

The lineup for the French presidential elections

by Garance Upham Phau

Between the preliminary presidential balloting on April 26 and the runoff on May 10, Frenchmen will have to decide between the re-election of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing for another seven-year term, and the election of Socialist Party candidate François Mitterrand. At stake is whether France will continue to develop as a nation committed to industrial and intellectual progress in Europe and in the Third World.

The electoral choice has nothing to do with the ostensible right/left, majority/opposition cleavages in French political life. In round two, Socialist Mitterrand could only win by garnering not only all the Communist votes, but also at least a third of the vote cast in the first round for arch-conservative Gaullist candidate Jacques Chirac. For his part, Chirac has committed himself to do everything in his power to unseat Giscard, including assistance to Mitterrand in the runoff. As for Giscard, he would win the election—as he probably will—if the Communists allot him a blank vote of confidence, abstaining in the second round instead of supporting Mitterrand.

On the eve of the 1969 presidential elections, the Young Fabian Society of London published a guidebook addressed to policy-makers, which stated bluntly that no one can understand French politics who believes in the right/left charade. The Fabians—who of course played a leading role in the formation of the European socialist

movement—asserted that the actual split overlapping both majority and opposition is between the proponents of dirigist state policies, called *Colbertistes* after Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the great nation-building industrializer of Louis XIV's reign, and the advocates of local-control, free-enterprise economics.

In the first group, the guide placed Charles de Gaulle, as well as the Communist-run trade-union federation, the CGT, which is the party's major base. They are accurately described as sharing a commitment to advanced science, a strong, centralized state, industrial growth, and opposition to British policies (at that time, notably U.K. entry into the Common Market). On the other side are classed the Socialists and environmentalists, together with leading figures of the majority, such as Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber.

These fundamental differences persist today. Moreover, they are found within the Gaullist movement itself, where presidential candidate Michel Debré, a prominent advocate of high-technology capitalist growth, and former prime minister under de Gaulle, opposes Gaullist RPR party candidate Chirac, whose campaign against the "omnipresence of the state" and for free enterprise make him a natural ally of the libertarian Mitterrand.

As a nation, France was built up by the dirigists, from Charlemagne to Louis XI's creation of the first great republic in the mid-15th century. This tradition was

exported to the New World, where, under Hamilton and others, it became known as the American System.

The British failure to crush the American Revolution prompted new, devious means to impose their anti-industrial, colonial policies through the creation of Jacobin movements like the Socialist International. Mitterrand today, with his love of the "natural environment" and abhorrence of nuclear power, holds precisely the views of the British aristocrat fighting American development. Giscard, by contrast, prides himself on a distant kinship with Admiral d'Estaing, a prime associate of General Lafayette in the French army that helped secure the success of the American Revolution.

Building Europe

Labeled a "monarch" by his opponents, President Giscard has assumed total responsibility for France's foreign policy, in the tradition of de Gaulle. Last week's announcement of a joint Franco-German \$6 billion bond issue marked a new stage in the evolution of the European Monetary System founded by Giscard and his friend Helmut Schmidt in 1978-79. Phase One of the system successfully stabilized the currency markets in the face of extreme dollar turbulence. Phase Two is designed to pull the world out of its economic depression by issuing gold-backed long-term credits both for domestic European programs and large-scale exports to the developing sector, including nuclear energy technology. Giscard above all is proud of the emerging Franco-German "superpower" and of his policy of dialogue with the Soviet Union which, he has stated, has furthered peace and progress.



Valéry Giscard d'Estaing

After the runoff, it is believed that a new prime minister will be brought into office, one, it is hoped, without the monetarist proclivities of the current premier, Raymond Barre, who has done a lot to tarnish the real accomplishments of Giscard's administration. Giscard this month announced a program of increased investment in high-technology industries to complete his mammoth nuclear construction program, and indicated that from now on he would take the reins of economic policy.

The Cheminade factor

The most forceful intellectual and political representative of the Colbertiste tradition in France today is Jacques Cheminade, a close associate of National Democratic Policy Committee advisory board chairman Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. The 40-year-old Cheminade has led an eight-month campaign in the elections to

revive the American System of political economy. First Secretary of the small European Labor Party, he has used his training as a state administrator (he is currently on leave from his post in the export division of the finance ministry) and his extensive economic and historical knowledge to work toward influencing both the electoral strategy and the economic policy of the French government.

In many ways, the Cheminade campaign has served as a rudder—small and seemingly not very significant, yet capable of steering a large ship in hidden ways. Certainly the sudden aggressiveness with which Giscard and his associates began to attack the Socialist economic program in the past three weeks, with particular emphasis on the disastrous consequences of a Socialist-proposed moratorium on nuclear construction, were directly inspired by the Cheminade group. And many observers drew a connection between Cheminade, who is the most outspoken enemy of monetarism in France, and Giscard's unprecedented March 10 blast against the "extraordinarily dangerous" monetarist policies of Margaret Thatcher and elements within the Reagan administration. Giscard called the Anglo-American level of interest rates completely unacceptable; his stance consolidated the push for international "interest-rate disarmament" (see Economics).



Jacques Cheminade

Cheminade announced on April 2: "I call upon my partisans and friends to vote for Giscard d'Estaing. Three reasons prescribe that choice: his nuclear policy, his conception of détente, and his commitment to fight monetarism. Moreover, he is in the best position to defeat François Mitterrand, whose candidacy poses the gravest and most immediate danger. Under the present circumstances, a Socialist presidency would effectively mean the proliferation of irrationalist anti-state movements and policies, and the annihilation of our energy program, which stands at the foundation of Frenchmen's standard of living and of our policy of national independence. . . .

"There remains for me to add one essential thing. President Giscard will not acquire the means to win and carry out the policies necessary for the interests of France without rallying Frenchmen to great expectations. We must have a policy of rapid growth and highly skilled employment. Frenchmen are ready to mobilize against the financial interests and the Malthusian policy which provoked the crisis. Today Frenchmen demand an offensive strategy. Nothing is more urgent than a program of technological development to ensure harmony of interests between nations."

The candidates' policy positions

Below is a summary of the major policy positions held by the main candidates running for president in France. The major issues in this election include economic development, nuclear and other energy development, drug legalization, East-West relations, employment, and policies for Middle East peace and development. The positions of current President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing are presented first:

Nuclear energy: Giscard favors continuation of world's most important program to develop nuclear energy, under which 80 percent of electricity production will be generated by nuclear power plants by the year 2000. Includes continued development of fast breeder reactor program; overall, calls for 45 percent of total energy production to come from domestically produced resources, compared with 24 percent in 1973.

Economic development: improve financial situation of firms to allow for more investment; develop research.

Employment: upgrade job skills of youth; reorient aid to the unemployed toward work incentives; encourage departure of immigrant workers; eliminate fiscal obstacles to job creation.

Drugs: no position available; under first term in office, has maintained strict laws governing possession of all drugs including marijuana; law banning favorable presentation of drugs by the media, which has led the government to take the weekly *Libération* to court for violation of the law; Giscard has been endorsed by the French Antidrug Coalition.

East-West relations: "France is the designated interlocutor of the two great superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union"; "I have acted for peace, and if I am re-elected I will continue to act for peace"; Giscard favors resuming grain sales to Soviet Union.

Middle East policy: strongly opposes Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel; favors global settlement involving Palestinians and PLO; seeking East-West accord to cool out Lebanon.

Mitterrand's policies

Nuclear energy: proposes constitutional reform to enable a nuclear energy referendum to be put on the ballot; a halt to nuclear plant construction until results

of referendum are in; opposes fast breeder reactor.

Economic development: boost economic activity through increased consumer goods consumption; decentralize economic planning and development; reduce foreign trade to 20 percent of GNP by 1990.

On decentralization: "There is an excess of centralization of the state. . . . The machine became a means to accelerate production under false pretenses . . . and instead of creating new spaces of freedom, a new, more oppressive system was created. . . . The economic system of the 19th century used the machine to crush man. . . . First in the domain of nuclear energy, which is already producing a formidable centralization."

Employment: increase hiring in public sector; reduce work week to 35 hours; introduce a fifth week a year of paid vacation time; retirement at 60 years for men, 55 years for women.

Drugs: has not come out publicly on the issue; Socialist Party has introduced a bill in the National Assembly calling for decriminalization of marijuana; has been endorsed by Dr. Claude Olivenstein, foremost proponent of decriminalization of all drugs in France.

East-West relations: favors closer relations with China; accuses Giscard of being "a paid errand boy" of Moscow.

Middle East policy: Mitterrand supports Camp David accord; close to Moshe Dayan faction in Israel; seeks direct French military intervention in Lebanon to set up French "Vietnam."

Chirac's policies

Nuclear energy: give priority to "new energies"; continued development of nuclear program and the fast breeder reactor.

Economic development: reduce the "omnipresence" of the state; free enterprise; increased tax deductions for investment.

Employment: free enterprise and reduction of regulations governing layoffs will encourage hiring.

Drugs: no position available; campaign manager Charles Pasqua was head of parliamentary commission in charge of drug problems at the same time that Pasqua was boss of Jean Venturi, alleged by U.S. authorities to be number-one importer of French heroin into the U.S. during 1960s.

East-West relations: "dialogue [with the Soviets] is not an end in itself, when it is destined to fail"; "we must indicate that France would immediately denounce the Helsinki accords, as well as the economic and technological agreements with the Soviet Union" if the Soviets invade Poland.

Middle East policy: no explicit statements on Camp David; favors direct French military involvement in Lebanon; report is circulating in private channels that Libya has helped finance Chirac's campaign.