

Election night and later, with Sarko.

The double-cuffed arm rests on the window ledge of the short French limo, the hand waves slowly now and then, the other hand holds a mobile phone to an unsmiling face talking rapidly and seriously, next to him his wife also talking on a mobile phone, the limo moves through the splendid streets of Paris in a swarm of motor-cycled police to the Salle Gaveau, the classical concert hall of France, now the place where Sarko would make his acceptance speech in front of a crowd of the faithful, all cheering, stamping their feet, singing like a mass of football fans.

It was a speech in which he addressed the key issues of the day, memorably and briefly, with not much more than a single sentence for each: 'members of the EU should listen to their peoples - I am a European; the USA can count on France's friendship but must accept that friends have different opinions; global warming is a priority problem, France will call a conference on the environment; let's make a Mediterranean Union to bring peace in that area; all those who suffer from tyranny will have France's help'. One almost hoped that the usual stuff about a 'new era' 'honoured to serve' 'will work for all the people' might not be heard.

And then something very French happened. Sarko left the Salle and went to get his dinner. With some friends at Fouquet's restaurant. Where he stayed for a couple of hours before the limo moved off again to the Place de la Concorde in which were crammed 10,000 more fans, being entertained in the meantime by ageing white singers and younger African singers supported by jigging dancers bathed in bright white lights.

While Sarko was eating his dinner and taking a call from President Bush, Ségolène Royal was smiling and waving from a balcony at her ever-enthusiastic supporters on the other side of town, smiling and waving for hours, just as though she had won the Presidential election and was not the loser.

On TV, to fill in the time, some of Sarko's intimates were being questioned as to the make-up of the future Cabinet. Monsieur Fillon had a broad smile on his face so viewers felt pretty sure that he was indeed going to be named as Prime Minister, whereas Monsieur Borloo looked glum and clearly was not going to have his wish to be Prime Minister. An anchorman informed the audience that Monsieur Fillon has a Welsh wife.

Back in the Place de la Concorde, Sarko finally arrived, struggled through the crowd, slapped backs, kissed ladies, reached the stage and embraced the performers. A splendid speech followed saying all the things one could hope for in an acceptance speech to fans.

'My dear friends, this is a vote for change, nobody will be excluded, a victory for France, let us make a united France, I will be the first President of all the French'. Then he tellingly finished with 'I will not lie to you. I will not deceive you'.

We were impressed; as we always are when Sarko speaks. He is convincing, indefatigable, firm, and has a ready, intelligent opinion on everything. And he doesn't

talk in spun words. Despite a feeling amongst many French that there is something of Napoleon about him - a negative - he appeals just because he is energetic and sure of himself. Sego seemed wishy-washy by comparison and not everyone was happy with her private living arrangements where her companion of many years is also Secretary General of her party, but sometimes disagrees with what she says.

The French people are said to feel unsure of themselves and their future at the moment. Perfect timing for the arrival of a dynamic and positive new President.

Then, wasting not a moment, Sarko set about forming his Cabinet and scored a first in politics. He named as Foreign Minister a person who actually has experience of his portfolio and the real world. Most ministers, of course, are appointed to tasks of which they have no experience whatsoever. Their c.v's are empty except for political ladder-climbing. But here is Monsieur Kouchner, a former UN administrator and one of the founders of Medecins Sans Frontieres, appointed as Foreign Minister. Most of the other Ministers come from the usual legal background, of course, but encouragingly, others have experience relevant to their future jobs – the new Minister for Budgets and Accounts once worked for Arthur Anderson; the new minister for Culture ran the big tourist attractions of Versailles; the new Education Minister is loaded with degrees and was a teacher before becoming Inspect General of Schools.

Continuing to surprise us, as soon as he had a desk, Sarko called in the leaders of the trade unions for amiable discussions and they all exited with optimistic sound-bites, shaking hands warmly with Sarko and the new Prime Minister. Monsieur Fillon is considered to be a patient and excellent negotiator; a good thing as Sarko is forceful and very direct.

The French are encouraged by all this high-powered activity and not too many of them are being typically pessimistic for the moment.

Ribot des Bouquets.