

A French Mayor Views The Financial Crisis

by Daniel Heydt

Daniel Heydt is the Mayor of Bellange, in Moselle, France. He gave this speech, titled, "The Impact of the Financial Crisis on French Municipalities," to the Schiller Institute Conference, in Rüsselsheim, Germany, July 2-3. Jacques Cheminade is the leader of Solidarité et Progrès, the LaRouche movement in France, and a candidate for the French Presidential elections. Other speeches from the conference have appeared in recent issues of EIR, and all can be viewed at www.schillerinstitute.com.

My name is Daniel Heydt, and I'm the mayor of Bellange, a small village in Moselle, France. I am not used to speaking before such an impressive audience. I usually address my municipal council, which is made up of nine people! So I thank you for your understanding. Jacques Cheminade asked me to deal with the subject of the impact of the international financial crisis on French towns and villages.

My intervention is centered on three main points: I will first present my village; then speak of the current territorial reform carried out by the French state, under the official pretext that the world crisis demands cuts in spending; and finally, I will raise some considerations to think about.

But first of all, I would like to hear a round of applause for the whole assembly, because I have been really impressed, since yesterday, by the quality of everything going on here, and the work carried out by Mr. LaRouche's and Mr. Cheminade's militants who are working on all those subjects. (Applause). You deserve it, quite sincerely; I'm impressed.

Now, I would like to mention the reasons why mayors of French villages, such as myself, are sponsoring and supporting [the candidacy of] Jacques Cheminade. They are often mayors of villages, because we are not associated with party structures which could command obedience from us. The first reason that comes to mind—and I have also asked the other mayors attending, about this—is that Jacques Cheminade, for us, is

the only candidate who has presented a serious and credible program, based on the teachings of the past. And that's very important, considering that life is a perpetual beginning. So, if we learn things from history, it's always good.

In France, on the contrary, we are asked to be either on the "right" or the "left," even though the UMP [conservatives] and the PS [socialists] only propose solutions intended to further the interest of the party or, at best, the wishes of the system. And that system is only in place for the happy few, who already have everything.

Let me explain what I mean. I have been working for four years in a large company headed by a president. In the beginning of 2010, there were 700 employees. In mid-2010, we bought up a group as big as ours, with 500 employees, but which made less profit, and was less competitive. Since it was making less money than us, we bought it up. One year later, there are not 700 plus 500 employees, i.e., 1,200, but just barely 1,000 employees, and it's not over.

How does it work? You have mergers which lead to layoffs, to the benefit of just one person, the president, not the employees. Today, in 2011, our company is even more "powerful" than in 2010, so we will buy out more competitors. We're number two in France, but we want to become number one, and so on, just to make more money—and tough luck for unemployment! The Sarkozy government could have countered that situation, but of course, it did not. On the contrary, it is something that allows a person to earn much more money and to be able to finance more private interests some day.

Coming back to Jacques Cheminade, the second point that I will raise, is his credibility. He is the only one who told us, during the 2007 Presidential campaign, that an international crisis was going to hit. The only one! Unfortunately, he was right; in September 2008, the Sarkozy government was telling the French that he had not seen the crisis coming, and that we had to tighten our belts. Between you and me, he should have consulted Jacques Cheminade and not Jacques Chirac!

Thirdly, I would say that Jacques Cheminade is just common sense. I came here with a fellow mayor who is a farmer, and there is what we can call "a farmer's common sense," or being "down to earth." It involves doing sound things which work—for instance, a policy of great projects; we know that it works.

I would say that Jacques Cheminade fights, like all the other activists here, for the common good—and



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Daniel Heydt, the Mayor of Bellange, in Moselle, France, spoke at the Schiller Institute Conference on July 3.

that's important. Those are a few of the reasons why I support him and why other mayors, fortunately, also support him and are giving their signatures so that he can run in the 2012 campaign. Since I'm fortunate enough to be on the podium, I would ask you to applaud Jacques Cheminade and all his organizers (applause).

The Village of Bellange

Let's speak now about Bellange, a village of 62 inhabitants. When I became mayor, there were only 45 of us, so we produced children on a grand scale—more or less, 33% more citizens! Our small village also has four farms. One day, at the Ministry, they asked me how that was possible: 62 inhabitants and 4 farms? The Ministry didn't even know where the village was; they don't even know what a village is.

We also have another peculiarity. In 2004, we had no access to Internet in the village. But we organized an innovative project with the DATAR, a public research agency in France, which involved receiving Internet and distributing it via electrical outlets. This is called, in insider jargon, outdoor power-line communications. We do get Internet at the nearby city of 1,500 inhabit-

ants, and bring it back to the village, 6 km away, via a small WiFi antenna. And we connect it to the electrical wiring in the village. The Cultural Association of the village then provides the inhabitants with a small modem for EU10 a month. They connect the modem to the electrical outlet and are able to access the Internet. We thus share one Internet connection for the whole village, and it works well, for only EU10 a month!

Our village has 3 km of public roads, with sidewalks, etc. Our great wealth is the citizens, who volunteer to do many things in the village; they organize festivals, decorate the squares with flowers, etc. Most people have taken responsibility for their lives this way.

Territorial Reform

The French state is now carrying out a reform of the national territory in order to save money—or so it claims—after privatizing highways, water, gas, electricity, and most services for the citizens.

I already raised this problem in the case of the company where I work (but luckily for me, I only have 27 more days to go); private companies are run so as to have minimum expenses for maximum profits.

Now, the French state plans to eliminate practically half of France's villages by 2020. In exchange (what a nice term), they are imposing the creation of communities of villages, for the sole purpose of cost-efficiency. I say, this is a lie. The only effect it will have is an increase in profits for the private companies which provide services to the communities of villages. Citizens will now no longer be motivated by the village they live in, as they are today in Bellange. Citizens will be turned into voters, sitting in front of their TV sets. They won't be developing themselves, intellectually or artistically.

Let me give another example of how this works: Five years ago, garbage was collected in our village by an intercommunal association representing 15 villages. The price per inhabitant for garbage collection was EU29 per year. Five years later, the community of villages took over that service. And today, citizens pay EU92 per year for the same service—over three times more. This is clearly not in the interest of the citizens, who pay more so that the private companies profit.

This territorial reform will eliminate all the associations for water management and sanitation, and even for school services, although the structures work very well. Less service, and higher costs, for whom? For the citizen. To whose advantage? The private structures, as I already stated.

Considerations

The third part of my intervention deals with proposals for several areas to reflect upon. The first applies to the village of Bellange. Practically all speakers in this conference have raised the issue of transparency. For Bellange, it is easy; it involves posting all public expenditures—the money of citizens—on the Internet.

Every citizen, anywhere in the world, can find out what the village of Bellange spends, area by area, in its global budget. We make this commitment every time we open our wallet for whatever the purchase. The day I got this idea, I must admit, I was like the hen that found an alarm clock. I marvelled at it; I was so happy! I had found the idea of the century.

After thinking it over, I said to myself: Now when I spend money for Bellange, it's not my money. I give it out easily; nobody's watching, so I can do what I want. But, if I put this on the Internet, everybody will know what I'm doing and that could be annoying. Whenever I buy something, people will know it, and they will know how much I paid for it. The citizens and inhabitants might criticize me. So I hesitated several days, but then I decided to act.

Immediately, and naturally, my behavior changed. I was forced to think about it much more before I bought anything. So I began to regulate myself. The fact that anybody and everybody can pass judgment on me changed everything.

Anyone here in this room can go to the Bellange website and see the list of expenses, and then come up and say: "Hey, Daniel, you're a nice fellow, but look at all your spending! Can you explain why you went to the restaurant?" And so forth. In Bellange, we don't have much money, but still, the fear of being criticized.... And frankly, there's nothing worse than your neighbor not saying "Good Morning" to you because he was on the website and saw something he didn't like. Therefore, I say, transparency is simple: anyone can do it, the means are available.

The second idea I'm considering is to limit the terms of office. I think one should not be elected more than once, and for a limited time period; it shouldn't be a career. We were talking about revolutionary ideas before, and this is one. I had trouble explaining it, but yesterday, while listening to a speech, I had this idea, and I did what you do: I looked at the past.

In any activity, there are generally three phases. The first phase is learning. How long it lasts depends on the difficulty of the activity and on one's own personality.

The second phase is a period of activity that one can call optimal, where one is the most productive, the most creative. It can last several years, depending on the activity. The third phase is a period which one associates with fatigue; you produce less and are less creative. At that point, one should leave the job to others, one should not stay in power for life. However, one can very well remain an activist!

If we don't want to say that it's our genes that make us want to stay in power, once we have it, perhaps we could blame the little devils for pushing people to hold on to power. It's not his fault, the devil made him do it! But we have to make room for the X, Y, and Z generations, and the Zs are great people. If we don't make room for them, we will have serious problems.

To conclude, I would like to say that I'm happy to have followed the proceeding here over these two days, because I have met people of a really high level, whether on the podium or in the room, and your passion is admirable. It is what allows you to accomplish exceptional feats. Bravo to all of you, and thank you for your attention.

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