

the many undecided and "discreet" voters (those who were unwilling to reply) and, on the other, to purely numerical calculations based on reported allegiances rather than on an evaluation of political activities that were highly disconcerting for the voters of the Centre, who cast the determining ballots in any pluralist democracy.

It can, in fact, he said that the Left had virtually lost the elections as early as September 23, 1977. The breakup of the Union that night was followed from September to December by a virulent Communist Party campaign aimed at crushing the Socialist Party militants. From January until the eve of the elections in March, the Communist Party's campaign was directed at Socialist supporters, its keynote being sounded by a slogan hammered out by *L'Humanité*, the organ of the French Communist Party (PCF): "Vote Communist on March 12 for agreement on the 13th and victory on the 19th". In the autumn campaign directed at the Socialist militants and in the winter campaign that focused on the voters, the intention of the Communists was to generate pressure from its base and then from its voters to force the Socialist Party (PS) to subscribe to a "good", "up-to-date" common program of government.

During the first phase, while the campaign against the militants was in progress, the PS refused to budge, to the surprise of the PCF leadership. With François Mitterand as its general, the PS held its ground. Attempts by CERES, its "maximalist" wing, to bend the party line and have the PS make a few concessions to the PCF failed.

#### Fringe voters

The winter campaign was directed at the fringe voters situated on the borderline between the Communist and Socialist Parties. Its purpose was to take from the PS

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the voters who had deserted the PCF since the Socialist Party resolutely began in 1972 to implement with the PCF a program of extensive reforms in the French economy and in French society. This manoeuvre was successful. Not that the Communist Party obtained a higher percentage of votes than in the legislative elections of 1973 – in fact, it declined from 21.3 to 20.6 per cent – but it forced the Socialist Party to move its campaign further to the left to win the voters on the fringes of the two parties, and thereby lose the 3 per cent of the voters at the centre that the Socialists needed to gain victory. These voters were frightened, and after some hesitation finally gave their allegiance to the parties of the Union pour la démocratie française (UDF).

This union of parties supporting President Giscard d'Estaing registered a notable electoral score of 21.5 per cent. Made up of the Republicans (the President's party), the Social Democrats (with their Christian Democrat orientation), and the right-wing Radicals (liberal), the UDF was able to achieve two objectives: it made possible the electoral victory of the Right by winning the votes of the Socialist Party's centrist supporters, and, by obtaining 21.5 per cent of the votes, it lessened the influence within the rightist majority of the Gaullists in Mr Chirac's Rassemblement pour la République (RPR).

These elections have left France with four political "families" practically equal in voter strength: the conservatives of the RPR (22.6 per cent of the votes); the liberals of the UDF (21.5 per cent); the democratic socialists of the PS (22.6 per cent); and the PCF's Communists (20.6 per cent). Because those who voted Left in the first round did so with less consistency in the second round than those who cast their ballots for the Right, and because the electoral map displayed certain distortions, the two families of the Right came out stronger – the RPR's conservatives won 148 seats, the UDF's liberals 137, the socialists 104 and the Communists 86.

#### Double polarization

The French political picture is complicated by the fact that the Right-Left division is not the only basis of political differentiation. There is another type of polarization, which for lack of a better term we shall call "open-closed". Those on the "closed" side are the conservatives of the RPR and – the Communists. Both these parties are isolationist: the PCF's economic program, for example, would lead to autarky and, in concrete terms, to the withdrawal of France from the European Common Mar-

*Communists intended to generate pressure on Socialists*