

# France's elite opts for national suicide

by Jacques Cheminade

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To judge by the vote in the National Assembly on April 22, a strong majority of government and party leaders supports the single currency of the European Monetary Union (EMU), the euro. President Jacques Chirac (RPR), Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (Socialist), and the three main parties, the neo-Gaullist RPR, the neo-liberal UDF, and the Socialist Party (PS), all claim that there is no other way to go. The opposition comes from various minorities, mainly the French Communist Party (PCF) and Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (FN). But, in fact, there is an actual and potential majority of the electorate who are against the euro. The problem is that this opposition has neither a clear political expression, nor competent leadership.

The political nomenclatura has submitted to the financial oligarchy, and the voters have been brainwashed into complacency by the media. Even some defenders of the euro have to admit that the strategy of those leading France into the EMU marriage has been to cloud the issue. *Le Monde* editorialist Erik Israelewicz, a euro-partisan, concedes that the rationalization for joining the euro is "an obscure clarity which shines from the dark."

President Chirac, in an April 16 press conference, had the nerve to say that "it is thanks to the euro that we have not suffered more from the Asian crisis. . . . The euro inspires confidence and guarantees activity and employment." On April 3, 1990, he had declared exactly the opposite, stressing that the euro would cause France to lose its sovereignty in such vital areas as national defense, the budget, and social welfare. One observer comments: "Among the many illnesses that Chirac has caught, the europhile virus is the worst." RPR leader Philippe Séguin, together with his party, did not vote in the National Assembly on the Jospin resolution in support of the euro—although they are in favor of it—simply because they did not want to appear to support the Jospin government. The Maastricht Treaty on European union, sniffed Séguin, was voted up by the French people in a referendum, and therefore nothing can be changed in any case.

This betrayal of Gaullist principles by their present-day

supposed advocates, is only matched by the Socialists' betrayal of their own election promises and party principles. Jospin, in an interview with *Le Monde* on April 21, and in his speech the same day before the National Assembly, tried to outdo Chirac's europhilia. He claimed that the conditions set by the Socialists for France to join the euro have been met. He was especially referring to the demand that the European Central Bank would be controlled by a political entity. What he didn't say is that this "political authority" will be made of the European Council of Ministers of Economics and Finances, advised by a Financial and Economic Committee composed of the representatives of the European central banks and treasuries. In short, Jospin is claiming as a political victory that the European Central Bank will be politically controlled . . . by central bankers.

In the Assembly's pro-euro vote, the PS admitted that the most help came from the Thatcherite liberal UDF. Not too surprising, either: Typical of this vein is the ultra-liberal Alain Madelin, who proclaims *urbi et orbi* his admiration for Britain's Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, expressing the wish that France's Socialists will become "true Blairists," in the European process.

## Opposition in disarray, at best

The opposition to the euro is a confused alliance of the Socialist Left faction in the PS, the PCF, the three Trotskyite movements in France, Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement's MDC, right-wing politicians Philippe de Villiers and Charles Pasqua, and Le Pen's National Front.

The Socialist Left is anti-euro, but also anti-nuclear and close to the pro-euro Greens; at present, its scant half-dozen deputies have been gagged by the party leadership, which laid down the law that "among us, there is no freedom of vote in the parliament." The Trotskyites are either anti-nuclear or close to a leftist cult (Workers Struggle and Workers Party). Chevènement and the PCF have no credibility: Their stance against the euro is undermined by the fact that they belong to the "plural left" which is enforcing it. De Villiers and Pasqua are far too right-wing to appeal to the victims of the euro. That leaves racist demagogue Le Pen, who hopes to capitalize on his anti-one-worldist populism to draw anti-euro ferment to his ranks.

All this creates an explosive situation, although Le Pen would collapse immediately if his free market neo-liberal economic policies were properly challenged—something the Paris nomenclatura will not dare to do.

Hence, the importance of the movement I represent. We are politically the only ones to call for a positive alternative to the euro, with a New Bretton Woods system, a Eurasian Land-Bridge, and a new European alliance of nations for this purpose. Our ideas are making their way into the national debate, in various decision-making bodies, in a situation where the national leadership has left a policy vacuum, and everybody knows it.