

Kim Willsher in Paris

The penniless son of an impoverished Hungarian aristocrat, he had nothing except the clothes in which he stood and a pair of borrowed shoes several sizes too small.

Today Pal Sarkozy, as he is now known, lives in a luxury apartment in an exclusive Paris suburb and is a visitor to the Elysée Palace, where his son Nicolas Sarkozy, who he describes as "an intelligent boy and exceptional man" holds court.

And he believes he may not be the last Sarkozy to hold the office - he hopes his grandson Jean, 22, who is following his father into politics, will be the new blood in a Sarkozy "dynasty" to rival America's Kennedys.

"I arrive as a refugee and start life on the streets," said Pal, 80, in a rare interview last week. "And I see my son president of the republic Nicolas is a symbol of the accomplishment and success of the Sarkozy family in France."

Pal, whose son is notoriously tough on immigration issues, went on to reveal details of the extraordinary riches-to-rags-to-riches journey that the Sarkozy family has taken over recent generations, which began as landowners in the village of Alattyán, outside Budapest, where Pal's father and grandfather were also elected officials. When the Red Army entered Hungary in 1944, the Sarkozy family fled to Germany, then under Hitler. They returned in 1945, but by then all their possessions had been seized.



Pal Sarkozy in Madrid during the opening of his exhibition "Out of Mind"



Pal Sarkozy, far left, with his brothers Gyorgy and Gedeon in the 1940's

How Nicolas Sarkozy's father once lived rough in Paris

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When Pal Sarkozy de Nagy-Bocsa spent his first night in Paris sleeping rough in an entrance to the Métro, he could never have imagined that almost half a century later he would see his son elected president.

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Carla Bruni-Sarkozy with her husband, the president of France Nicolas Sarkozy

"First we had Hitler, then we had Stalin," said Pal. "I didn't have a childhood at all, we couldn't do any proper studies. We were refugees - we returned, we left again... It was a very complicated childhood, it was no childhood."

Pal revealed how in 1948 his mother advised him to head west again after the Soviet forces occupying Hungary called him up for forced labour in Russia.

"My mother told me 'Pal, you must leave Hungary because if you don't you will find yourself in Siberia and we will never see you again'," he said.

He escaped to Austria and then to Germany, while his mother told the authorities he had drowned. In the German town of Baaden Baaden, near the French border, he was recruited to the French Foreign Legion, and was due to be sent to the war in Indochina until a sympathetic Hungarian doctor gave him a medical discharge. In the interview with France's Omega TV channel, he described how he then struggled after arriving in

Paris. "I didn't have a sou (penny). I arrived without anything, without any shoes and ended up spending my first night in the entrance of the Metro," said Pal, who eventually found a job as a runner at a film company. "The poor are more generous than the rich. I had a friend who had two pairs of shoes and he gave me one. The problem was he was size 41 and I was 44, so I had to cut out the toes."

He married Nicolas's mother Andrée, a law student and daughter of an influential doctor, when he was 22. They had three sons, Guillaume, Nicolas and François,

but divorced when the boys were young. Pal Sarkozy then went on to a successful career as an advertising designer and later a painter of what has been described as "surrealist and erotic art".

His son, however, has not always been complimentary about him. He has claimed that after his parents split, his father was a largely absent figure. And when the young Nicolas failed to impress his father in school exams, he was warned: "With the name you carry and the results you obtain, you will never succeed in France."

Nicolas proved his father wrong, but the sting of the criticism remained a cause

of resentment. "What made me who I am now is the sum of all the humiliations suffered during childhood," he once said.

But Pal denied he had neglected his family, insisting: "I was divorced but I saw them as often as possible"

However strained relations between father and son might have been in the past, Pal Sarkozy says they are now "excellent". He said he and Nicolas, now 54, spoke regularly on the phone, even though the president was sometimes difficult to get hold of. "If I need to contact him I send a text message him and he calls me back," he joked.

As the son of a foreign émigré, Nicolas Sarkozy might have been expected to have some sympathy for the refugees and immigrants seeking a better life in France.

Instead he has led a crackdown on illegal immigration, and in 2005 caused outrage by describing rioters in the run-down Paris suburbs - home to many of France's first and second-generation immigrants from Africa and North Africa - as "racaille" or rabble.

But Pal Sarkozy had nothing but praise for his son, whom he said had suffered the misfortune of "inheriting" the economic crisis.

"I hope with all my heart the crisis will end as quickly as possible and the last years of his presidency will be calmer. Then we will appreciate his real qualities because he is an exceptional man."

If he has his way, the French public may also get not one, but two chances to appreciate a Sarkozy's leadership talents. One of Pal's grandchildren, Nicolas's second son Jean, 24, is an activist for his father's centre-right UMP party and an already a councillor in the wealthy Paris suburb where he grew up.

"I hope there will be a Sarkozy dynasty in France," said Pal. You need at least three successful generations for a dynasty and I believe my grandchildren are well on the way to this."

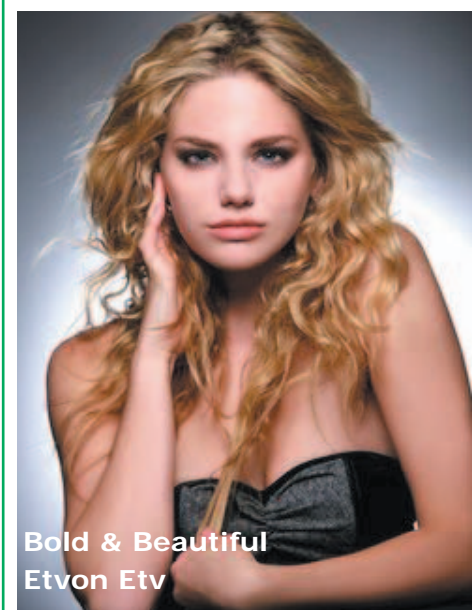
Perhaps most significantly of all, Pal also appears to approve of his son's new wife, the supermodel-turned-singer Carla Bruni, whose relationship with the president has scandalised and enthralled France in equal measure.

At the end of the TV interview Pal Sarkozy also showed a photo portrait he had done of Ms Bruni, which he gave his son and new wife as a marriage present. Carla is shown sitting on a piano, from which is reflected Nicolas Sarkozy's Elysée office.

"Look at that; she has superb eyes," said her father-in-law.

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TV GUIDE



Bold & Beautiful
Etvon Etv

ITN

A.M.	04.00 Peyen Peya Puwath
04.30 Station Opening	04.03 Kekulu Kodewwa
04.35 Pirith Deshanaya	04.30 Dedunu Hendowa
04.42 Jayamangala Gatha	05.00 Peyen Peya Puwath
04.46 Davase Sithuvili	05.03 Dedunu Hendowa
05.00 Thakshilawa	(Cont'd.)
06.00 ITN Puwath	05.30 Lama Puwath
06.15 Davase Palithara	05.45 Theruwan Namadinu
06.55 Jeevithaya Jayaganna	05.50 Jaya Piritha
07.00 Hathveni Peya	06.00 News - Tamil
08.00 Peyen Peya Puwath	06.30 Denumai Vasanaival
08.05 Pahan Dora Magazine	07.00 News and Current Affairs
08.30 Sal Mal Yaya	(Sinhala)
09.00 Peyen Peya Puwath	07.30 Mutha Kilili
09.05 Batil	08.00 Paba
10.00 Peyen Peya Puwath	08.30 Ithin Eeta Passe
10.05 Nimthera	09.00 Api Api Wage - Tele
11.00 Discussion	Drama
Noon	09.30 News - Sinhala
12.00 Noon News	09.55 Biz News
P.M.	10.00 News - English
12.30 Sinhayaki Oba	10.10 Thulawa

CHANNEL EYE

A.M.	04.30 Cartoon Programme (English)
06.29 Station Opening	05.00 Cartoon Programme (Tamil)
06.30 Talk for the Day	05.30 Super Top 10 (Tamil)
06.45 Cartoon Programme	06.00 Sokkuthey Manam (Tamil)
07.00 Musical Programme	06.30 Natyangalee
07.15 Shanida Vasana	07.00 News & Weather Report
07.30 Naledugaili Intru	07.30 Pruthu Yugam
08.00 Variety News Songs	08.00 Kana Kanum Kanangal
08.30 Kalai Wanakkam	08.30 Appuvakaga
09.30 Udaya Darshanam	09.00 Vasana Sampatha
11.00 Kana Kanam Kalangal	09.15 Jayoda Lottery
11.30 Kaimanam	09.30 News and Weather
Noon	12.00 Lunch Time Variety
P.M.	09.55 Insight
01.00 Enthozhi En Kathai En	10.00 Top Score
Manavil	10.30 Thihamachara
01.30 Afternoon News	M.N.
01.45 Tamil Feature Film	12.00 End of Transmission

SWARNAVAHINI

A.M.	01.00 Hada Rendi Peya
05.30 Ehi Passiko	02.00 Udu Viyan
06.30 Mul Pitwa	05.00 Samanala Wasanthaya *
07.00 Loka Sithiyama	05.30 Mini Toons
07.30 Gidiatar Academy -	06.00 Musix
Cartoon	07.00 Sports Hiltz
08.00 Kid Toon Movie	07.30 Gaja Muthu
09.00 Hello Sri Lanka	08.00 Live @ 8
10.30 Channel D	08.30 Abhimaan
11.00 Mahajana Seywaya Pinisai	09.00 Rosa Katu
Noon	09.30 Loving Star
12.00 Live @ 12	10.00 Hathdinmath Tharu
P.M.	M.N.
12.30 Rasa Liya	12.00 Close of Transmission

ETV

A.M.	05.00 Channel News Asia
06.00 Prime Time Morning	05.30 Prehistoric Park
06.45 Debrief	06.00 Channel News Asia
06.55 Lanka Business Online	07.00 VH1
07.01 LBR Money Report *	07.45 Debrief
07.30 Channel News Asia	07.55 Lanka Business Online
09.00 LBR Money Report *	08.01 American Idol Season 8
09.30 Channel News Asia	08.55 Lanka Business Online
10.00 Telemarketing	09.01 The Bold & The
10.30 Channel News Asia	Beautiful
Noon	09.45 Debrief
12.00 YA TV	09.55 Lanka Business Online

MTV

A.M.	04.30 Bunny Fillers
05.25 Station Opening	04.30 Animated Classics
05.30 Voice of America	05.30 Sherlock Holmes in the
06.30 News First	22nd
07.00 Good Morning Sri	06.00 Enter 10 Music
08.00 Fox News	06.30 TV South Asia
P.M.	07.00 Tiny Toons Adventure
12.30 News	07.30 Tom & Jerry Kids
12.45 VOA	08.00 Cricket Classics
01.15 Fly Tales and	09.00 News
Untalkative	09.30 Planet Pulse
	10.30 Top Story
	10.32 Fox News

DERANA

A.M.	01.30 Mix Songs
05.55 Station Opening	04.00 Dragon Tales
06.00 Cartoon	04.30 Cartoon
07.00 Derana Aruna	06.00 Mumbai Masala
08.00 Suba Dawasak	07.00 Lanka Soy Rasa
08.30 Eka Dawasak Ude	Meevittha
10.30 Teledrama	07.30 Pinibindu
11.00 Sith Gimana Hala	08.00 Ada Derana
P.M.	08.30 Saraa
12.00 Ada Derana	09.00 Adaraneeya
12.15 Sinhala Songs	Poonima
12.30 Sathulu Wila	09.30 Vaada Pitiya (Live)

SIRASA TV

A. M.	01.30 Movie
04.00 Pirith & Jayamangala	04.00 Cartoon
Gatha	04.30 English Lesson
04.30 Mahamaluwa	05.00 Scooby Doo
05.00 Bana	05.30 Tom & Jerry
05.30 Cartoon	06.00 Magic Box
06.00 English Lesson	06.30 Tharumansala
06.30 News First	07.00 News 1st
07.00 Inspector Gadget	07.30 Situ Gedara
07.30 Sonic	08.00 Mahagedara
08.00 Jeevithayata Eda	08.30 Kindurangana
Denna	09.00 Praveena
10.30 Rasala Rasak	09.30 Kawya
11.00 Dilganthaya	10.00 News 1st
12.00 Lunch Time News	10.30 Final Cut

RUPAVAHINI

A.M.	02.30 Drama)
04.48 Station Opening	02.30 A Documentary
04.50 Homage to the Triple	02.55 News
Gem & Karaniya Metta	03.00 A Documentary (Cont'd.)
Sutta	03.30 Kapa Nasna Samaya
05.00 G.C.E. (O/L) (Sinhala)	03.55 News
05.55 Dina Asiriya	04.00 Cartoon
06.05 Shudesa	04.30 Raltriya Vee
06.30 Palithara Sirashala	04.55 News
06.55 News	05.00 Havasa Paya
07.00 Aadaraneeya	05.55 Defence News
Yavuvanyaya	06.00 Paiganaka Paradesaya
07.55 News	06.30 Nena Physa
08.05 Nuga Sevana	06.58 Vismitha Charita
08.55 News	07.27 Shina Kumari
09.05 Nuga Sevana - Contd.	08.00 News
09.55 News	08.30 Pasubima
10.00 Nuga Sevana - Contd.	08.35 Tele Drama
10.55 News	09.05 Kadulla
11.00 Aluth Sri Lankawak	09.32 Doni
Noon	10.00 Vasana Sampatha
12.00 Tele Drama	10.05 Jayoda Lottery
P.M.	10.10 News
12.30 Hiru Vyana	10.30 Uthimachara (Musical
01.00 Hiru Vyana	Prog.)
01.55 News	12.00 End of Transmission
02.00 La Hiru Dahasak (Tele	



ART TV

A.M.	12.30 Quest Means Business
01.30 World News Europe	01.00 World Business Today
02.30 Back Story	01.30 World News
03.00 World Sport	01.57 State of Business (3
03.30 The Situation Room	min)
04.30 CNN Today	02.00 Eco Solutions
06.30 World Business Today	02.30 Larry King Live
07.00 The State of Business	03.30 World News
	04.00 World Sport
	04.30 Fraggie Rock
07.15 Music +	04.57 State of Business (3
06.30 World Business Today	min)
07.00 The State of Business	05.00 Conan
	05.30 World News Asia
07.15 Music +	05.57 State of Business (3
07.30 Anderson Cooper 360	min)
08.30 Talk Asia	06.00 Telescreen Marketing
09.00 World Sport	06.30 World Business Today
09.30 CNN Today	06.57 State of Business (3
09.57 State of Business (3	min)
10.00 Telescreen Marketing	07.00 Top 10 Hits
10.30 CNN Today	07.45 World News
10.57 State of Business (3	08.15 The State of Business
min)	08.30 John & Kate
11.00 Telescreen Marketing	08.57 State of Business (3
11.30 CNN Today	min)
11.57 State of Business (3	09.00 CSI Vegas
min)	09.57 State of Business (3
	min)
M.N.	10.00 Larry King Live
12.00 Telescreen Marketing	11.00 State of Business *
P.M.	
12.30 CNN Today	

SHAKTHI TV

A.M.	01.15 Thirai Koodam
06.00 Breakfast News	04.00 Children Movie
06.15 Filler	05.30 Shakthi Chat
06.30 Good Morning Sri Lanka	06.30 Kolangam
08.30 Caller Galatta	07.30 Simran Thirai
09.00 Priyamana Thozhiye	08.00 News 1st
10.00 Vasantham	08.30 Selvi
10.30 Sivasakthi	09.00 English News
11.30 Kasturi	09.30 Lakshmi
Noon	10.00 Thirumathi Sabam
12.00 Poomankkaba	