

## **L'Eclat. C'est moi!**

President Sarkozy's lively first few months - devoted to making France Europe's leader - have been a source of wonder to the French citizen. Although some say he is a bit Napoleonic (pejoratively), no-one denies his energy. Visits to Britain, Italy, Siberia, Russia, Gaza, India, and China, to name a few, seem to have engendered big trade deals for France's nuclear fuel stations and TGV trains. California and Argentina are also new customers.

On the home front, the President has announced ten new universities, has said he will fight Brussels for improved quotas for Breton fishermen, and commissioned a massive survey, already completed, of what needs to be done in France to make it more fit for the modern world. 316 ideas came out of the survey. One of them has already been demonstrated against, of course, with a nationwide strike of taxi drivers who don't want their profession deregulated.

The President has also said that immigration quotas will be introduced, France's TV stations 1 and 2 will no longer have advertising, primary schools will be reformed, labour contracts reviewed, and so on, and so on. The list seems endless. And all embracing. Normally, in one of the 'banlieue' spats, the cars that get burnt belong to local residents. Few of whom can afford full insurance for their vehicle and of course lose their means of going to work. The President has instructed the insurance companies to make a minimum payment of 4000 Euros (£2,900) in such cases. Supermarkets have been asked to review their margins to keep down the cost of living. He has also instructed the banks to come forward with ideas to stop such 'folies' as the recent sub-prime fall-out, and junior traders playing games with billions of euros in France's larger banks. The financial world, he said, was 'out of its mind' and 'had lost sight of its purpose'.

To deter Monsieur Dupont from driving over the limit, self-testing individual alcohol tests are on sale in all major retail outlets, at 1 euro each. There seems no end to the matters the President is concerned about - and will do something about.

Normally high political office takes its toll quickly and Presidents and Prime Ministers soon start to look frazzled at the edges. Not so Monsieur Sarkozy. He appears on TV - at home and abroad - setting out his philosophies with aplomb and conviction, never drooping for one minute. He seems impervious to France's frequently recurring strikes, as though he knows that he can make it all come right, and quickly. Rarely has the world seen such a ball of fire, fearless and positive, sans cesse.

The only other person to be the subject of such television attention recently, is the junior trader who almost emptied the Societe Generale, Jerome Kerviel. Did he make a mountain of money or did he just lose it? Was he guilty of a dreadful crime? In his police interviews he described the environment at the bank as one of lawlessness and laissez-faire. 'If you can make a huge profit for us, by whatever means, good. If you get caught doing anything dubious, you'll be hung out to dry.' When Monsieur Bouton, the

boss of the bank, was asked for his comment on this, he replied ‘Well, you can’t trust a fellow like that, can you?’ Monsieur Sarkozy has called for his resignation, but Monsieur Bouton has been confirmed in his post by his Board. Largely so that continuity will reign and the bank will not be targeted by predatory take-over. There was even talk of a Russian bank, which raised shudders around the Elysee. It is one thing to sell the Russians a TGV but quite another to have them camping on your trottoir.