

French Vote ‘No’ To Globalization

by Christine Bierre

The French vote of 55% “no” against the proposed European Constitutional Treaty May 29 was, as Gen. Charles de Gaulle would have said, “bold and massive.” The voter turnout was also very high, nearly 70%, which is exceptional for this type of referendum, and as high as the 2002 Presidential primary. The results show that France is totally divided: The “yes” vote was heavily concentrated in the major (and wealthier) cities, with Paris running the highest rates at 67%; Strasbourg 63%; and Lyon above 61%.

The “no” vote was concentrated in the poorer suburbs, rural areas, and formerly industrial centers. In Venissieux, a working class area near Lyon, where the Mayor had invited Lyndon LaRouche’s leading French associate, Jacques Cheminade, to visit an exhibit against the European Constitution, the “no” vote hit 69%! The poorer suburbs of Paris also went heavily for the “no,” including Seine Saint Denis, 62%; Seine et Marne, 55%; and Val d’Oise, 53%. In rural areas like Limoges, 55% voted “no,” while “no” also ran high in the formerly industrial centers, such as Le Havre, 64% or in Pas de Calais, 69%-plus. Maps of French unemployment published by the press coincide precisely with maps of the “no” vote. The “no” vote was also massive among the youth, where unemployment levels have soared in the recent period.

The effect of the vote has been a real earthquake, reflected in the banner headlines of the main press: “It’s Enormous,” *Le Parisien*; “It’s ‘No,’” *Le Figaro*; and “The Biggest ‘No’ Day,” *Libération*. Commenting on the victory, Jacques Cheminade, characterized the vote as an “abrupt halt to the last 35 years of neo-liberal drift.” “Nothing will be the same as before,” Cheminade said, and he ruled out the various schemes put forward to ignore the vote, such as having the French vote again next year, or enacting the Constitution among the nations that ratified it, or renegotiating the Constitution text.

Lyndon LaRouche characterized the vote as the beginning of a “reverse cultural paradigm-shift” away from the “no future/consume now” policies of the free-market economy agenda adopted by the Baby Boomers and French Bo-Bos (bourgeois-bohemians) during the last 30 years.

A Full Government Reshuffle

In a carefully worded statement, President Jacques Chirac tried to de-dramatize the results, while announcing



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Jacques Cheminade characterized the “no” vote on the European Constitution as “an abrupt halt to the last 35 years of neo-liberal drift.” Here, Cheminade (on the sound-truck), joins a LaRouche Youth Movement week of action in Paris, January 2004.

a major change in the government. “You have expressed your concerns and hopes,” he said. “I shall respond by giving a new and strong impulse to government action.” The President also indicated that the government would concentrate its efforts in the areas of unemployment and social welfare.

Shell-shocked by the results, Chirac decided to move rapidly. On May 31, he accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin and chose Dominique de Villepin as the new Prime Minister. Although the choice of de Villepin indicates a halt in the free-market “liberal reform” policies the government has adopted in recent years—including large cuts in health insurance benefits, reductions in pension funds, and reductions in unemployment benefits and rights—that choice was tempered by Chirac’s decision to call his neo-conservative friend Nicolas Sarkozy back to the government, with the title of Minister of State, making him number two in the government.

The choice of Sarkozy is all the more bizarre in that he and de Villepin hate each other with a passion, and have been in furious competition for the post of Prime Minister for the past few years. Informed sources claim that it is an attempt by Chirac to control Sarkozy, something that is more easily done if the ambitious politician is part of the government and

not outside it. For Sarkozy's part, his entourage says that he realizes that a total failure of the government will also kill his career.

Beyond the personalities and names, it is only the economic program adopted by the new government which will tell whether France's leaders have really understood the message of the population. If there is no change in policy, or merely cosmetic improvements, stated Cheminade, then this government will be nothing but a "government of particles," a pun on the word *particule* which, beyond the common meaning in French and English, is also a reference in French to the "de" particle added to the names of aristocrats. And both Dominique de Villepin and Nicolas Sarkozy de Nagy-Bocsa are aristocrats.

According to the daily *Le Monde* June 2, however, Dominique de Villepin had established in recent months the "diagnosis of a country plunged into crisis by the shock of global-

ization." In an address to the National Assembly on June 7, de Villepin, reports *Le Monde*, will emphasize "employment, solidarity, and research. A relaunching of public investment, through a policy of great projects, could be announced, presuming by that, that the government will have decided to free itself from the constraints of the European Stability Pact. A new crisis under way with [EU headquarters] Brussels is a prospect that does not frighten de Villepin. It is not certain, however, that France's partners will be so conciliatory after the massive rejection of the constitutional treaty by the French people."

Should this policy be adopted, speculates *Le Monde*, de Villepin will try to move rapidly, using rulings by decree to legislate the authorization of programs. The two other areas into which he intends to intervene, according to *Le Monde*, are jobs creation for youth, via financial incentives for regional bodies. Unfortunately, this sounds like the non-productive

Cheminade: A Mandate To Lift Europe From Crisis

Jacques Cheminade, leader of the Solidarity and Progress party in France, and an associate of Lyndon LaRouche, used the words of Gen. Charles de Gaulle to declare, after the "no" against the financial oligarchy, "the harsh joy of taking responsibility." Cheminade, who played a major role in catalyzing the mobilization



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of the "no" vote, headlined his May 30 statement with this slogan from de Gaulle. The statement follows:

The rejection by the French people of the European referendum-ultimatum brings to a halt 35 years of neo-liberal drift and promotion of unemployment. We have received a mandate to bring life to Europe so that it can face up to the world crisis. By providing an overview, we will be able to mobilize the people. The international circumstances lend themselves to this. In the United States, between May 21-23, Democratic and Republican lawmakers stopped a coup d'état by George Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Karl Rove, aimed at imposing a Presidential dictatorship. The imperialists and neo-conservatives have been weakened. The Franklin Roosevelt tendency, revitalized by

Lyndon LaRouche, has been reinforced. The coup, and with it the effort to impose a preventive nuclear war strategy in foreign policy, has been temporarily halted.

There remains, however, both here and there, the need to give positive content to the Resistance. In the world, the crisis in the hedge fund and real estate markets, will reveal, over the June financial deadlines, the extent of the crisis in the monetary system. This will be the moment to rise up for change. This will be the moment to again found Europe, but not on the basis of diplomatic arrangements and bureaucrats.

We propose:

1. To re-establish a program of research and heavy investments able to create 20 million skilled jobs by devoting 10% of our GDP;
2. To create the conditions for financing this, beyond taxes and borrowing, via mobilizing public productive credit issued by a system of national banks, accountable to the citizens;
3. To build a Europe of fatherlands and citizens via a Eurasian Land-Bridge policy, integrating Iraq and China, with Turkey and Russia as the links.

Any thought of forcing France to vote a second time, or to implement the Constitution only in those countries which ratified it, or to renegotiate the rejected text, would be all insults to the universal right to vote. Let us re-read the "Edge of the Sword" of de Gaulle, and "The Modern Republic" of Mendes-France, Leibniz and Carnot, Friedrich List, and the text of the Treaty of Westphalia. Europe needs reference points and enthusiasm and a movement that can change the conditions of struggle on a world scale; it needs to bet on the future and not on this odd petty institutional fix.



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Lyndon LaRouche (right) and his French co-thinker Jacques Cheminade, leader of the Solidarity and Progress Party in France.

make-work projects the government has adopted over the last few years. This is no substitute for the kind of large-scale infrastructure-building plan that Cheminade and LaRouche are calling for, in the context of a New Bretton Woods financial reorganization.

European Stability Pact Under Fire Again

Under the crisis of the “no” vote, an important debate has broken out, at least in some quarters of the present majority. Jean-Louis Debré, son of de Gaulle’s Prime Minister Michel Debré, who is now President of the National Assembly, has called for emergency measures to deal with unemployment and other economic difficulties. During a luncheon organized for the new Prime Minister at the Hotel de Lassay with the right-wing majority deputies, Jean-Louis Debré called for decreeing a “state of emergency for employment.” “Let us listen to the message of our fellow citizens,” he said. “Employment, especially for the youth, must be our absolute priority. We have 22 months to demonstrate the efficiency of our actions in the area of employment, professional training, and social justice.” More important, in an interview to national radio RTL, on May 31, Debré reopened the debate on the hated European Stability Pact, which imposes heavy financial sanctions on countries which violate the two main financial criteria of the Maastricht Treaty: that deficits and government indebtedness cannot go beyond 3% and 60% of the GDP, respectively.

Debré called for “policies centered on the defense of employment and solidarity and on a very active policy for relaunching of public investments.” Questioned on whether that meant that France should consider itself free of the Stability

Pact requirement, Debré stated a clear “Yes. . . . I think that the Stability Pact must not be such a strong constraint as it is today.”

According to *Le Monde*, debate around this issue has become intense since the defeat of the referendum, particularly among the right-wing majority at the National Assembly and, of course, at the Finance Ministry. There, if Thierry Bretton, the current Economics and Finance Minister, is happy to have contributed to the recent reform of the Stability Pact, he is also known to be against deficit spending and indebtedness as a means of public credit. A few deputies are favorable to Jean-Louis Debré’s views on this issue, says *Le Monde*, indicating that the “government could authorize itself certain freedom with those rules,” in order to relaunch growth. Different measures are being discussed in this direction, among which are a joint Franco-German initiative.

Le Monde states that Jean-Louis Borloo, the present and future Social Affairs Minister, will be getting more funds to carry out his Social Cohesion Plan, and is calling “for a rapid Franco-German action.” “A joint initiative could indeed be one of the axes of the economic policies of de Villepin. The idea is progressing rapidly. Its content remains to be determined. Will it be grand public investments as Debré is calling for, or rather initiatives for exports, innovation, research, and perhaps even social and fiscal reforms.”

During a meeting with the majority Senators on June 1, the new Prime Minister said he was giving himself 100 days to regain the trust of the French people. In his first televised address that same evening, de Villepin stated once again that the government’s priority will be the fight against unemployment, the fight in favor of the most vulnerable, but also, the right to create new companies as well as the right to look into the future: innovation, research, new technologies, and a new industrial policy for France.

The new government has still to unveil its policies. How significant will this effort be? What kinds of jobs will they be creating? Will these be make-work projects, aimed at making the economy turn by increasing consumption? Or, will there be jobs around great infrastructure projects useful to Europe, and in connection with a broader Eurasian policy, involving a particular alliance with Germany, as LaRouche and his co-thinkers in France are promoting?

The Socialist Party: In Total Denial

The worst reactions to the slap in the face by the French electorate were those of the official Socialist Party leadership. This group of ideologues—Bo-Bos at their worst—constituted by François Hollande, his wife Ségolène Royale, and

former ministers in the Jospin government, Dominique Strauss Kahn and Martine Aubry, among others, has refused to draw the lessons of the vote. Instead they are plotting to purge Socialist Laurent Fabius and others in the Socialist Party who led the campaign for the “no” vote. In official statements immediately after the defeat, François Hollande, the head of the Socialist Party, blamed only Chirac for the defeat, not mentioning the fact that just three years ago the Socialist Party had been thrown out of the Presidential race for the first time in more than 20 years, for having adopted the same policies!

The first meeting of the national leadership of the Socialist Party, including supporters of the “yes” and the “no,” will occur June 4. At that meeting, the leadership will try to get the body to endorse a statement which will be written by the “yes” leaders in such terms that Laurent Fabius will be forced either to join them, or leave the leadership of the party. In an interview with the June 2 *Le Monde*, Strauss Kahn, when asked whether he thinks Fabius should remain at his post as number two of the party, didn’t hesitate to state, “I’m not sure that Fabius wants to continue with us on the orientations that we have followed in the last two years”—that is, the policies that have been disavowed by the French population.

When asked whether he would support a French “withdrawal from the Stability Pact, an increase of public spending, and the creation of jobs by the State, as some in the right-wing majority are calling for,” Strauss Kahn responded that such policies would be tantamount to an “attack on the euro. Yet, without the euro, the budget policies of Chirac would have led us to the IMF.”

A National Role for Jacques Cheminade

Only if the French elites listen carefully to the proposals of LaRouche and Cheminade will France, and Europe be able to reorient towards the growth policies of the “30 glorious years” of the post-war reconstruction, which were heavily influenced by the ideas of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and by the Colbertist dirigist planning treasured by the French. Although there are many competent politicians, civil servants, economists, and scientists in France, in the last 30 years, with very rare exceptions, it has been mainly the LaRouche/Cheminade forces who carried the weight in fighting against the free-market economy of the oligarchy, the Shultzes, Thatchers, Blairs, Mitterrands, and other enemies of the people, risking reputations, careers, financial well-being, and even their freedom, for this fight.

In that period of time, it is also the LaRouche/Cheminade forces who sought inspiration for the solutions to the present crisis in the achievements of great statesmen of the past. If Chirac and Schröder want to survive politically, if President Putin of Russia is to survive, they must reject the free-market agenda now, and move forcefully towards world monetary reform and the Eurasian Land-Bridge grand economic design.