

## Victorious Sarkozy vows to speak for all

Right-winger Nicolas Sarkozy, who had sought a mandate for radical reform, has emphatically won France's presidential election, promising to heal the wounds of the bitterly fought campaign.

"I will not betray you, I will not lie to you, I will not disappoint you," Sarkozy told tens of thousands of supporters packed into a Paris square.

But as news spread of his triumph over the Socialist Segolene Royal, police fought hundreds of anti-Sarkozy rioters in Paris and others cities around the country.

Sarkozy, 52, won the battle to be France's new generation leader in place of President Jacques Chirac with 53% of the vote against 47% for Royal. The estimated 85% turnout was the highest in 30 years.

Amid wild celebrations in Paris, Sarkozy, speaking from the party headquarters of his Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) said: "My thoughts go out to all those French people who did not vote for me. I want to say to them that, above and beyond the political fight and differences of opinion, for me there is only one France. I will be president of all the French. I will speak for all of them. I want to say to everyone: I will not betray you, I will not lie to you, I will not disappoint you."

At the Socialist Party headquarters, Royal supporters, many in tears, gloomily digested a third consecutive presidential defeat.

"I gave it all I had and will continue to be with you and close to you," Royal said. But many experts now expect bitter recriminations within her party over its new humiliation.

World leaders were quick to acknowledge Sarkozy as the new French leader. US President George Bush telephoned to congratulate him within an hour of polls closing, said a White House spokesman.

Some hope for a new era in US-France relations after the frostiness caused by Chirac's opposition to the Iraq war.

Sarkozy said the US could count on friendship from France but urged Washington to show leadership in the struggle against global warming and said it would be a priority for his government.

"A great nation like the United States has the duty to not create obstacles in the struggle against global warming," Sarkozy said

Chirac, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and a host of European leaders also telephoned Sarkozy. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she was convinced Sarkozy would maintain the French-German axis at the heart of the European Union.

On the last day of the campaign Royal had warned that a Sarkozy victory would trigger "violence and brutality" across the country.

Thousands of police reinforcements were deployed around Paris to head off the risk of unrest by youths from high-immigrant suburbs where there were riots in 2005.

Riot police fired tear gas and water canon at up to 300 stone-throwing protesters in the Place de la Bastille in central Paris, where about 5 000 Royal supporters had gathered.

"Police everywhere, justice nowhere," shouted some rioters, while others screamed "Sarko-fascist".

Youths also burned several dozen vehicles in Paris suburbs where troubles erupted two years ago. Disturbances were reported in several other cities around the country.

Sarkozy will take over from Chirac on May 16, and after legislative elections in June he plans a special national assembly session to launch his reform drive.

These include the abolition of tax on overtime, big cuts in inheritance tax, a law guaranteeing minimum service in transport strikes, and rules to oblige the unemployed to take up offered work.

On the social front he has pledged minimum jail terms for serial offenders and tougher rules to make it harder for immigrants to bring extended families to France. - AFP

Published on the web by Cape Argus on May 7, 2007.

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