

# France proposing united Europe, large-scale infrastructure projects

by P. Coulomb

A series of important policy statements from French officials, following President François Mitterrand's trip to the Indian subcontinent, have confirmed that France has worked out an ambitious policy which links the unification of Europe with a bold vision of development for the developing sector. There is nothing accidental, leading French officials told *EIR*, in France's renewed activism in the direction of the developing sector; it is part of an overall strategy which aims to renew Gaullist France's historic role as a friend and ally of the "Third World." Though no area of the developing sector is excluded from this, the priority areas defined by French leaders include the Maghreb, the Mediterranean Basin more generally, and Africa—in short the natural southern "periphery" of Europe.

Confirming this view in an interview with the weekly *Nouvel Observateur*, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly and former presidential spokesman, Michel Vauzelle, noted that the unification of Germany and of Europe must be accompanied by measures to create "poles of development in the Maghreb" and, more broadly, in the South. France, he said, had a particular role to play in this along with Spain and Italy, Europe's major Mediterranean nations.

Interestingly, this orientation was also endorsed by the Christian Democratic president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, in a speech to the French Bishops' Conference, where he, too, linked the unification of Europe to the need to widen the scope of development efforts to the Mediterranean Basin and the Third World. Both indicate a growing consensus, born out of efforts by the French presidency to work out a global strategy in the face of the unprecedented events sweeping Europe.

As the pace of change in Europe's postwar political landscape quickened, François Mitterrand's executive adviser Jacques Attali published a programmatic study of the possible directions of world development, *Lignes d'Horizon* (Fayard, 1990), written during the Eastern European revolutions but reflecting a long-matured thought. In the study Attali proposes that the integration of Eastern Europe into the western part of Europe, to be successful, must be accompanied by large-scale infrastructure and industrial development programs—in energy, transport, telecommunications, and environmental cleanup. It is for this purpose that Attali suggested

the creation of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which since then has been officially agreed upon by the European Community. (Attali is slated to be named its first president.) If this succeeds, he writes, Europe will become the "heart of the world," the most prosperous, technically developed, and advanced area of the planet and hence its greatest pole of attraction. In addition, it will become the center for the expansion of freedom and democracy throughout the planet.

Attali, however, sees this in conjunction with the need for a similar effort to be undertaken for the nations of the developing sector. Without this, says Attali, war, which is increasingly unlikely between East and West and between the competitive areas of the North, will become increasingly likely between North and South. The peoples of the developing sector will not sit back and watch without getting their just rewards. Hence for Attali the Oder-Neisse line, the river system dividing present-day Poland from East Germany, "should in some sense be seen also as a North-South line."

Globally speaking, Attali proposes that hyper-industrial civilization is needed and coming; not *post*-industrial but *hyper*-industrial, i.e., a world of industry and high technology which takes environmental concerns into account but as part of the need for growth. Hindering this is financial speculation: capital required for development, for the stabilization of the democratic governments of Eastern Europe, for curtailing poverty in the North, for renewing infrastructure (notably in the United States) is being soaked up in speculative excesses of all kinds. This speculative growth is "now culminating in the most of extreme instability."

Though it is the most elaborate view presented by any Western government leader of the needs of our times, it expresses the consensus of French elite circles as indicated above. President Mitterrand himself has long been a supporter of the cause of Third World development, but so was his chief rival in the last presidential election, Jacques Chirac. In fact, France's elites are renewing the vision of President Charles de Gaulle, who in 1964 proposed that development of the Third World was the great task facing mankind, only to be echoed a few years later by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*. Europe's reemergence as the moving force in modern history must lead, in their view, to European unity and hence to solidarity with the developing sector.