
European Labor Party

'Combative' candidates turn France on head

by Liliana Celani

On March 16, fifty million Frenchmen will go to the polls to elect a national parliament. The elections will be marked by the participation of over 250 candidates, in 27 "departments," from the European Labor Party (Parti Ouvrier Européen—POE), co-thinkers of *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche. Running in areas encompassing 10 million voters, the POE slates, as the French press has said, are quite different from any other slate running in the elections.

The candidates are not professional politicians, but farmers, teachers, workers, North Africans who have become French nationals, and former government administrators bitterly disappointed by the government's austerity program, the "free-market economics" policies being pushed by all other parties. These include President François Mitterrand's Socialists, former President Giscard d'Estaing's UDF, whose candidate for premier is Trilateral Commission member Raymond Barre, and the Gaullist RPR, whose top candidate, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, is considered the likely next premier.

The POE candidates, for example, farmers, are experiencing the terrible effects of such economic policies first hand. That is probably the reason that, as the press reports, they are more "combative" than other candidates.

This unique feature of the POE slates has already altered the political atmosphere of this French campaign. In Paris, Lille, Nantes, Metz, Strasbourg, Besancon, Lyon, Toulouse, and Nimes, when POE candidates presented themselves to the press, they provoked consternation among the journalists who had come to label them "right-wingers," but found it very difficult to attach any label. Unique indeed.

On Feb. 22, the daily *Libération* pointed out that the POE will probably be the party with the most French-Muslim candidates, and added: "It is often the parties who talk the least, who do the most." Another daily, *L'Est Républicain*, titled, "The new (and mysterious) slate of the Parti Ouvrier Européen." A regional daily, *Presse Ocean*, published an article on the top POE candidate in Vendee, entitled "Madame Lelièvre candidate for the legislative elections on the POE slate," trying to ridicule former municipal councillor

Madelaine Lelièvre as "La Pasionaria of Bocage." It quoted a *Le Monde* article which slandered the party as "right-wing" and "CIA financed." *Presse Ocean* is owned by Philippe Maistre, a friend of Raymond Barre and himself a candidate in Vendee. Mrs. Lelièvre, furious at the corruption of the press, went to a public appearance by Maistre, protesting so vehemently from the back of the room that the UDF candidate put on a tape of the French national anthem as loud as possible.

As for *L'Est Républicain*, on Feb. 22, after the determined protests of the POE candidates, particularly the French Muslims, the daily published a correction to a previous article on the POE characterizing it as a "right-wing party." The North Africans were quoted in the daily comparing the POE program to that of King Louis XIV's great minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert, saying it is "inspired by Colbert's philosophy, which rejects austerity, either the socialist or the liberal kind, and gives great priority to the industrialization of Third World countries and classical education for everybody. It also demands the strengthening of the Western alliance, and fights unemployment, the farm crisis, drugs, and terrorism."

At a press conference in Lille, a French Muslim candidate answered a journalist accusing the POE of being "right-wing": "I can show you my socialist party card, which I still have, as well as my membership in the Force Ouvrière Union, and I can tell you one thing: I will get every single worker in my factory to vote for the POE because they are the only ones who have a program."

It will be difficult for the press to hide the POE's program, which has nothing to do with stereotyped "left-right" categories. According to the French electoral law, all parties presenting more than 200 candidates in more than 20 departments are assigned 8 minutes on national television and radio. The POE's candidate for premier, Jacques Cheminade, running in the once-industrial Metz, will appear simultaneously on all national channels at prime time, outlining a platform that includes abolition of the International Monetary Fund; industrialization of the Third World; a French Strategic Defense Initiative in cooperation with the United States, and deployment of the neutron bomb; a *Colbertist* approach to finance productive investments; elimination of EC quotas to increase farm output; a war on drugs and terrorism; and introduction of a classical education curriculum.

In the city of Lyon, where the head of the POE slate, Claude Albert, will run against Raymond Barre, the Trilateral Commission member whose "privatization" program would lead to a total economic disaster. The party will be publishing a brochure on the Trilateral Commission and Barre. In Nievre, Mitterrand's home base, the top POE candidate, Claude Gravier, will face budget-slashing Finance Minister Pierre Bergovoy. Around the city of Lille, the POE's Ben Tounes, a former deputy from Algeria and a highly respected personality in the French Muslim community, is running against Pierre Mauroy, the Socialist Party strongman.