

France: Nuclear Energy Or Financial Power

by Jacques Cheminade

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The visits by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and First Lady Cécilia Sarkozy to Libya at the end of July, met with real success: Not only were the six medical workers (five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor) freed after more than eight years in prison, but France became involved in Libya with its most important strategic asset, nuclear energy. Moreover, a new concept for collaboration was developed there: nuclear desalination of seawater. For many years, Lyndon LaRouche and this author have defended this concept, with the idea of generating enough usable water to avoid depleting groundwater reserves and fossil water resources, overexploited by Tripoli up till now.

Nothing is served by questioning whether the overture is opportunistic, as the French Socialists are doing. They should know, since they have themselves been in power, that opportunism, at least at this point in history, cannot be tolerated, and that the only thing that really matters is results.

More important, for the first time, calling into question the theses of Zbigniew Brzezinski and the American neo-conservatives, the President of the French Republic declared—according to a July 26 Reuters wire—that a policy which begins with the principle that the Arab world “is not intelligent enough to use nuclear energy” would, in the long run, threaten to set off a “clash of civilizations.”

Moreover, the French nuclear energy giant Areva is also financing two modern EPR nuclear power plants in China. In Niger, thanks to a renewed agreement with the Niamey government, the company will continue mining some of the largest uranium deposits in the world. And, in the energy domain, the oil company Total was chosen to take a 25% share in Russia’s Shtokman natural gas field in the Barents Sea, one of the most important in the world. In Sudan, Total won out over Britain’s White Nile for the right to exploit the “Block B” concession. Hence, France’s position in these fundamental domains is solid, and that is good news for the interests of France, and also for world economic development.

However, a fundamental issue remains. Talking about new energy resources, necessarily implies considering economic development, and talking about economic development, necessarily implies talking about great infrastructure works and industrial strategy. To bring those about, one has to



European Commission

Is French President Nicolas Sarkozy distancing himself from his neo-con allies? This is the question posed by Sarkozy’s new commitment to provide nuclear technology to Libya and other Third World nations.

issue massive credit, on a long-term basis and at low interest. But the current financial and monetary system forbids recourse to this type of credit, and the European Central Bank’s announced interest rate hike for Sept. 6 is not of the nature to reverse the general trend—quite the contrary. Notably, the current disintegration of the international financial and monetary system raises the question of any prospect for growth in the real economy.

Look to the FDR Model

For that reason, however much we might rejoice in the French efforts in the energy domain, we cannot but acknowledge that the financial backing for their fulfillment does not exist, for lack of political vision and because of the pressure exerted by the European and international financier groupings that brought Sarkozy to power. The domestic policy of our government is radically opposite to the policies carried out by Harry Hopkins during his first week in the Franklin Roosevelt Administration, which gave a strong impetus to jobs creation, especially productive employment, around the great projects of the New Deal.

Don’t we have to tell Mr. Sarkozy to find his inspiration there, rather than in submitting to rentier-finance capital and to the logic of the hedge funds? Nuclear power, indeed, cannot be reduced to the construction of third-generation power plants, but requires the development of the fourth generation—the high-temperature reactors—and of controlled thermonuclear fusion power, together with the physical and human transformation of the economic environment around the power systems as such. That requires a new mode of financing, in the framework of a new international economic order, a New Bretton Woods and a “Global New Deal.”