

The French elections: Cheminade throws his hat into the ring

by Our Paris Correspondent

Jacques Cheminade, a well-known French political figure and a colleague of Lyndon LaRouche, on March 17 submitted to the Constitutional Council the signatures of 517 French elected officials supporting his campaign for the presidency of France (500 signatures are required to become a candidate in next month's presidential elections). Cheminade was the first candidate to file his signatures, out of a field that is expected to include 8-12 candidates, by the time the campaign officially begins on April 7.

The news came as quite a shock to the French ruling nomenclatura, both on the left and the right. The political scene is highly charged, although the leading candidates are doing their utmost to avoid addressing the vital issues facing the nation. Cheminade's view is that, up until now, "the other presidential candidates have been giving great orations on the deck of the *Titanic*, pretending not to see the iceberg which will soon destroy their illusions."

In a scandalous intervention into the political process, the Bank of France (central bank), according to press reports, has asked candidates not to discuss the financial crisis during the election campaign, for fear of inciting a new round of speculative attacks on the French franc.

As an officially certified candidate, Cheminade will have access to one and a half hours of national television time, and additional radio time, to air his views. He will certainly have a great deal to say about the collapse of the world financial and economic system. His four-page campaign program will be distributed by the state to all of France's 40 million voters. The program highlights a quote from Gen. Charles de Gaulle: "The policies of France are not made in the stock exchange."

Cheminade and his program

Cheminade, 53, has a long background in commercial, trade, and economic work for the French government (in 1969-72 and again in 1978-81, he worked in the Foreign Relations Section of the French Ministry of Economics and Finance; from 1972 to 1977 he was a commercial attaché, then counselor, in the French Mission in New York).

In addition, from 1981 to 1991, he was president of the Schiller Institute in France; he also worked with the newspaper *Nouvelle Solidarité* and the magazine *Fusion*. He remains extremely active with the Schiller Institute, which was founded and is led by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the wife of American

statesman and economist Lyndon LaRouche.

Cheminade has vowed that his campaign will attack social Darwinism and the marginalization of the weakest members of society, the ill and the elderly, a phenomenon he lays at the door of what he calls a "truly savage liberalism." He is combatting the racist ideologies of blood and soil created and maintained by this same philosophy of liberal economics.

He proposes a new East-West and North-South Marshall Plan based on great infrastructure projects, to reestablish a policy of long-term investment and of the creation, in Europe and internationally, of skilled jobs.

In a platform issued recently, Cheminade said that his campaign has three goals: to expose those responsible for the present financial and economic crisis; to put forward a new program for peace, economic growth, and job-creation; and to reintroduce into French political life a real debate on ideas, which he characterizes as a necessity if France is to save its democratic republican form of government.

On the first point, Cheminade's literature charges that the Anglo-American financiers, "the banks of the City of London and of Wall Street, the International Monetary Fund, GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade], and the U.N., are the pillars of a 'one world' system which is attempting to destroy any form of resistance we might put up."

But he says that, as opposed to his opponents, he "knows how to identify the internal malady of the West by its right name, and to organize a resistance against it."

The creation of a new Marshall Plan, an economic program devoted to peace and growth, requires, according to Cheminade, that "the state retake control over credit and over the issuance of money, to the detriment of the financial oligarchy." In addition, he sees a "firm Franco-German alliance" as the basis for a European-wide economic effort based on the application of high-technology to transport, defense, energy generation, and the like.

Finally, to re-create in France the interest in ideas, and the basis for substantive debate, which are essential to a democratic republic, Cheminade insists that it is necessary to resist the blandishments and "the bludgeonings of television . . . the world of the media, which is a product of financial speculation."

What is needed, he said, are leaders of "resolve, of dar-



Volunteers distribute Jacques Cheminade's Agriculture Program at a March farm fair in Paris. The candidate (inset) is raising the vital issue that all the others are attempting to ignore: the financial crisis and the bankruptcy of the productive economy.

ing, of foresight," people who can inspire their fellow citizens to take on and destroy the cancer of financial speculation, and, having done that, can set about creating the jobs so desperately needed, and drawing back into society those whom the malthusian cost-cutters wish to kill off.

The other candidates

Prominent among Cheminade's opponents, the other presidential candidates, are: Prime Minister Edouard Balladur of the Gaullist RPR; Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac of the Gaullist RPR Party; conservative Philippe de Villiers; extreme right-winger Jean-Marie Le Pen of the National Front; and Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin.

As the campaign first began in January, analysts seemed to consider Balladur a shoo-in. But a series of scandals had, by the Ides of March, driven down Balladur's ratings to the point that, polls showed, if he had to face Chirac in the runoff, Chirac would get over 60% of the vote. (The French election, which is run on a non-partisan basis, is a two-step process: On April 23 there will be a qualifying round from which the two finalists will emerge. Those two face off at the polls on May 7.)

By March 17, things had gotten worse for Balladur. His ratings in the polls were around 16%, lower than those of the Socialist Jospin. "Free fall" is how various press have been describing Balladur's trajectory.

Cheminade sometimes refers to the other candidates collectively as the French nomenclatura, the idea being that their entrenched and bureaucratic outlooks have made it impossible, as Cheminade charges in his campaign literature, for them to offer anything but "bandaid solutions or ideological demagoguery."

Campaign off and running

As an initial measure of the impact Cheminade's campaign can be expected to have, the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*, probably the most influential French establishment daily, on March 19 covered his presidential bid extensively—and with hostility and falsehoods. (Lyndon LaRouche, for example, was referred to as an American "billionaire.") *Le Monde* also seems angry that Cheminade has for years refused to be typed as "right-wing" or any other political category.

Since that "warning article" appeared, the establishment media in Paris have virtually blacked out Cheminade's campaign, even while giving extensive coverage to the views of would-be candidates who have not yet submitted the signatures necessary to qualify, and who may not succeed in doing so at all.

But Cheminade is not relying on the Parisian press to get his message across. Immediately after filing his candidacy, he embarked on a national tour that will take him to the cities of Lyons, Grenoble, Nancy, Metz, Strasbourg, Marseilles, Nice, Montpellier, Toulouse, and Rouen. He will be meeting with supporters and the press, and addressing constituency groups, city councils, and other groups. On March 29, he will lay flowers at the tomb of French Resistance fighters near Grenoble, at the invitation of the town mayor.

His campaign is preparing a poster for national distribution, with the slogan, "A France to Rebuild the World." It is also circulating a pamphlet on agricultural policy, and will issue another on the need for reviving the space program, as well as a mass-circulation run of Cheminade's campaign platform.