

place of Edgar Faure, the official candidate of the conservative RPR and outgoing President of the Assembly. The Prime Minister intends to continue with his somewhat unpopular economic policy of "true pricing", which has already resulted in a rise in rates for industries such as textiles and steel, and in which the dairy farmers and cattle-raisers are having difficulty keeping up with the competition from their Dutch and Danish partners in the European Community. The priority given by the Barre Government to making the French economy more competitive could give rise to social unrest.

Whether it wants to or not, Mr Chirac's RPR must support the Barre Government, in which it has a number of ministers. It is clear that Mr Chirac, who keeps a tight rein on his party, has his eye on the Presidency of the French Republic. Under the Constitution, the Presidential elections must be held in 1981. If President Giscard d'Estaing, who has emerged from the recent legislative elections as the clear winner, is able, through the Prime Ministers he designates and by his own actions, to maintain his present image, he will be re-elected without difficulty, and Mr Chirac will not even consider running. He would declare his candidacy only if France were to experience serious difficulties, for then Mr Chirac, who cultivates an image of authority and order, could present himself as the saviour of France and the last resort in the old Gaullist and Bonapartist tradition.

*Candidacy of Chirac will depend on Giscard's successes*

#### **A shaken party**

The picture of the Communists presented to readers of *Le Monde* is one of a party severely shaken. The articles in this daily by historian Jean Ellenstein and philosopher Louis Althusser, both eminent members of the Party, and the scathing letters by intellectuals to *Le Monde* and other newspapers, seem to be indicative of critical "right-wing" and "left-wing" currents within the PCF at this post-election juncture. Such minor rumblings of discontent pose no serious threat, however, since the party leadership is keeping the situation well in hand by practising "democratic centralism" – that is, by excluding from the decision-making process the lower levels of the party (cells, sections, federations). Requests from local units are filtered through successive levels before getting to the top (secretariat, "politburo", Central Committee). At the same time, they are obliged to carry out decisions handed down through the hierarchy.

After the elections, there were indeed animated discussions in numerous cells

(the Party's basic level), particularly concerning the rather undiplomatic way of announcing the Party's new policy decisions – for example, the statement by Secretary-General George Marchais in favour of a complete striking force and an "all-directional" military policy – and the style of relations with the Socialist Party. After enjoying full favour, the latter suddenly became, in the eyes of the Communist leaders, intrinsically perverse and a carrier of all the evils of the "bourgeois" poison.

But these criticisms, except in a few cells of intellectuals, did not call into question the basic direction in which the Party – above all, its leadership – was headed. Even if changes were made in the leadership, this would not settle the question of the internal operation or the ends of the Communist Party. During the election campaign, which, paradoxically, was directed essentially against the Socialists, the Communist Party showed that it was still essentially non-democratic. Maintaining its hegemony over the organized sector of the working class through the Confédération générale du travail (CGT) and holding the positions it has gained in factories and municipalities are more important to it than playing second fiddle in a Government headed and dominated by socialism.

On the whole, the Communist Party achieved what it set out to do. It lost only 7 per cent of the popular vote, while the Socialist Party made no large gains and is only 2 per cent ahead. In the Chamber of Deputies, the Socialists gained only a small number of seats (15, compared to the Communists' 13). Above all, the Socialists, shaken by the defeat, do not have the strength to challenge the Communists for a position of dominance. At a meeting last April 25, the Communist Party's Central Committee – of which Ellenstein is a member – unanimously approved the policy of Marchais. The Party will continue to work even harder towards "the union of the people of France", a vast coalition with adherents from all levels of the population (apart from the handful of "big monopolistic capitalists").

#### **Losers**

Paradoxically, the Socialist Party, which gained most votes, appears to have been the loser in these elections. It went up from 19.3 per cent in 1973 to 22.6 per cent in 1978, and its tiny ally, the Mouvement des radicaux de gauche, advanced from 1.4 per cent in 1973 to 2.1 per cent in 1978. But the Socialist Party's ambitions and expectations were such that this result, which