advisors announced to the media by candidate Bayrou (who doesn't hide his friendship with Barre), are Jean Claude Casanova, editor of the French version of the neo-con magazine *Commentary* and a Trilateral Commission crony of Barre; and Jean Claude Peyrelevade, former CEO of the Crédit Lyonnais bank and former associate of its head financier, Edouard Stern. (Stern's body was found a few years ago in Geneva with three bullets in the head; police suspected that he was involved with the Russian mafia.)

In the context of this programmatically bankrupt campaign, Jacques Cheminade recently announced that although the "main" contenders and their controllers seem to have taken over the scene, the turbulent times ahead will make clear that the future is in the hands of those who, like Cheminade, will pursue the fight to reestablish the republican principle of public welfare against oligarchic forces. Proud of the 220 signatures of mayors gathered by his movement, Cheminade announced that he will be pursuing his work with the mayors and with the LaRouche Youth Movement, bringing them into an alliance in the upcoming legislative elections to solve France's urgent economic problems—in particular, in the poor suburbs.