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JPRS L/9593

9 March 1981

West Europe Report

(FOUO 14/81)

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COUNTRY SECTION

FRANCE

GISCARD ACCUSED OF 'WANTING TO BE KING'

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 2 Feb 81 pp 21-25

[Article by Georges Mamy with the collaboration of Pierre-Marie Doutréland and Alain Chouffan: "The Man Who Wanted To Be King--Georges Mamy Tells How the Sweater-Clad Candidate of Seven Years Ago Has Been Transformed Into a Finicky Monarch Whose Vain Behavior in Matters of Protocol Does Not Make His Ministers or Frenchmen Laugh Any More"]

[Text] The laughing is over. A few years ago, at the first signs of the sickness, people spoke ironically about the nasty habits in matters of protocol and the imitation "ancien regime" with which Valéry Giscard d'Estaing spiced up his style. After seven years this is no longer funny and now the Giscardian Republic's monarchical bent is being treated very seriously. At least three recent works--those by Roger-Gerard Schwartzberg, Thomas Ferenczi and Pierre Boutang--revolve around this theme. Articles and studies taking their cue from this neo-royalty--which, for a Roger Philippe de Saint-Robert, is nothing less than "fascism with a liberal face"--are increasing in newspapers and magazines.

The foreign press is joining in the chorus. Already in December 1978 the serious-minded English ECONOMIST had come out with a description of "the last emperor of Europe," but his portrait was done with a certain amount of indulgence. But it came back to the subject on 6 December 1980--"The Power of Giscard"--this time with headlines about the diamond affair from LE CANARD ENCHAINE and LE MONDE illustrated on its cover. The 4 December issue of the German STERN discussed the "arrogant management" of this "reign" under the title "Like God in France." On 5 January the rightist Spanish CAMBIO 16 mixed the Basque quarrel into its criticisms, headlining its editorial "L'ETA [Basque Fatherland and Liberty Group], c'est moi," set off by a cartoon of Giscard in the process of examining a diamond with a jeweller's magnifying glass. After all, it has been a long time since the American press came out and reported all the rumors, gossip, and bits of news, sometimes true, often unverifiable, which made the rounds in France--not all of them were in writing--and which fashioned the image of a chief of state transformed little by little into a willful monarch, a playful autocrat in some eyes, a stuffy bourgeois for others.

In 1974 the average Frenchman would have been astonished if you had ventured to predict that the grand young man who worked so hard at being unconventional in a

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well-mannered way was to have such propensities. "Giscard d'Estaing will give the inauguration ceremonies a less stilted style," announced the issue of LE MONDE dated 24 May. In fact, the newly elected president got off at Clemenceau Square that appointed Friday so as to arrive at the Elysee Palace on foot. What a change! A little later, still on foot and dressed in a suit, he was to go back up the Champs Elysees from George V to the Etoile. People were ecstatic. And--a charming touch--all the papers reported that all along Marigny Avenue two voices had called out "Daddy!" The president's two daughters, Valerie-Anne and Jacinthe, were "passing that way" on their bicycles, dressed--with such simplicity!--in "Giscard at the helm" campaign T-shirts. Giscard left his escort and gave his little girls a kiss. Photographers immortalized the moment.

Yes, this style was meant to change everthing. The newly elected president explained this calmly to the press. He wanted to be a "modern president," and going towards the Arch of Triumph on foot was given as an example of the "new formulas" to be sought: "To my way of thinking," he said, "protocol is the way in which a people becomes aware of events which affect them. This new style will not be only the chief of state's but also France's."

In October 1976 Valerie-Anne and Jacinthe, the same two daughters, accompanied Daddy and Momma on the president's official trip to Iran where the shah received them. But the girls were not lost in the crowd at all. Disregarding all republican tradition, they ranked third and fourth in the French protocol, preceding Louis de Guiringaud, minister of foreign affairs at the time, and three ministers, Fourcade, Ornano, and Soisson. In two years--and even less, as we shall see--the sweater and ordinary suit style had given way to a taste for showing off. Mr Jourdain's habit was that of imitating an imaginary gentleman.

Is this too insignificant an episode on which to base a case? It is true that a certain amount of the blame and some of the criticisms currently levelled at Valery Giscard d'Estaing should not be attacking him alone, or even mainly him. In fact it is the Fifth Republic's institutions, under which our country has lived since 1959, which have legally established a system concentrating extensive power in the hands of the president. De Gaulle was the first "sovereign" of this personalized government; who could forget? But Maurice Duverger, in his work entitled "The Republican Monarchy" published at the beginning of 1974, included Pompidou in his analysis. "The second king in the dynasty is hardly concerned with anything except big ups and downs," he wrote, stressing how exceptional the General's charisma had been. Duverger added, however, that "President Pompidou does much more governing than his predecessor and does in in a more authoritarian manner. But the country does not feel like it is being governed." When referring to the power of his principal adviser, did not one speak of the "July monarchy?" So Giscard, the "third king," has in one sense only carried on and increased activity started by the first two. But, apart from the fact that he was not inevitably forced by anything to further aggravate a bad practice open to criticism, Giscard d'Estaing has fewer excuses than did his predecessors, quite simply because he had promised to make efforts to do the opposite. On 17 August 1967, three weeks after De Gaulle's "Long live free Quebec!" at Montreal, did not Giscard--then out of power--say: "The distressing thing is the fear that the solitary exercise of power, if it were to become the rule, does not prepare France itself to calmly take on the broadening of ideas and national consensus"?

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So he arrived in the Elysee with the desire to be "different." He had already played the accordion in public, competed in a soccer game, discovered the metro, and shown himself in a sweater. It only remained for him to prove that he was a really "progressive conservative," a genuine disciple of de Tocqueville, in short, a modern man. Shaking hands with prisoners in the Lyon prison, reducing the voting age to 18 and several other gestures went in this direction. But the accumulation of gimmicks quickly raised eyebrows. Having four garbage collectors over to breakfast at the Elysee at 0630 was not in the best of taste. Adopting a "presidential insignia" (the lictor's bundle, seal of the Republic of 1792) was even more surprising: his predecessors certainly used an "insignia"--the cross of Lorraine for De Gaulle, his initials for Pompidou--but only for the pennant on their official car. As for Giscard, he had it added to the flag on the Elysee front wall under the pretext that it shows if the chief of state is there. Should not the flag itself, the symbol of the republic, be enough?

Peyrefitte's Blunder

Then there was the change in tempo of "La Marseillaise," the "departure tune" which had accompanied Giscard's election campaign and was adopted as his personal anthem, and there was the military troops parade from the Bastille to Republique on 14 July 1974, and so on. People who tend to complain only ventured to say that these gestures, these more or less symbolic little effects, were sacrificing what was important for what was incidental and that not enough attention was being paid at that time to the inflationary threat.

Only starting with the second half of 1975 was a gradual change seen in the style and behavior of the new president. Certainly there had very quickly been many rumors about the private life of the "young and dynamic" man. People would readily have chalked them up to his justifiably rejecting narrow conventionality. Now people are starting to discover Giscard's strange but imperious taste for the 18th century, and particularly for Louis XV, to whom he wanted very much to establish a blood tie.

At least one man was aware of this quirk: Alain Peyrefitte. As new minister of culture he had been asked to lunch in March 1974 at the Finance Ministry offices and was a little surprised to find Pierre Gaxotte there. Giscard announced that he thought it was a "scandal" that the reign of Louis XV, "the greatest king of France," had sunk into oblivion. Since the tricentennial of that sovereign's death was coming up, he wanted an exhibition on everything connected with the monarch to be organized. Gaxotte was only there to provide support. But Peyrefitte, who at the time was unaware of the finance minister's and future president's claims of descent, retorted that in his eyes Louis XV was the worst and least loved of the 40 kings who have made France, "and rightly so!" The occasion was cut short: Pompidou died, the exhibition was deferred and held later, the theme being "The Century of Louis XV" which also included 1789.

But Valery Giscard d'Estaing pursued his idea himself. He got hold of several items from that exhibition--furniture and art works--which he later had put in the Elysee. This was the case with the set of sculptures representing Louis XV and LaPompadour at Vertumnus and Pomona--set up in the foyer as well as the portrait of Louis XV painted in Van Loo's workshop.

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Ah, that portrait. Giscard is so proud of it that he does not miss an opportunity to tell his visitors about it. It was like that on 15 July 1976. That day he was receiving the president of the republic of Seychelles, James Mancham, along with two of his ministers. Four Frenchmen were present. When the honored guest rested his glance on the monarch's features, the chief of state leaped at the opportunity to explain the reasons for the portrait's presence there, in particular that, "Well, as you undoubtedly known Anne-Aymone and myself are descended from Louis XV."

"Oh, it that so!" the other man exclaimed, surprised and interested. "But then we know your cousins." Giscard's face darkened. But James Mancham insisted, "Yes, you French think that Louis XVII died. But that is not the case at all: he found refuge in our country and married one of our women. We know his descendants well: the last ones run a restaurant which is called 'Chez Louis XVII.' Those are your cousins!" And he burst out laughing.

But no lesson seems to have been learned on this score. However, although certain people concede a doubtful ancestry--a fairly standard bastard lineage for all that--for the family of Anne-Aymone, nee de Brantes, that does not apply on the Giscard side. Even the Americans had just let him know it without further ado at that time. When making preparations for his official trip to the United States in May 1976, the French President had had a request made that he be admitted to membership of the "Cincinnati." The Society of the Cincinnati, a very exclusive one, includes only descendants of families who played a distinguished role in the War for Independence in the 19th century. And a certain Admiral/Count Charles-Hector d'Estaing--descended, it is said, from a sergeant-at-arms (Dieudonne) who saved King Philip Augustus from death during the Battle of Bouvines (1214)--played a very courageous part in that War for Independence. Later on this man, a constitutional monarchist and freemason who was nicknamed "Tin Platter" by his adversaries, was to be guillotined: though he was in favor of the [French] Revolution, nevertheless he stood up for the queen which was his undoing. In short, the role of this d'Estaing in the Americas was in no way questioned. But everyone over there knew that all the Giscard had done was to "pick up" this escheated title in 1922 without having any blood tie with the admiral. The French President, however, insisted on the request to the point of asking to be admitted as a member for his lifetime, him alone, not transferable to his descendants. He was refused. Since, however, the business was becoming embarrassing, the Society magnanimously consented to make him an "honorary" member--not on a personal basis at all, but rather in his capacity as representative of France which, itself, had played a very "distinguished" role in the War for Independent. People started to talk about "foolishness."

This upsurge of aristocratic behavior also surprised everyone because on 27 January 1975 the president of the Republic had decided that from that time on titles of nobility of visitors to the Elysee would no longer be used except for the Count of Paris and Prince Napoleon. Even some people in the Almanach de Gotha felt this measure was small-minded.

But something else--what was it?--was happening between the summers of 1975 and 1976 which brought Valery Giscard d'Estaing back to his original elitism. Here as well one witness was less surprised than others. This was Alexander Sanguinetti who already in February 1974 was telling about a conversation during which Giscard

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had said, just as if it were the most natural thing in the world, that a country's government ought to be the business of "a dozen or so persons who know what is what." Since Giscard gave the Liberal Empire between 1860 and 1870 as an example, "Sanguin" made the observation to him (as Sanguinette tells it) that since that time there has been excessive industrialization, the growth of Marxism, the working class, and so on. But he does not think he rattled Giscard.

Chamson Without His Green Coat

Besides, had Giscard really changed deep down inside when during the summer of 1974 he was making a number of youthful innovations? One incident gives cause to doubt it. Perhaps people remember that he had banned cutaways from his investiture ceremony; everyone was to wear suits. However, one of the people taking part hesitated. The sash of grand master of the Legion d'Honneur--which he refused to slip on around his neck--was to be presented to him in its case by Andre Chamson who was replacing Admiral Cabanier, grand chancellor of the order, who was ill. But the venerable, Chamson, then 74, is a member of the Academie Francaise and therefore wears a green coat, make no mistake about that! However, the morning of the ceremony the orders were the same for everyone, and the writer had dressed in gray like everyone else. But the telephone rang. It was the chief of protocol from the Elysee who amid his many efforts to gain Chamson's good will conveyed that in any event the president wished Mr Chamson to change back into his green coat. The member of the academy complied. The telephone rang again. Again it was the chief of protocol..."Oh, no! Do not tell me that I have to change again for this young man. If that is what it is, I am not coming!" and he hung up. Ring! The chief of protocol, embarrassed, insisted. And in the end Andre Chamson was at the Elysee in a suit.

So his touchiness about protocol was incubating. The devastation that it caused is found throughout 1976, and since then it has kept gaining ground like the hives. A vain itch of the president, it is however more than just that. It interfered with politics. It supports or covers up his selfish interests despite being made to look like the "sovereign's" right, need or privilege. It is even to be feared that it modifies certain government decisions.

When Giscard, contrary to all expectations, suddenly curbed the fervent regionalism of his own friends and Jean Lecanuet's, a minister explained it by saying "He had the instincts of Louis XV," without meaning any mischief. Giscard was a de Tocqueville pluralist to start with, but turned out to be a Bourbon-style centralist. But that was not the worst. Fanatical changes took place. People learned that the ritual of official hunts--which will come up again--had been changed: there were tables with tablecloths, chairs and all the trimmings for an outdoor luncheon which his predecessors had not required. Giscard presided over several meetings held to work on changing the handwriting on menus, which had been unchanged since the days of Fallieres (1906-1913).. He had "The March of the King's Guards" played, he had a new coat of arms made up by the prince of La Tour d'Auvergne-Lauraguais, and so on.

And guests at an Elysee dinner on 26 May 1976 verified what all of Paris was already talking about. On that day Valery Giscard d'Estaing was hosting Imelda Marcos, the wife of the president of the Philippines and an important political

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figure in her own right, at his table, and he had himself served first. Of course the old monarchs had their meals alone. But De Gaulle and Pompidou had themselves served last, as is the French custom, except at ceremonial receptions when the host is served at the same time as his counterpart, the chief of state guest. As for Giscard, thinking he was respecting his "office" that way, had himself served first even during private dinners and even before ladies.

The Luynes, who have some reason to think they are of better "birth" than the Giscards, could not get over this nouveau riche behavior. They were invited to Authon for an "intimate" luncheon--just the two couples--and they watched as two servants served Giscard first, then Anne-Aymone, and only then the duchess as the third, and finally the duke. There were to be stories about the same misfortune occurring in the winter of 1980 at another (unidentified) ducal couple, with as a bonus Henri Giscard d'Estaing, the eldest son who is more and more the dauphin, being put into third place before the duchess. Another example of the importance the king attaches to good old French gallantry: Jacqueline Nebout, the only woman at a political luncheon, found herself relegated to the bottom of the table and was only served last, the excuse being that she was there in her capacity as secretary general of a political party (the Radicals). And then there is the "hole," the space opposite the president of the republic left empty when none of the individuals present is of his rank. This is a practice in which De Gaulle never engaged. Yves Guena, along with others, was able to say, "I was beside the hole."

Four Chairs and Two Armchairs

Even Margaret Thatcher at the time of her visit was only served after our "sovereign." She was a woman, of course, but she was "only" prime minister. The English press was quite shocked at this and an issue of NOW, the sale of which Jimmy Goldsmith banned in France, reported this unseemly behavior which was falsely attributed to right-thinking protocol. At the dinner hosted by the French in India, Henri was served before Indira Gandhi, she also being "only" prime minister. In Peking Jacinthe came ahead of Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Francois Poncet on the protocol list. On another level, people were indignant and joked about "official" or "semi-official" missions inappropriately entrusted to Anne-Aymone, from the Joan of Arc celebration in 1975 in Orleans to her recent trip to Egypt.

These pretentious stupidities can be laughed at. In fact a minister who is a regular at these meals made this observation: "This conduct, thank God, carries within itself its own punishment; the president, who is served first, has in fact to wait for the others to be served in turn. Therefore he is condemned to always eating cold food."

Perhaps it will be said that these are fairly insignificant details. But is it possible to exhibit this kind of behavior in 1981 without it being puzzling and perhaps disquieting?

And would the job, its surroundings, its isolation and the weight of its responsibilities inevitably lead to such bad habits?

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"We will see if Mitterrand is not just as much like a monarch as Giscard," Jacques Chirac flung out one day. But he added, "After all, De Gaulle was like that: cynical, haughty, and pitiless. But you could talk to him. Giscard is trying harder and harder to imitate De Gaulle, but you cannot even talk to Giscard."

These stories of inappropriately taking precedence are bound to lead to trouble sooner or later. Along these lines they played a role in accelerating the Giscard-Chirac split. The Chiracs, invited to the fort at Bregancon for Pentecost weekend in 1976, found themselves there at the same time as the president's ski instructor and his wife, and all four were put in ordinary chairs while the presidential couple had the use of armchairs. Whose pride would have tolerated that?

But this "prince" who is surrounded by the kinds of defenses authority can provide, taking pride in his appearance and position, and creating silence around him, does he at least make significant use of his extraordinary power? History shows us several "great men" who in this way were able to help artists of their time, men of the Renaissance, of the 18th century itself, or Louis II of Bavaria in the 19th century. De Gaulle via Malraux had Chagall. Pompidou liked Vasarely, Agam, deStael, Soulages, and others. As for Valery Giscard d'Estaing, alas, when he had the good impulse to want to commission a portrait of De Gaulle, he resorted to the pretentiousness of Chapelain-Midy. And his assistants, while they are exaggerating about his bad taste, neglect contemporary artists and favor the 19th century. Worse than that, they refused one by one legal gifts (gifts donated as tax payments) from the families of Alexander Calder and Max Ennst.

No, aside from his political duties, it is his glory, his pleasures, his personal interests and those of his family with which Giscard is occupied. It has been said that he has searches made for portraits of genuine d'Estaings. He has tried to buy the portrait of himself as Louis XV painted by Christian Gaillard for the cover of Jean-Michel Royer's patchwork-quilt of a book, "A la maniere d'Un." Giscard is constantly striking a pose. When he returned to Orly from an "incognito" trip to Chanonat, a photographer was there. When Reagan telephoned on the day of his inauguration another photographer was there, ordered of course. He keeps an eye on everything, instructs journalists who he thinks are won over to his cause, and so on.

For "Charities"

And he hunts. In fact he goes hunting more and more, sometimes taking off from the Elysee during the week to go shooting at Rambouillet, Chambord, Marly, or in Sologne. The day after the Copernic Street attack he was out on the Count of Beaumont's hunting grounds in Alsace. At Authon--under strict surveillance by members of the Gendarmerie Mobile who, weapons in hand, turn back anyone out walking who looks like they are heading for the L'Etoile area--the secondary road maintained by the department which runs alongside the property is blocked off when his lordship is hunting. Without advance notice. Without sanction from a municipal by-law or order of the prefect. The same thing at Marly-le-Roi. He has hunted in central Europe and in Africa, accumulating trophies of "big ones" (bears, elephants). Even hunters refer to this hunting mania unsympathetically: "He hunts to kill." And this is not respectable, it seems.

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Also enormous "displays of game" are regularly brought to the Elysee. "This game is sold for Mrs Giscard d'Estaing's charities," you are told without being convinced. Other presidents had their charities, which did not expect to receive that kind of a take. Besides, the Elysee's budget is generous, and secret funds, it is said, make it healthier still.

It seems that because of "charities" the custom of presenting the "questa" (baskets of ham, sausage and cheese) has been done away with. The "questa" was presented every two years by the representatives of the council of the Adnorra valleys who came to show allegiance to their joint sovereign, the French president. Now they hand over a check. For "charities." The previous presidents had the custom of distributing those tasty goods to the staff of the Elysee. The staff found that nice and misses the tradition.

So the suspicion arises that these rich "lords" might actually be miserly and stingy like the worst nouveau riche petty bourgeois. Giscard went 15 years without paying his dues to the ENA [National School of Administration] Alumni Association before the treasurer decided in 1968 to exempt him, because he was going to be forced to kick him out. The episode is of little interest. But it is closely akin to memories of Valery's friends during adolescence.

Here is testimony that is clearer and with more substance. Two or three times a year at Authon Valery Giscard d'Estaing engages about 20 farmers from the village as beaters for hunting. He pays them each 50 francs for the day. If they want to carry off a pheasant in the evening they are docked 25 francs. If they would rather have a hare, that is 50 francs, the cost of their whole day. In 15 years these beaters have only been invited one time to have an aperitif in the chateau courtyard.

While we are on the subject of the L'Etoile chateau at Authon in Loir-et-Cher, this is the time to start clarifying a few things. In a statement made to LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in 1976, Giscard asserted that this property belonged to his wife who had bought it from one of her aunts. The actual situation, as verified from public property records, is quite different:

- 1.-The property of the L'Etoile chateau, which currently covers 505 hectares and 90 ares, is registered as belonging to Giscard and his wife together.
- 2.-The president also owns in his own name: the La Bressiliere mill (27 hectares), bought in 1975 from Louis Chauvelon, the mayor of Authon; the La Goudonniere vineyards (62 ares); and Vaunas Wood (10 hectares) which is still providing the seller with a lifetime annuity.
- 3.-Anne-Aymone Giscard d'Estaing owns in her own name a piece of land one hectare and 26 ares in size, which was bought in 1968 from Armandine Herve, who is still living at the age of 82 and receives about 500 francs a month from the president's wife as a lifetime annuity.

Therefore, Valery Giscard 'Estaing is the sole or joint owner of 542 hectares. At the time of the first purchase in 1964 the property covered 453 hectares. It went from 455 hectares in 1966 to 487 in 1970 to 505.90 in 1972. It reached its present area in 1975.

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Scarcely two kilometers away as the crow flies, in the northern part of the commune, are the 661 hectares of the Fresne chateau, the property of Paul Sauvage de Brantes, Anne-Aymone's brother. People in the area say that Paul does not have much of a talent for farming.

No Answer from the President's Wife

At any rate the property is not all under cultivation and the owner has obvious need of ready cash. So for 15 years he has been selling off little pieces of land from time to time. In 1977, for example, he wanted to sell a sizable farm to its tenant farmer. SAFER [Real Estate and Rural Development Company] went along with that and wrote to the president's wife to ask her to join with it in setting up an agricultural property group, the system introduced by Giscardian agriculture specialists as the experimental program to be expanded. Strangely, SAFER received no answer. But at the last moment Paul de Brantes took his farm off the market: Anne-Aymone had intervened so that the family property would not be broken up. A few months ago, Paul put the whole Fresne property up for sale through an agency in the southwest. Buyers came forward: one for the forest, and SAFER for the fields (at 20,000 francs a hectare). But nobody wanted the chateau on the sale of which the owner had put only one condition: that it not be sold to an African. And then suddenly at the end of the year the whole thing was again taken off the market. In the area there was not the slightest doubt why: Giscard did not want to run the risk of causing the slightest fuss and it was he who put everything on ice. We will see what happens after the presidential election.

Bssides, who apart from Giscard and his relations could have purchase it? "Since he has settled at Authon, all the nobility and gentry in the area have been holding their heads up high again," people say at the Loir-et-Cher farmer's union. La Chauviniere chateau in Boulay, the neighboring commune, was bought on 7 July 1980 by Prince Guy de Faucigny-Lucinge; Le Hetre chateau, also nearby, was acquired by the Clermont-Tonnerres. They are cousins. At Le Temple a member of the De Talance family, farmer-owner of 230 hectares who raises pheasants and partridges commercially, was authorized by the committee on concurrent holdings to get a 70-hectare piece of land back which had been allocated to a farmer who supported 200 farm workers.

So the ill will is spreading. "By bidding for everything being sold he is making prices go up," groan the farmers, who know that the notary, who deals with real estate sales, has in fact had instructions along those lines. "We ourselves cannot buy any longer. So we do not have enough land." However, they do not even seem to know that the Giscard's themselves are buying land even beyond the country's frontiers: in Greece, at any rate, and perhaps elsewhere.

But how do you reach Anne-Aymone Giscard d'Estaing's heart who must, with an easy mind, consider herself as the "equal" of every farmer. There is a reason for this: just like them, she is registered at the Loir-et-Cher Farmer's Mutual, as an agricultural farmer of about 50 hectares of the L'Etoile property. She pays her contributions as a farmer, of course. Consequently, she is entitled to all kinds of government assistance which are dispensed as compensatory farmer income; she was awarded 1,200 francs in 1974, for example. And when she is old enough

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she will have the right to a farmer's pension currently estimated at 12,000 francs per year. She will even be able to claim annuity compensation for leaving the business.

The Ambitions of "Riton"

We should also talk about the son "Riton," Henri Giscard d'Estaing, 24 years old. Within shooting distance of the area we have been discussing, between Marchenois and Vendome, he is preparing, as he quite simply says, to be "the youngest deputy in France," with the help of the prefect Charles-Noel Hardy, Giscard's former cabinet member in the Finance Ministry. He has launched a newspaper, the LOIR-ET-CHER HEBDO, which must have already cost a billion old francs. Last November he managed to be present at 18 opening ceremonies in Vendome during a single Balzac Fortnight, whose actual cost has been estimated at 54 million old francs (rather than the 12 million which was reported). He is a subject that will merit further discussion, unless some obstacle gets in his way. The current centrist-UDF deputy for Vendome, Jean Desaulis, who Henri and his family are counting on sacrificing, remains to this day completely determined to stand for office in 1983. But will he be able to hold out?

On 22 January at the Academie Francaise, when the speeches welcoming Marguerite Yourcenar as a new member were coming to an end, the entire gathering--this happened spontaneously--rose to applaud. Except for Valery and Anny-Aymone Giscard d'Estaing. As if homage were being paid them, or as if they were something other than common people, common people meaning even members of the academy.

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COUNTRY SECTION

FRANCE

POLL: GISCARD SHOWS SLIGHT GAIN IN FIRST ROUND

Paris PARIS MATCH in French 13 Feb 81 pp 40-41

[14th PARIS MATCH Public Opinion Poll]

[Text] Beginning this month, as the competition grows more intense, PARIS MATCH will publish its presidential election public opinion poll twice monthly. For the second ballot, the current poll shows that while positions have not changed on the Mitterrand/Giscard matchup, if Chirac were a majority candidate against the socialist leader, he would lose a point. On the first ballot, Giscard gains points no matter who the other candidates are, which would apparently hurt Michel Debre. Among the opposition, Mitterrand is regaining some ground, while Marchais is consolidating his position. This poll was made after the televised oaths of Valery Giscard, Marie-France Garaud and Michel Crepeau, but before Chirac officially declared himself. It should be noted that on the first ballot, the mayor of Paris would achieve his best score if he were the only Gaullist representative and his worst if Michel Debre and Marie-France Garaud hold steady. However, according to our surveys, he has dropped when compared with the January poll. Finally, one out of every two voters currently believes that Jacques Chirac is right to declare his candidacy. Some 12 percent believe he has a chance of winning. On the other hand, one voter out of three believes he has little chance. The net decline of Michel Debre and a close analysis of responses concerning the candidacy of Jacques Chirac would tend to show that the majority voters are more and more inclined to vote "yes" from the very first ballot.

First Ballot: Giscard With the Three Gaullists

If the presidential election were held today and the following candidates were on the first ballot, which one of them would you vote for in each of the six cases below?

	1981		Out of 100 supporters			
	January	February	PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Valery Giscard d'Estaing	28	31	1	4	31	89
Francois Mitterrand	24	24.5	5	84	1	1
Georges Marchais	16	17	92	-	-	-
Jacques Chirac	11	10	1	2	56	2
Michel Debre	6	2.5	1	-	6	4

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(cont.)

Marie-France Garaud	4	4.5	-	2	4	3
1 ecologist candidate	6	7	-	5	2	1
1 extreme left candidate	3	2	-	1	-	-
1 extreme right candidate	1	0.5	-	-	-	-
Michel Crepeau	1	1	-	2	-	-
No response	11	14	4	8	5	5
Abstentions	5	8	1	2	2	2

- 1 Socialist Party
- 2 Rally for the Republic
- 3 French Democratic Union

If Debre Drops Out

	1981		Out of 100 supporters			
	January	February	PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Valery Giscard d'Estaing	30	31	1	4	31	91
Francois Mitterrand	25	25	6	84	1	1
Georges Marchais	16	17	91	1	-	-
Jacques Chirac	13	11	1	2	61	4
Marie-France Garaud	5	5	-	2	4	3
1 ecologist candidate	6	7	-	4	2	1
1 extreme left candidate	3	2	-	1	-	-
1 extreme right candidate	1	1	-	-	-	-
Michel Crepeau	1	1	-	-	-	-
No response	13	14	4	8	5	4
Abstentions	5	8	1	2	2	2

Chirac As Sole Gaullist Candidate

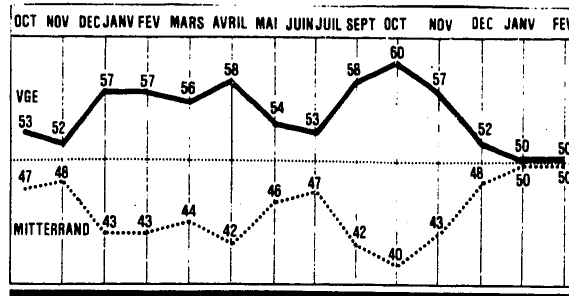
	1981		Out of 100 supporters			
	January	February	PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Valery Giscard d'Estaing	31	33	1	4	34	93
Francois Mitterrand	26	26	6	86	1	1
Georges Marchais	17	17	92	1	-	-
Jacques Chirac	13	12	1	2	61	5
1 ecologist candidate	8	8	-	4	3	1
1 extreme left candidate	3	2	-	1	-	-
1 extreme right candidate	1	1	-	-	-	-
Michel Crepeau	1	1	-	2	1	-
No response	13	15	4	8	6	4
Abstentions	6	9	1	2	2	3

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Second Ballot: Giscard and Mitterrand on an Equal Footing

If, on the second ballot, the candidates who won on the first ballot were the following, for which one of them would you vote?

	1981		Out of 100 supporters			
	January	February	PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Valery Giscard d'Estaing	50	50	4	5	91	99
Francois Mitterrand	50	50	96	96	9	1
No response	11	13	16	4	10	1
Abstentions	14	15	20	2	8	2



Mitterrand Beats Chirac

	1981		Out of 100 supporters			
	January	February	PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Jacques Chirac	40	39	6	4	93	76
Francois Mitterrand	60	61	94	96	7	24
No response	16	17	17	3	11	18
Abstentions	16	18	19	3	6	14

Over 20 Percent Undecided

Is your mind made up?

	Overall	Out of 100 supporters			
		PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Yes	68	70	82	70	77
No	20	21	14	20	17
Do not know	12	9	4	10	6

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Instructions on Second Ballot

If your candidate cannot be listed on the second ballot, will you follow the instructions he gives at that time?

	Overall	Out of 100 supporters			
		PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Yes, definitely	29%	37	33	34	38
Yes, probably	24%	31	24	32	26
No, probably not	13%	9	16	16	15
No, certainly not	13%	12	11	8	12
Do not know	21%	11	16	10	9

Do You Approve of Chirac's Candidacy?

It is generally thought that Jacques Chirac will be a candidate in this presidential election. Do you believe he is right to be a candidate?

	Overall	Out of 100 supporters			
		PC	PS	RPR	UDF
Yes	46	38	41	77	54
No	30	39	40	14	33
Do not know	24	23	19	9	13

If Yes, Why?

It is normal for the RPR to have a candidate in the presidential election.	51
He is the best representative of the Gaullist family.	15
He strengthens the chances of the majority.	13
He is in the best position to win.	12
Do not know	9

If No, Why?

He divides the Gaullist family.	21
He favors the election of a leftist candidate.	9
He should wait for the following presidential election.	9
He has little chance of being elected.	52
Do not know	9

The results given here are from a poll conducted on 29,30 and 31 January 1981, using a national sampling of 1,000 representing the French population over the age of 18. The sampling was set up using the quota method. The following criteria were taken into account: sex, age, profession of the head of the family, category of the commune, region (Z, e, a, t). Attention is drawn to the following points: Inasmuch as the election will not take place for 3 months, the country is not in the real psychological and political situation of a presidential election. Results for all the French people must be interpreted in the light of this remark. Concerning results analyzed by political sympathy (determined by the following question:

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"To what political grouping or party do you feel the closest? the RPR, UDF, PS, MGR [presumably Revolutionary Leftist Movement], PC, extreme right, extreme left, ecologist?") Since the reference samplings were by definition limited compared with the overall sampling of the French people, the statistical margin of error is large. One must therefore retain only the trend and not the absolute value of the figures. This remark is a general one and applies to all polls of this type.

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COUNTRY SECTION

FRANCE

CRITICISM OF GISCARD'S FOREIGN POLICIES REVIEWED

Paris VALEURS ACTUELLES in French 2 Feb 81 pp 19-20

[Article by Francois Lebrette]

[Text] "To assemble in a meeting all of the countries which, right or wrong, are accused or suspected of interfering in Afghanistan's domestic affairs." Spectacular, this proposal, issued over television on 27 January by the president of the republic, appears as the logical outcome of a diplomatic ballet begun 6 months ago.

Let us review the various stages.

On 14 May 1980, the pro-Soviet government of Kabul proposed to Iran and Pakistan "bilateral negotiations" aimed at ending "armed and any other form of interference" in Afghanistan's affairs; the Soviet Union and the United States were to guarantee the agreement. In plain language: the international community would recognize the Kabul regime and abandon all Afghan resisters, excluded from the negotiations, to their fate.

On 15 May, the member countries of the Warsaw Pact, meeting in the Polish capital called for a "world conference" to eliminate "hotbeds of international tension." According to Soviet Foreign Affairs Minister Gromyko, it was necessary to have a meeting of the "principal nations" by regions; a conference on Afghanistan would naturally be included in this framework. French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean Francois-Poncet immediately declares that this proposal must be studied "seriously" and "discussed with its authors."

On 19 May, Giscard d'Estaing met with the "principal author," Leonid Brezhnev in Warsaw. He conveyed the french position to the Soviet official summarized at the end of the meeting as follows:

"My preference is for a summit meeting of the principal countries involved."

His spokesman, Jacques Blot, further stated that such a meeting could not take place before 1981. The answer was then given the next day by Soviet ambassador Tchervonenko in Paris.

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"Interesting proposal."

At the Venice summit meeting on 22 June, Giscard d'Estaing informed his allies of a telegram from Moscow announcing a partial withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. A good-will gesture, the French president thinks. A deception, the CIA asserts, pointing out, on the contrary, an increase in the Russian presence.

However, the significance of the new developments was not underestimated. Last Tuesday, Giscard d'Estaing stated:

"The Soviets have withdrawn some of their forces but, in the last analysis, have not carried out any action aimed at complete disengagement."

Was the summit he was proposing make it possible to relaunch that action? Something new has been added to his proposal: since Moscow would refuse the presence of any Afghan resistance group in such a summit, the Kabul government should by the same terms be excluded. The immediate reaction of an Afghan refugee in Paris:

"This would not be a compensating action but a deception. The pro-Soviet government would be represented by the Soviets and the Afghan people by no one!"

As far as French diplomacy is concerned, the important thing, therefore, is to begin negotiations. Pursuant to a principle which Francois-Poncet outlined the day following the Warsaw summit before the National Assembly:

"There will be only a political conclusion to the crisis."

Mrs Marie-France Garaud considers that attitude the unequivocal acceptance of a fait accompli. On the eve of the speech given by the president of the republic, she made the following statement on Television Station 2 during a program entitled "Putting the Cards on the Table":

"His foreign policy is akin to a strategic withdrawal from positions not prepared in advance. And this generally ends in Bordeaux."

The criticism was aimed as much at the initiatives taken toward Moscow as at France's apparent ultraconservatism in the Chad affair.

"What would we have accomplished in going there?" the president of the republic answered the next day.

There was no question of his committing "the major political error" which would have been involved in intervening "in a country torn by civil war and whose legitimate government would have opposed the entry of French forces."

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It was then a display of force to go along with the a posteriori condemnation of the Libyan intervention and subsequently enter into negotiations. This is what was done on 24 January, with the Libyan minister of information received in Paris.

Was this really the only solution? During the same television program, Giscard d'Estaing incidentally recalled the conditions under which Emperor Bokassa was overthrown in Central Africa:

"Where was he? Where was he? He was in Tripoli."

This was clearly done to point out that France sometimes manages to intervene without the endorsement of the "legitimate government," and even in opposition to it. But, on that occasion, it was a question of overthrowing an arbitrary and, very probably, criminal emperor in absentia. In Chad it would have been necessary to oppose a Libyan armada led by several hundred instructors from the GDR.

To justify France's abstention, the president of the republic and supreme head of the armed forces according to the constitution made the following statement:

"We would have lost tens and hundreds of men."

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COUNTRY SECTION

ITALY

EUROCOMMUNISM 'MORE NECESSARY' IN POLARIZING WORLD

LD191027 Turin LA STAMPA in Italian 17 Feb 81 p 3

[Dispatch by Frane Barbieri: "Eurocommunism: War on Three Fronts"]

[Excerpts] Madrid--Deposed secretary general of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia Gutierrez told me that "there will be a dramatic struggle for Eurocommunism at the coming PCE Congress." However, it will be made dramatic not so much for the inevitable Soviet broadsides as for the internal opposition and--let us admit it--for the state of crisis within Eurocommunism itself. "Either Eurocommunism takes a decisive step forward or it will die," PCE executive committee member Ramon Tamames said. The crisis concerns both substance and methods. The entire concept of Eurocommunism is limited to the formula of socialism within democracy, socialism within freedom and socialism within pluralism. It lacks satisfactory formulations on social and economic forms, on the model of system to which the democratic and pluralist path should lead. There are growing suspicions among communists that the pregalence of pluralist democracy will by no means lead to a revolutionary step beyond capitalism in a socialist direction. Among noncommunists the vague formula prompts suspicions that democracy is regarded merely as a tool for gaining power, since the communists have had to forgo outright revolution.

Strategy

It emerges that the PCE's democratic foreign policy has not been reflected in internal party democracy. Thus Eurocommunism has remained incomplete and unilateral, failing to involve party members in it as an idea and as a form of action. Dynamic deputy mayor of Madrid and prominent economist Ramon Tamames said: "party strategy remains in the secretary general's hands: there is no discussion at an all-party level, and therefore the party is losing its enthusiasm."

The youngest member of the PCE Executive Committee, Tamames suggests that the secretary general be replaced by a collective secretariat (which would still have to be elected by the Central Committee on the basis of various lists presented at the congress, instead of a single list drawn up by the executive committee). Tamames argued as follows: "Looking at the matter calmly, I would say that the concentration of all power in the leadership makes Carrillo a venerable tribal patriarch, so that the whole world believes that the secretary general is the only man in the PCE." He added emphatically

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that "bureaucracy is making the party mediocre; the war veterans and former exiles still hold important posts in the bureaucracy: the party's central organization has not been sufficiently rejuvenated."

Eurocommunism is in a state of crisis as a result of the convergent attack of the Soviets and the confusion within its own ranks. What are the outlooks? I discussed this with Manuel Azcarate, who was the first, while still in exile, to introduce the idea of "a different kind of communism within the framework of the European community," at a PCE meeting in Paris in 1973.

[Question] What is the nature of the crisis of Eurocommunism?

[Answer] The international situation in which the word and concept of Eurocommunism took shape was very different from the present one. Then there was a shining horizon for the European left.

[Question] When and why did this horizon become darker?

[Answer] The basic fault lies with the leftwing forces in France, or rather with the way in which the union was broken.

[Question] Then other reversals followed.

[Answer] We have the very grave international crisis, the return to the cold war, plus the social frustrations and the lack of prospects.

[Question] The problem is whether Eurocommunism is still valid in this new situation.

[Answer] The crisis and tensions are driving toward a swing in the direction of traditional truths. People are again regarding the world as split into two camps. If the United States exerts pressure on one side, the answer lies in support for the other bloc.

[Question] Do you consider it inevitable?

[Answer] No, on the contrary, it is a way of avoiding reality. The world must not be regarded as split into two camps. For us alignment means shutting yourself in a ghetto from which you cannot change things.

[Question] What is the way out of the ghetto?

[Answer] Eurocommunism is in a state of crisis, under pressure of circumstance, but at the same time it is becoming more necessary than before. We cannot deal with the new pressures and tensions in Europe with traditional communist culture. When people began to talk about Eurocommunism the trend barely existed and the word seemed almost ridiculous. Now the situation is justifying the term, because the autonomous Europeanist trend is growing stronger in Europe.

[Question] Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how strong the leftwing forces' role becomes....

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[Answer] Europe's role cannot grow stronger without the leftwing forces as a whole becoming stronger. To achieve this it is necessary to overcome the historical split of the twenties, not through a return to Lenin-Kautsky type debates.

[Question] How can this be achieved?

[Answer] It is the kind of rapprochement which perhaps [former PCI directorate member] Amendola was the first to envisage: a rapprochement between two self-critical approaches to our past, the social democratic and the communist. Thus the situation would make the major guidelines of Eurocommunism emerge.

Old Ideas

[Question] Where do you put the USSR in this framework?

[Answer] The USSR is logically belligerent toward Eurocommunism. Even Kissinger says that a Eurocommunist party is more dangerous than a Stalinist one. The two superpowers are opposed to it. Very specifically, the USSR, not only for ideological reasons but also for political reasons, is opposed to Eurocommunism because it does not include Western Europe in the system of blocs. This has repercussions in eastern Europe too, where progress is being made by the idea of a synthesis between socialism and democracy, as shown by Poland.

[Question] Moscow's "belligerence" is in fact becoming more aggressive and dangerous at the moment.

[Answer] Moscow is exploiting the tendencies toward the return of old ideas and alignments within the communist parties, therefore in some countries we are in the midst of a battle--not only, I would say, for the defense of Eurocommunism, but primarily for the development and extension of the concept.

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COUNTRY SECTION

SPAIN

ELS MAULETS: NEW TERRORIST GROUP OR OUTGROWTH OF ETA

Madrid CAMBIO 16 in Spanish 2 Feb 81 pp 34, 35

[Text] Last 13 January a group, as yet unnamed, kidnaped Luis Suner in Alcira. Suner, according to last year's Treasury lists, is the richest businessman in the country.

The police initially aimed their investigations at the Basque Fatherland and Liberty Group (ETA [p-m]), and even thought that a small independence group that emerged 2 years ago in Valencia and Alicante might be behind the kidnaping.

That group, called "Els Maulets," advocates the armed struggle, and with technical support from some major terrorist organization, perhaps ETA (p-m), could have carried out the kidnaping. Several days later, the police rejected that theory. Nonetheless, CAMBIO 16 wanted to find out who belongs to "Els Maulets," the Valencian ETA, so it wrote this report.

"Els Maulets" consists of a little over two dozen Valencian and Alicantean youths from 18 to 25 years of age. It is an aggressive group that advocates independence.

The members consider the Democratic Center Union (UCD) a neofascist and neocapitalist party. The Spanish Workers Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) disgust them. Only the military wing of the ETA provides them with a certain guarantee of being a national liberation group with clear ideas and weapons always ready to be put to use in the struggle for their ideals.

"Els Maulets" is the Valencian ETA. Its origins date back to the eighteenth century. During the War of Succession between Archduke Karl of Austria and Phillip V of the House of Bourbon, in 1717, the majority of Valencian peasants and artisans took the archduke's side in the conflict.

Their battalions were known as "maulets," derived from the Latin word "maula," which can mean a base, lower class man, or a person who hides out in the woods (guerrilla).

Today's "Maulets" first became known in the summer of 1979 through a series of political slogans painted on walls in Valencia and Alicante, calling the people "to arms."

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Of course no one paid any attention, but they continued to believe that the only political solution for Valencia is the armed struggle, and that socialists and communists are not going to promote such a movement.

Therefore, they are preparing for battle. Although police told CAMBIO 16 after the kidnaping of Valencian industrialist Luis Suner that the "Maulets" are still too "green" to undertake such an adventure, they claim that very soon they will be as well known or even more famous than the Basque ETA itself.

For now their actions have been limited to attacking businesses, stores, bookshops and the automobiles of people associated with the Valencian extreme right. They have also burned Spanish flags and the blue-striped Valencian flags during holidays such as Las Fallas in 1980, trying to reach the masses with their message.

However, the most "military" sector of "Els Maulets" believes that this type of activity is not enough, and that they must begin to act in earnest, with real pistols and machineguns, with dynamite and "goma-2" explosives, if possible.

For this purpose, in mid-1980 a sector of "Els Maulets" proposed to blow up the statue of General Franco in the Plaza del Pais Valenciano in the capital of Turia. The idea was to place 2 kilos of "goma-2" under the belly of the horse on which the general's figure sat, and blow it sky-high.

Strong pressure from the political sector squelched the idea, but the "military" sector of "Els Maulets" prepared new activities. These included robbing a bank to obtain funds, and using Molotov cocktails to attack a book store and the delegation of the Ministry of Education and Science in Valencia.

The three armed actions had to be carried out in a synchronized fashion, because the latter two were to serve as decoys to divert police attention so that the bank robbery, from which they hoped to reap a large booty, would go off without a hitch.

Five minutes before the attacks, when the three armed commandos were already prepared to go ahead, the chief of the "Els Maulets" political sector sounded the order to retreat. A couple of days later, in April 1980, the "military" and "political" sectors of "Els Maulets" decided to split up. Since then, the military ETA of the "Maulets" has become completely isolated from other political organizations, and has devoted itself exclusively to preparing for the armed struggle.

"Your magazine doesn't seem to have much faith in us," said one of the members of the "military" sector of "Els Maulets" when CAMBIO 16 tried to contact them so they could explain publicly the short- and medium-term objectives for the armed struggle.

"We are the only Valencians who are fighting for the independence of our country," stated one of the group's spokesmen when they finally agreed to an interview. "The other political parties are bands of traitors and collaborators."

The "military" sector of "Els Maulets" acknowledged having contact with ETA. "They have not been official contacts, but private ones," revealed the source. Despite those contacts, the same person emphasized that there is no collaboration between

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"Els Maulets" and ETA. "ETA's struggle," they pointed out, "is in the Basque Country, and that of 'Els Maulets' is in the Valencian Country."

When this magazine asked them why, as an armed group, they have still not seen any action, they seemed very irritated. "When we split from the rest of the organization in the middle of last year we had to start from scratch. Now we are in the formation stage; we are acquiring channels of information and means for preparing commandos, training guerrillas, obtaining financing and purchasing weapons."

At a certain point in the interview, Luis Suner, the Valencian industrialist who was kidnaped last 13 January, was mentioned. "The only thing we can say," indicated the "Els Maulets" spokesmen, "is that it was not our group. It was probably a kidnaping planned by criminals. The fact that no political group has taken credit for the action confirms our theory."

"How many people do you think you will have to kill to achieve the independence of the Valencian Country?" CAMBIO 16 asked at one point. The two "terrorists" of "Els Maulets" changed color and gulped several times. One of them got up from the table and headed for the door without a word. The other followed. The interview was over.

The Valencian ETA prefers to be called "Maulets" rather than ETA. Nevertheless, their admiration for the Basque terrorists is a constant in the short history of the Valencian terrorist group.

In the summer of 1979, after the blue flag replaced the four-striped flag to represent Valencia, and after what they considered the "advances" of the Valencian right, a group of six people met at a cafe near the General Union of Workers (UGT) Valencian headquarters and discussed the need for an armed struggle.

That was the embryo of "Els Maulets." After that initial meeting, another 10 people joined the organization directly, and the members of the group emulated each other, saying they were "ready for anything," even taking up a machine gun if necessary.

The small nucleus of guerrillas in power is made up of former members of the Popular Socialist Party of Valencia, Socialist Germania, the Spanish Communist Party and some independents, as well as former members of the nonparliamentary leftist parties.

Their political principles exclude any formal program, and they have set forth just a few minimal guidelines necessary to remain together and take joint action: absolutely no pact with the authorities, no to the Valencian Autonomy Statute, yes to "workers and peoples" self-government, and yes to the revolutionary struggle.

With this theoretical baggage, "Els Maulets" began to make itself known in Valencia. Every weekend a group would go out in two cars to paint pro-Valencian slogans on walls. A couple of months later, in the fall of 1979, the capital of Turia was plastered with these slogans. "Maulets, to arms," "Spain is deceiving us," and "Neither France nor Spain, Catalonian Country," are some of the most common ones.

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In early 1980, the organization began to consolidate itself. The number of members was on the rise, and "Els Maulets" gained a reputation as a proindependence organization with a clear tendency toward the use of arms to impose its ideas if necessary. It was in the beginning of 1980 when the organizing group made contact with different collectives of "Maulets" that had been emerging in various parts of Valencia. They all attended the annual rally held on 25 April in the Valencian bullring, where numerous groups of "Maulets" not controlled by the founders appeared.

There, overcoming the initial mistrust stemming from the possibility of police infiltration, contacts were made for a subsequent coordination through a "Valencian Taula" (board of directors). In addition to the "activist Maulets," who are more or less clandestine, this board of directors would comprise the Independent Left of Castellon, Popular Unity of Vinaroz, the United Left of Gandia, the Independent Socialists of Jativa and five council members from Villafranca dels Ports.

The organization has become increasingly radical. The "Els Maulets" graffiti now not only call for the armed struggle, but also come out in favor of the ETA armed struggle and praise some of its actions. "Els Maulets" is coming closer to the armed struggle, and some commandos have decided to take up weapons immediately.

In this climate of radicalization, there is also tension. One sector, the "political" sector of "Els Maulets," believes that the independence of the Valencian Country can be obtained through mass actions and the political struggle. This group favors the creation of a political structure similar to Herri Batasuna for Valencia. The most radical group advocates the creation of a closed, clandestine paramilitary organization which will form commandos, train them and prepare to begin the armed struggle.

The idea of blowing up the Franco statue in April of last year aggravated internal conflicts, and the "military" sector, the Valencian ETA, left the organization to form an armed group, although it has not yet taken action.

The political sector, on the other hand, has formed an assembly. It is a radical, pro-independence organization, in the manner of Herri Batasuna. Last 18 January at a meeting held in the Valencian town of Perellonet, the old "Maulets" met with the Communist Movement of the Valencian Country, the Workers Party, the Revolutionary Communist League and the d'Esquerra Front, as well as other independence groups. The resulting coalition intends to adopt the name "Unitat Popular del Pais Valencia" [Popular Unity of the Valencian Country]. It rejects the constitution and the Valencian Autonomy Statute, and some of its members openly favor self-determination, while others are for independence. In this context, the majority of the groups that signed the Perellonet document feel that the armed struggle of the military "Els Maulets" and the political struggle of Popular Unity can complement each other, as do the military ETA and Herri Batasuna.

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