

Nixon Sees Foreign Chiefs After Rites for Pompidou

By Jonathan C. Randal
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PARIS, April 6—Monarchs, presidents, premiers and dignitaries from more than 80 nations paid tribute today to the late President Georges Pompidou in a 45-minute memorial service at Notre Dame cathedral.

No sooner had the ceremony ended than President Nixon, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, Italian President Giovanni Leone, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, interim French President Alain Poher, and other world leaders began a round of mini-summits.

Although very little was said officially about these meetings, they apparently dealt with the much-troubled transatlantic relationship and the divisive repercussions among the nine European Common Market nations.

Some French observers privately suggested such discussions were inappropriate, not because they implied lack of respect for Pompidou, but because they centered on France's controversial policies while this country has only a caretaker government.

A dozen candidates have already announced their intention to run in the May 5 first-round presidential election which will be followed by a runoff vote May 19 matching the two leading contenders.

White House press spokesman Ronald L. Ziegler retorted "absolutely not" when asked if the President's meetings with five European leaders were not inappropriate, given the mourning period for

the French president who died Tuesday of cancer at 62.

"The President only gets to Europe occasionally," Ziegler added, in possible allusion to French opposition, which ruined Mr. Nixon's desires to preside over a great summit meeting to mark the 25th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization this month.

But as Mr. Nixon scheduled more talks for Sunday—in a sudden change from original plans to fly back to Washington Saturday evening—with Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny and Japanese Premier Kakuei Tanaka, other diplomatic conversations were under way in Paris.

Moreover, French objections to the propriety of such diplomatic encounters were undercut because rival leaders of the ruling Gaullist coalition announced that they were running for the presidency within a few hours of Pompidou's burial.

Former Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, the first to throw his hat into the ring, appeared to be picking up strength today.

Education Minister Joseph Fontanet announced that his small Centrist Party in the government coalition would back Chaban-Delmas. Following a similar Centrist endorsement by former minister Jacques Duhamel, Fontanet's call appeared to stifle National Assembly President Edgar Faure's efforts to put together a broad-based coalition stretching from Gaullists to Centrists and right-wing Socialists.

Nor were Faure's chances

enhanced by the continuing silence of Finance Minister Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, leader of the right-of-center Republican Independents and another likely presidential candidate.

The finance minister said he would not make any statement until today's day of mourning is completed. Observers suggested that he might now wait until as late as Monday to make his position known.

[Agence France-Presse quoted reliable sources as saying in Paris that Giscard d'Estaing had decided to enter the presidential race. A spokesman for Giscard d'Estaing later "formally denied" the report.]

Including former Education and Interior Minister Christian Fouchet, there are now three formally announced candidates from the present ruling coalition.

Prime Minister Pierre Messmer appealed indirectly to Giscard d'Estaing last night when he announced that he had abandoned his own ambitions in favor of Chaban-Delmas and pleaded against any more candidates from the government ranks.

Giscard d'Estaing Thursday had warned that he would run unless Chaban-Delmas withdrew from the race, but since then some of his own key Republican Independent backers are reported to have gone over to his rival's camp.

The danger of such continuing disunity in the government coalition ranks was demonstrated by an opinion poll taken three days before Pompidou's death and published

today in the newspaper L'Aurore.

It showed Chaban-Delmas, Giscard d'Estaing and Messmer all losing—although by only 1 per cent in the case of Chaban-Delmas—in a straight vote against Francois Mitterrand, the Socialist leader who will be running with Communist backing.

Such political calculations were set aside temporarily for an hour this morning in the Notre Dame ceremony based on Pompidou's own planning of the November 1970 service for his predecessor, Charles de Gaulle.

Bells tolled, pigeons fluttered and Republican guards resplendent in white breeches stood at attention with drawn swords as organ and choir executed Bach. A giant French tricolor flag was suspended from the vaulted 13th century ceiling. About 5,000 policemen patrolled the church, the surrounding streets and the rooftops.

Mr. Nixon, Prince Philip representing his wife the Queen of England, Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, Brandt, the leaders of French-speaking Africa and many of the other foreign guests attended the De Gaulle memorial service, too.

The most remarked upon newcomer to the ranks of the mourners of state was Prince Sidi Mohammed, the 11-year-old heir apparent of King Hassan of Morocco.

Dressed in a fez and white cloak, he was chaperoned to his place among the foreign guests by Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, who began life as



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President Nixon and French Prime Minister Pierre Messmer (right) arrive at Notre Dame for Pompidou services.