

Background: the French presidential elections

Presidential elections are scheduled to take place in France at the end of next April, provided President François Mitterrand is not obliged to step down earlier due to severe health problems. So far, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, head of the nominally Gaullist party, the Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR), is the only officially declared major candidate, but his bid is strongly opposed within party ranks. His major rival is Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, who belongs to the same party but has more support from the liberal coalition partner, the UDF, of which former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing is a member.

While a victory for the majority candidate seemed certain after the overwhelming defeat of the Socialist Party in the European elections last June, the tables have turned. Some polls now show that if Jacques Delors, current president of the European Commission and probable candidate of the Socialist Party, does run, he would win.

While the right-wing parties, the majority, are tearing themselves apart in internal fights for power, the government is slowly disintegrating. Since last summer, three ministers have resigned over ongoing judicial investigations against them on various charges of corruption, graft, and illegal funding of political parties. This is a result of France's version of the "Clean Hands" anti-corruption campaign, in which Italy's institutions were destroyed in record time. Although initial Socialist Party calls for dissolving the government may be more demagogic than serious, the present government is not likely to last beyond

the year's end.

Meanwhile, the directors of many of France's leading industries and infrastructure suppliers are being targeted by the "Clean Hands" investigations.

The main issue has not been raised by anyone: the imminent financial meltdown and the emergency reconstruction measures which need to be taken. In France, as in other European countries, talk is focusing on the so-called ongoing economic recovery, the inevitability of unemployment, how to cut public spending, and so forth.

Since there is no perspective of growth and of breaking out of the monetarist straitjacket, the debate around Europe is irrelevant. Chirac will try to capitalize on the very strong sentiment in France against the Maastricht Treaty on European union (the referendum ratifying the treaty only passed with 51% of the vote last June), by accusing his probable rival Delors of being a European federalist, which means in favor of a common currency for Europe, a European central bank, and doing away with national sovereignty. Delors is presented by his opponents as the "candidate of Chancellor Kohl," who will subjugate France's interests to those of the "big, bad neighbor" Germany. This all plays into Great Britain's effort to set up a new "Entente Cordiale" with France and to weaken the Franco-German alliance, which goes back to de Gaulle and Adenauer.

What the actual stance of Delors will be on these questions is not clear. He has been head of the European Commission since 1985, and somewhat removed from the French political "pulse." But even if the debate drags on endlessly, everyone agrees in private that the Maastricht Treaty will never be applied, simply because it is a bureaucratic text which in no way takes into account political and economic realities.—Christine Schier

Delors and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Faced with this situation, the British leaders and press attempted by every means to frighten France—"alone" in the face of the German and American "giants," and to make us believe that an "Entente Cordiale" could rhyme with national independence. Jimmy Goldsmith, simultaneously, supports the "nationalism" of a Philippe de Villiers³ and a French version of the "Operation Clean Hands" which has swept Italy's traditional postwar political parties off the map and disgraced or jailed their leaders en masse. Let us remember, in passing, that he justifies the *Forbes* accusation by talking about a "new Stavisky affair."

3. Philippe de Villiers, a former member of the Republican Party of France, split dramatically from the party recently and ran a "neo-conservative" campaign for European Parliament last June, lavishly funded by Jimmy Goldsmith.

It is striking to note in these circumstances, that the "Clean Hands" operation (sponsored by the hands of Jimmy Goldsmith) is aiming precisely at all the major French companies—Alcatel-Alsthom (communications, transportation), Générale des Eaux and Lyonnaise des Eaux (urban water systems), Saint-Gobain (chemical), Schneider (equipment)—which constitute the mainstays of any European infrastructural and industrial development plan.

So, it's clear: A Franco-German alliance for peace through development in Europe is in the crosshairs of the British (and Anglo-American) financial oligarchy, which is, by its nature and historically, the main enemy of our nation-state and of productive economy. Against this are found the political orientations—surely imperfect, but opposed in principle—of Chancellor Kohl and President Clinton, which are also attacked by the same media organs that are going after France.