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## French Presidency

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# Giscard campaigns against Socialists

by Garance Upham Phau

French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing officially announced March 2 that he would seek another seven year term in office. Giscard's principal opponent, François Mitterrand of the Socialist International, had already announced his candidacy and spewed forth his main campaign theme: that Giscard is a "monarch" who must be overthrown. Jacques Chirac of the "Gaullist" RPR is also running to build support for Mitterrand with his attacks on Giscard; Gaullist Michel Debré is opposing him.

To elect Mitterrand, said President Giscard in his campaign kickoff remarks, would mean "goodbye to the stability of the franc and freedom of enterprise. . . . Goodbye to nuclear independence and France's rank in the world."

### At stake in the election

Giscard is stating the implications of a socialist program which would put a brake on industrial growth by channeling credit into crafts and shops only, stop nuclear energy, and bring France back into NATO.

The Socialist perspective for France—if Mitterrand is elected—is a return to the heyday of the Fourth Republic, when the nation was a virtual satrapy of Britain.

Giscard stressed that the Socialists "remain the same, with the same leaders who have fought relentlessly since 1958 against the Fifth Republic."

Created by General Charles de Gaulle, the Fifth Republic gave France a strong republican constitution, with a presidential system that makes it perhaps the most stable nation in Europe. The Fifth Republic gave France a nuclear development program that is the world's largest relative to its gross national product, and made it the world's third-ranking nuclear power militarily.

### Foreign policy key

President Giscard has stated his conviction that France's foreign policy is at stake in the election—thus

challenging Gaullist RPR Party candidate Jacques Chirac's contention that Giscard's dialogue with Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev is proceeding from a position of weakness.

Giscard came under fire from both Chirac and Mitterrand when he visited Warsaw last spring to meet Brezhnev to seek a resolution of the Afghanistan crisis.

"France wants to be and must be a partner in peace," the French president told *Figaro* magazine in an interview published this week. "I know that when one uses the word peace, some people understand it as a reference to experiences such as Munich—as resignation and national abandonment.

"But this is not what it is," Giscard continued. "The search for peace consists of studying all possibilities for resolution of crisis before they reach catastrophe. . . . Firmness consists in leading a high level policy, by clearly defining its objectives, and by providing oneself with the appropriate means of action."

Reasserting his complete support for and cooperation with West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, Giscard attacked the "neutralist trend" in Western Europe, a hit at Socialist International Chairman Willy Brandt, who has been pushing for total disarmament as a means of destabilizing the Schmidt government.

### Domestic troubles

The high rate of youth unemployment is a factor that has hurt the president. With this in mind, Giscard has relegated Prime Minister Raymond Barre, an advocate of tight credit and austerity, to the back seat—with orders to hold his tongue—until after the election is over.

A major unanswered question is whether candidate Georges Marchais's Communist Party will give its votes to Mitterrand in the expected runoff against Giscard, or will abstain. Close to the Soviet leadership, the Communist Party knows the Kremlin's preference for the foreign policies of Giscard, but the deteriorating economic situation does weigh against the president.

The dispute between the Socialists and Communists has recently been exacerbated with Marchais's denunciations of Mitterrand for backing the ecology movement and supporting legalized marijuana.

Marchais has upped the ante by demanding that Mitterrand pledge himself to putting Communists into ministerial posts in exchange for the party's 20 percent share of the nation's vote.

President Giscard has fueled the conflict by remarking that Mitterrand would either "govern with the Communists" or would "betray their voters after having benefited from their votes." This would mean chaotic strikes by Communist Party unions. Hence, says Giscard, his reelection offers the "only alternative" to rule by "the party of disorder and consequent doom."