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The Resurgence of Xenophobic Nationalism in Contemporary France: Jean-Marie Le Pen and the National Front

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THE RESURGENCE OF XENOPHOBIC NATIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY FRANCE:

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN AND THE NATIONAL FRONT

A Thesis

Presented to the Departments of
International Studies and French
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Committee on Honors

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Selinde Martina Dulckeit

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I have made the serious decision to be, next year, a candidate for the presidency of the Republic....I wanted to make the official announcement here, in this little Breton house.. where I was born 58 years ago,...in this land of [Brittany], where civilization has asserted itself for more than 5000 years..on the shores of this ocean,..a symbol, for all men, of liberty, [and] discovery...and [a symbol] for France, of her glorious adventures as conquerors and civilizers. (...) It is because I have the profound conviction that the homeland is in grave danger, and that the French are threatened with being ruined, submerged, and subjugated, that I decided to engage myself in this decisive battle for the future of France.

--Jean-Marie Le Pen, April 26, 1987.

political brochure: Lettre Parisienne
[author's translation]

These words epitomize the political rhetoric of Jean-Marie Le Pen. He is the undisputed and charismatic leader of the National Front, a French party of the extreme right. The National Front is an ultra-conservative, xenophobic party which has experienced an astounding electoral success in recent years. The party was established in 1972, and achieved its first political success in 1983. In the presidential elections of 1988, Le Pen surprised the French political community by drawing nearly fifteen percent of the popular vote. This is both a remarkable and an alarming success for an extremist party. How is it possible that a man who espouses such fanatical moral and ethical values, could gain so much political support?

The National Front is extremely nationalistic, and Le Pen's main themes center around immigration. In fact, he blames both unemployment and crime on the very large immigrant--mostly North

African--population. Le Pen advocates, in many cases, their deportation in order to preserve the economic well-being, and cultural identity, of the French people. His political victories, however, have made many citizens and politicians very uneasy. Does the success of the National Front indicate a national or perhaps global trend towards the conservative right?

Already the National Front has had a profound impact on contemporary national French politics. Le Pen is considered the wild card in the game since he has drawn support from both ends of the political spectrum. The other parties must verbally define themselves relative to Le Pen, and make clear where they stand on "his" issues. For example, his emphasis on immigration has provoked the other established parties into formulating their own immigration policies.

This examination of the National Front will be approached from several different perspectives. The first subject to be addressed is Jean-Marie Le Pen himself. I shall briefly discuss his background, as well as the various conditions which contributed to his socialization. After tracing his development from childhood to the founding of his party, I will analyze the ideology on which the National Front is based. Thereafter, the specifics of the National Front's political platform will be explored.

The second section provides an analysis of the electorate supporting Le Pen. First, a picture is drawn of the typical National Front voter, in terms of his social, economic and

political background. Then, a geographic investigation will be pursued, determining in which areas of the country the National Front's support is concentrated. Finally, I will study the evolution of this support.

The third section of this thesis is devoted to determining the extent of influence the National Front has exercised in contemporary politics. I accomplish this with an extended analysis of each party's reaction to the Le Pen phenomenon. The established parties of the right, the left, and the extreme left, will each be treated in turn. The investigation will focus not only on the verbal reactions to the National Front, but also on the more fundamental policy changes instituted due to the popularity of certain Lepenien themes.

The final section compares the National Front to other extreme rightist movements of France's past. One of these was a stable long-lasting party, which gradually lost influence; the other three were very popular but short-lived creations. I will examine both the ideology and political strategy of each of these parties. Next, I will suggest a few reasons for their eventual failure. By understanding the reasons why similarly constructed parties failed, one can make a projection as to the National Front's potential for survival.

This study of the National Front and its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, is intended to be informative and objective. However, this project has been undertaken with the firm belief that Le Pen's success is a disturbing, if not an alarming, phenomenon. The National Front has already proved itself to be a real

political contender in modern France. In addition, the party continues the country's historical legacy of traditionally rightist movements. Moreover, the success of a party like the National Front can very often extend beyond a country's geographic borders. Many parties in the past have not only let their zealous voices be heard, but have actually altered the global political climate. All these movements were, at one time, small and inconsequential. However, somewhere along the line, they blossomed into terribly powerful forces. Jean-Marie Le Pen has already made a political difference; he has already carved his place in history. What the future holds in store for him is at this point unknown; but his potential is great. It is for this reason that the study of Le Pen and his ultra-conservative party is so very important.

Jean-Marie Le Pen was born on June 20, 1928, at La Trinité-sur-Mer in French Brittany. Jean-Marie was, from the start, very much influenced by his environment. His mother, the daughter of small farmers, and his fisherman father raised him modestly in a city where conservative Catholicism and patriotism reigned. The rugged land of Brittany, dotted with prehistoric megaliths, and imbued with the legends of her ancient Celtic ancestors, was an environment steeped in traditions of heroism. Jean-Marie's adored grandfather, Pierre Marie Hubert Le Pen, was also a fisherman who taught his grandson about ships, and the ocean--and about his ancestors. He told the boy stories of glorious wars long past, of the victorious French, of freedom and of life. This man passed on to another generation the age-old oral tradition begun by the Celts themselves, and thus instilled in him both a lust for adventure, and a keen verbal ability. Jean-Marie's first dream was to become a marine. Being a fisherman could not have satisfied his desire to serve his mother-country. This aspiration is exemplified by his statement that "the image which best symbolizes France is that of a flag on the stern of a warship." 1

It was during adolescence that some of Le Pen's political views were first formed. In 1944, at the age of sixteen, he became decisively anti-Gaullist and anti-Communist. This was the time of a national rivalry between the two French generals Pétain and de Gaulle. The impressionable Jean-Marie was convinced by his teachers and general environment that Pétain was the man who had acted for the good of the country, while de

Gaulle had not done enough to ensure peace. His anti-Communist views developed primarily during, and especially following, Liberation. In addition, he notes that in Trinité-sur-Mer the Communists were all of the lower and less desirable classes of society: "lazy workers and the professionally unemployed." 2

In 1947 Le Pen left Brittany for Paris and enrolled in law school. Always active and outspoken, he belonged to several student organizations and had a hand in certain publications. His first notable position was that of President of the rightist student group Corpo (which aided conservative political parties, hung posters, organized students, etc.). When he was 25 years old, Le Pen volunteered for the First Foreign Battalion of Paratroopers to fight the Communist Viet-mihn in Indochina. To his disappointment the battle was over by the time he arrived. The French withdrawal from Vietnam, although not a national humiliation, certainly did not fit with his idea of the always glorious and victorious French. Le Pen remarks that it was this very evening, May 8, 1954, that he realized: "it takes more than soldiers and courage to win wars...I swore to myself that if I should return I would consecrate my life to politics." 3

Following a short stay in Indochina, where he claims to have fully recognized the horrible tactics of the Communists, Le Pen returned to Paris. Pierre Poujade, the leader of a conservative political party, the "Union de Defense des Commerçants et Artisans de France" (U.D.C.A.), was looking for someone who could broaden his base of support. Specifically, he wanted someone who would appeal to veterans and who could run

for deputy in the National Assembly. The acquisition of Le Pen was really a coup for Poujade, due to the former's innate public speaking ability. He became the principal orator for the U.D.C.A., and was elected to the Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) on January 2, 1956. He represented the first sector of the Seine in Paris, and at age 28 was the youngest deputy ever elected. However, Le Pen began fairly quickly to forge his own path within the party. He distanced himself, remained independent, and was outspoken on many issues--especially on the Algerian problem, which would come to play an important role in his career. +

It was not long after his election that Le Pen broke with Poujade and his party. Recounting the reasons today, Le Pen points to their disagreement over the Algerian issue. Le Pen claims that Poujade was in a very good position to make some positive steps toward finding a solution (Poujade's wife was Algerian, and many Algerians were sympathetic to his cause because they were artisans and merchants). Unfortunately, says Le Pen, he drew back from his responsibilities. Pierre Poujade, on the other hand, irritably remarks that Le Pen never really was a Poujadist, and simply used his party to get into a powerful position. He resents any claims that today Le Pen is a neo-poujadist, and says that Le Pen wanted only to turn the U.D.C.A. into a mass movement of the extreme right.

Whatever the case, six months after his election Le Pen asked to be readmitted into his former paratrooper battalion. He was first sent to the Suez, and then finally to Algeria. Five

years following his stay there, in 1962, several reports surfaced accusing Le Pen of having tortured a young Algerian man, one who purportedly supported the French cause. There never was a judicial procedure, and no one can really be sure of what happened. What is sure, however, is that Le Pen's career was continually hampered by these allegations. 5

The French loss of Algeria struck Le Pen in a personal way. Not only was the French empire crumbling away, so were the dreams and illusions of his boyhood. During the decade following this event, Le Pen remained politically active, but he did not really find his calling until he and some friends founded the movement for which he is best known. Anticipating the legislative elections of 1973, he established The National Front on October 5, 1972. Le Pen was immediately installed as the organization's president, probably due to the unwavering strength of his convictions, and to his effectiveness as a speaker.

The National Front's success was minimal during the 1970's for several reasons. The main one was that the issues on Le Pen's agenda were not so crucial during this decade. For example, unemployment was not outrageous, the immigrant situation seemed under control, and perhaps most importantly, the country's president belonged to a conservative party. Le Pen's party was new, and considered by many to be fanatical and inconsequential. In 1981, however, a socialist president was elected, and just 2 years later the National Front began making significant gains. Not only was there now a leftist in power,

but the issues which concerned Le Pen (especially unemployment and immigration) suddenly interested the entire nation. 6

Le Pen's first success showed up locally after the municipal and National Assembly elections in 1983. For example, his party received 11.3% in the twentieth 'arrondissement' of Paris; 12% in the department of Morbihan; and a startling 16.7% in a town called Dreux, where a coalition was formed to prevent the return of a leftist mayor. [It is important to keep in mind that France operates on a multi-party system in which even the most popular parties often receive no more than 20% of the first round votes]. Even more astonishing were the results of the European Parliament elections of 1984, in which the National Front got 11.06% of the national vote-- above and beyond the most optimistic predictions. As a result, ten extreme right-wing delegates were among the 81 sent to represent France at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The parliamentary elections of 1986 resulted in a ten percent share for Le Pen's party, a number which could make up the crucial difference needed for the right to establish a majority. Finally, when Le Pen ran for office during the presidential elections of 1988, he finished the first round with a whopping 14.4% of the national vote. This was only about six percentage points behind runner-up Jacques Chirac, and under twenty points behind the eventually victorious Francois Mitterand. This is recognized as an incredible success for a marginal party, and it leads one to believe that the National Front could become one of France's "established" parties. Clearly the National Front, headed by Le

Pen, is a force to be reckoned with in contemporary French politics. 7

The success of the National Front is, of course, not only due to Le Pen's charisma, but also to the policies which he espouses. The central theme of his campaign is immigration. France has a very large number of immigrants (mostly North African Arabs) who, he believes, are the cause of many problems.

What are some of these problems? The two most obvious ones are unemployment and insecurity. His campaign speeches preach that if there are 200,000 unemployed French, then 200,000 immigrants should be deported. The immigrant population is also, according to Le Pen, the cause of most crime. In his eyes it is possible to kill two birds with one stone: decrease the immigrant population and the crime and unemployment rates will both decrease proportionally. Furthermore, crime and unemployment are not the only two disadvantages of housing the immigrants. Le Pen believes that France's population is disintegrating from a pure French race to a mixed one. Not only are there incidents of cross-breeding, but he estimates that since the birth rate is higher among the Arabs than it is among the French, eventually the immigrants will outnumber the natives. Influenced, perhaps, by the strong regional and national pride of Brittany, he expresses fear that his country may lose her cultural identity, and proclaims: "France for the French!" He uses similarly effective imagery to emphasize this point to his audiences. Le Pen's solution consists of rigid immigration control, and the deportation of a large number of foreigners already in France.

In addition, he advocates strict and harsh reforms of legislation regarding both naturalization and automatic citizenship. e

The remainder of Jean-Marie Le Pen's program is based on four general factors: (a) a strong state system strictly regulating domestic security; (b) less state bureaucracy and control; (c) rebirth of a moral order; and (d) international security and anti-Communism. The first point has to do with crime and enforcement. Le Pen is in favor of a strong and effective state-controlled police force and justice system. He is for the reinstatement of the death penalty for certain crimes, such as drug trafficking, and terrorism. He also advocates the expulsion of foreign delinquents.

Alongside this strengthening of certain governmental areas, is the second factor of reducing state bureaucracy and control. This is, most likely, a reaction to the socialist government which has nationalized many industries and institutions. Le Pen proposes fewer taxes, a general simplification of government, and the abolition of state monopolies in favor of the more traditional small-scale enterprise. He favors a complete separation of state and education (allowing for more defined religious instruction).

The third pillar of Le Pen's campaign platform has to do with morality and social issues. He is openly against homosexuality and abortion. There are, however, more subtle aspects of this policy area. For instance, as mentioned above, Le Pen talks quite a bit about the future of the French people.

He claims that the family has declined in importance, and that there are not enough French children to replace the present population. He is, thus, in favor of legislation which would support the family unit. To encourage women to have children, he proposes a "maternal revenue" for mothers who do not want to work in order to raise and educate their children. This serves to strengthen the traditional type of family, and a position which emphasizes where women "belong" in French society.

The final point of Le Pen's platform is that of international security and anti-Communism. In his mind the French Communists are inextricably linked to Moscow, and ever on the verge of a political plot. Some analysts remark that this theme is superficially developed and not of much consequence. He does, however, seem to base his few foreign policy ideas on this fear of the Communist threat. He is very much for the development of a European defense. He would like to replace the defense provided by the United States with one which would secure Europe even more from the dangerous threat from the East. 9

Jean-Marie Le Pen bases his campaign, then, on the central theme of immigration, which he links to unemployment and insecurity. This is bolstered by the four main points he proposes in order to effect, in his mind, positive social and political change. There is, however, one more, perhaps less obvious campaign tactic Le Pen employs in order to maximize his support base. Very subtly, he portrays himself as a logical and reasonable man who simply has remained faithful to his

principles. By avoiding the label of 'fanatic', Le Pen comes across as "just another" politician. And the National Front, by participating whole-heartedly in the electoral process, is presented as a party of the traditional right. Le Pen even accuses the mainstream rightist party of France, the Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR), of having betrayed its voters by acting in a centrist fashion.

Regardless of his ideology and campaign tactics, however, it is largely due to Le Pen's charisma that he has achieved such success. Most obviously, Le Pen is a superb orator. He understood quickly that in order to appeal to the general public, one must speak to them in a language they can understand. He has never spoken the jargon of a political scientist; instead he has spoken clearly and forcefully. He does not insinuate or analyze, he simply says what he feels. This is where another important trait comes in: feeling. Le Pen is very capable of dramatizing a situation, of using intense imagery, or forcefully simple allusions [as in the opening quote: this ocean...a symbol, for all men, of liberty [and] discovery...and for France, of her glorious adventures as conquerers and civilizers]. But these are just stylistic devices. What are the other tactics he uses to lure voters into supporting his party? The single most important one is perhaps the veil of patriotism in which he shrouds his entire campaign. He is not being racist, he is simply patriotic--or so it might seem. Next to nationalism, there are other traditional values which permeate every aspect of his campaign. Family,

religion--or morality--and honest work are the most apparent. Jean-Marie Le Pen has been very successful in exploiting these traditional values by using his verbal abilities to attract, and eventually convince, a large sector of the population. But what type of person supports Le Pen? Is his electorate made up of people from all walks of life, or do his supporters all stem from one particular social and economic class? These questions, among others, will be addressed in the following section. 10

Jean-Marie Le Pen is the driving force behind the National Front which, as we have seen, has celebrated increasing successes for the past several years. Having already analyzed Le Pen's ideological platform, we shall now turn our attention to those voters who have responded to his message. First, the typical Le Pen voter will be analyzed in terms of his or her social and economic background. Secondly, the geographic regions exhibiting the greatest concentration of National Front support--mostly the large cities in the South-- will also be examined in terms of their social and economic conditions. More specifically, Marseille will serve as a case study since it is situated in the South of France, and is the home of the largest National Front electorate in the country. After having analyzed the current support for Le Pen, we will look back at its evolution. It seems that between 1984 and 1986 a major shift in the National Front's electorate occurred, in which the party lost many of its traditionally conservative voters, and replaced them with the votes of leftist defectors. This national shift is represented in the voting histories of two Parisien neighborhoods.

The general picture, or media portrayal, of the National Front voter is that of a lower class, lower income, patriot, employed as an industrial worker. The stereotypical Lepenien voter is generally found in the large, industrial cities of the South, where crime and unemployment run high, and most importantly, where a very large number of immigrants have made their new homes. The economic situation of these French natives

is so bad that they find relief in Le Pen's nationalistic rhetoric, which provides an immigrant scapegoat for their problems. Some statistics about this electorate are available. Socially, the voters are not just workers, but very strong support is evident among artisans and small shopkeepers. There is even a significant number of professionals supporting Le Pen. Over two-thirds of the voters are non-practicing Catholics and 60% are male. There is evidence that unstable voters will tend to vote for Le Pen rather than for an established party. That is, marginal supporters of both the left and the right, who do not strongly identify with either party, tend to vote for the National Front. The unemployed have also voted in fairly large numbers for Le Pen, (12% in 1984, 14% in 1986), and this figure has surely risen in recent years.

On a national scale, support for the National Front has overwhelmingly come from the southern Mediterranean departments of France. As noted above, the highest levels of support are reported from those cities with large foreign populations, more specifically, the unintegrated North African immigrants. Within the other departments, highest support is also concentrated in the large cities, where a proportionally large number of immigrants are found. ¹¹

The question to be addressed at this point is why the greatest support for the National Front is found in the Mediterranean regions of the country. What is it about these areas that makes Le Pen so popular? The reasons are both social and economic. The decline of Southern industries coupled with

the increase in unemployment has had the most significant influence. Between 1975 and 1986, the percent of the population actively employed by industry fell from 38 to less than 30 in this region. Workers are being laid off with the increase in automation; and some people claim that workers, as a class, are disappearing entirely. ¹² The naval industries in many of the large port cities have been declining in recent years as well. And the inclusion of Spain in the Common Market has hurt many small agriculturists. ¹³ What really sets these cities apart, however, is the very large number of immigrants who live there. For instance, in Aix-en-Provence, a city of 120,000, there are officially 9,900 foreigners, of which 5,300 are North African. But this number is in reality even higher due to the large number of illegal immigrants. When these estimates are included, the number reaches a total of eleven to twelve thousand foreigners. ¹⁴

These are, then, some of the general characteristics of the Southern cities. I will now, however, take the second largest city of France, Marseille, as the prime example of current National Front support. Marseille is located on the Mediterranean, and is the capital of the Bouches-du-Rhône department. It is also the country's busiest commercial seaport. Its population is approximately 870,000, among which 100,000 are North African. The unemployment rate is rather high: 14.2% in 1982. Almost fourteen percent of the city's workers are employed in manufacturing, and 12.5% of the labor force is in transportation. Finally, one in three laborers are

somehow involved in port-related activities. With this kind of focus on the city's industries, it is no wonder that their economic decline has hit the people hard. As the workers try to cope with the economic situation, they must also handle the crime. In 1981, there were 9.4 criminal offenses per 100 people. 15

Marseille has traditionally been a bulwark of the Communist party, which had originally dealt with social, economic, and even immigrant issues during their campaigns. It was governed by a Communist mayor for many years. Today, however, it is the city with the strongest National Front support in all of France.

The number two National Front man in Marseille today, André Isoardo, was an active member of the Communist party for most of his life. The National Front has four deputies, 12 regional counselors, and 4000 party members in Marseille. Le Pen's speeches sometimes attract as many as 20,000 spectators. And in the presidential election of 1988, Marseille voted 28.34% for Le Pen, and only 26.91% for Mitterrand. 16

The combination in Marseille of high unemployment rates, declining industries, high crime, and the large number of unassimilated Arab immigrants has created a veritable breeding ground for Le Pen's xenophobic rhetoric. Marseille really typifies the current support for the National Front.

However, Le Pen's electorate was not always made up of the type of individual described above. In fact, it appears that between the European elections of 1984, and the legislative elections of 1986, a major shift took place in the make-up of Le

Pen's national support base. That is, those people who voted for Le Pen in 1986 are the foundation of the party's current support group, already discussed above. The people who voted for Le Pen prior to 1986--and especially in 1984 when the party achieved its first major success--stem from an entirely different social and economic class. In addition, their voting histories are nearly completely opposed to those who support the National Front today. This national shift of support is exemplified in the voting histories of two rather distinct Parisian neighborhoods. 17

For the European elections in 1984, the highest percentage of Parisian National Front support came from the Western sections of the city. This area is generally made up of bourgeois neighborhoods, in which many families own two cars. The inhabitants are often professionally, or semi-professionally employed. This is also the area with the highest concentration of Spanish and Portuguese immigrants (who comprise 25% of the foreigners living in Paris). These foreigners are, at a fairly high percentage, employed as household domestics, or hold other service-oriented positions. For example, they work as nannies, cleaning women, gardeners, or concierges, mostly for the above-mentioned French bourgeois families. A total of 38% of the Spanish and Portuguese immigrants are so employed, as opposed to 12% of Arab immigrants, and 5% of the French population residing in Paris. Another characteristic of this residential area is the political nature of its inhabitants. Generally speaking, they are fairly active in politics, judging by the number of

people who vote. In addition, this is an electorate firmly anchored on the right. The success of the National Front in these Western sections of Paris probably points to a xenophobic reaction which the French voters had towards the immigrants they employed or encountered. In addition, it is safe to assume a political reaction to the Socialist government in power (protest vote). Exasperated with the left, they seem to have gone much farther to the right than they normally would have. 18

Two years later, during the legislative elections of 1986, the National Front had a return of 10.99% in the city of Paris. This time, however, the major area of Parisian support did not come from the West as it had two years before. Instead the support came from the North-Eastern sections of the city. This is a much poorer area comprised mostly of working-class neighborhoods. In fact between 50 and 56% of its French population are workers (ouvriers). These North-Eastern neighborhoods also house the highest percentage of North African immigrants (Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans), who comprise 29% of the total foreign population of Paris. As opposed to the European immigrants holding service-oriented jobs, 58% of the Arabs are employed as industrial workers. The poor neighborhoods in which they reside are generally over-populated, and the living conditions are harsh. Politically speaking, there is another difference between this area and the richer, Western sections of the city. First of all, the French workers are less politically active than their bourgeois neighbors, as determined by the number of voter abstentions. Most importantly

however, the poor voters of the North-East traditionally stick to the political left. In the elections of 1981, for example, West Paris voted for the right, while the North-East working-class neighborhoods voted at a rate of 60% for the Socialists. However, it is also this section where the number of abstentions was the highest. 19

So we see, from one election to the next, a significant shift in the support base of the National Front. The bourgeois conservatives voted in large numbers for the National Front in the European elections of 1984. However, by 1986 they seem to have returned their votes to the conventional right, while the poor working-classes, who usually vote for the left, gave their protest votes to Le Pen. What are the reasons for this shift? According to one analyst, the reasons are mostly economic and political. The early 1980's experienced an economic crisis (recession) including a significant increase in unemployment. The North-Eastern sections of Paris became quite overcrowded and uncomfortable. There was also a general disillusionment with the Socialist government. Le Pen's nationalistic approach, and especially his handy use of the Arab immigrants as a scapegoat for the economic problems of the country, greatly appealed to the lower working classes who cohabitated with these very immigrants. Consequently, these electors switched their votes from the left to the extreme right for the legislative elections of 1986. The residents of the more bourgeois neighborhoods, on the other hand, decided against the party for whom they had voted two years earlier. One possible reason is simply their

return to the traditional right. Since the European election was perceived as largely inconsequential (because it would not affect them directly), they could afford to express their disapproval of the Socialist government by voting for the extreme right. However, with the advent of an important election, they may have chosen to cast a vote which would really count, in terms of actually electing a significant number of conservatives to Parliament. 20

So the electorate of the National Front has evolved over the years. Today, the party finds its support base among the poorer, lower classes who believe themselves to be directly affected by the immigrants with whom they share their neighborhoods. The worsening economic situation of the large Mediterranean cities, plus the proportionately high number of immigrants who live there, explains why these areas exhibit the greatest amount of support for the National Front. It is in cities like Marseille that the party has hopes of gaining local power before moving into the national political arena.

Yet, there are many who claim that Le Pen's success has already been significant enough to have granted him political clout. He seems to have laid claim to certain aspects of the national agenda, and has, perhaps, even affected the workings of the established parties. In any case, it is clear that the traditional parties of both the left and the right have their work cut out for them.

In an attempt to analyze the increasing popularity of the National Front, thus far, we have approached the movement and its leader from several different perspectives. First, we looked at Le Pen himself and what he has contributed to the party. Second, we examined the National Front's electorate to determine the origin and intensity of support. At this point we must ask whether or not Le Pen has any influence beyond his circle of supporters. How does the National Front, and Le Pen as its leader, fit into the national arena of French politics? -or does it? What have been the reactions, if any, of the more established parties? Do they feel threatened, challenged, or completely unaffected? In other words, does Lepenism radiate beyond the National Front and either directly or indirectly influence the national political agenda? In order to determine this we must examine the reactions of the established parties to the Le Pen phenomenon. I shall begin with the moderate right, (the RPR), move to the traditional left, and conclude with the established party of the far left, the Communists.

I begin with the conventional right because certainly many, if not most, of the National Front electorate originated here. In the early 1980's there were a number of collaborations between the established right and the National Front. The Rassemblement Pour la République, the RPR, is the party of the right, and the Union pour la Démocratie Française, or UDF, is a right-leaning centrist party. These two parties very often form coalitions in order to gain a majority against the Socialist party. However, in some cases their union has been insufficient

to achieve a majority; thus, there are several instances of an RPR-UDF-NF coalition. This was the case in the previously cited city of Dreux, during the municipal elections of 1983. The list of National Front candidates, headed by Jean-Pierre Stirbois, received 17% in the first round. Consequently, four National Front candidates were incorporated into the second round coalition list of the opposition right. It was through this combined effort that they defeated the Socialists. The alliance with the National Front was applauded by the national leader of the RPR, Jacques Chirac. In fact all of the major leaders of the right approved except for Simone Veil. Her objection, however, was dismissed by these leaders as a result of "personal problems," apparently a reference to the fact that she is Jewish and was deported during World War Two. 24

The Dreux election, as noted above, was among the National Front's first major victories, and Le Pen's success attracted much attention. In January of 1984, only four months following the second round in Dreux, Le Pen was asked to take part in a series of political programs. Excerpts of these journalistic interviews were often shown the next day on the national news. Le Pen was given the opportunity to explain and defend his policies. In addition, "each time an established leader of the right appeared on an interview, he was forced to define himself relative to Le Pen."²⁵ As the media attention increased, it grew more difficult for the voting public to remain indifferent.

The number of both sympathizers and opponents increased, although many of Le Pen's basic themes remained popular.

By the Spring of 1985, the leaders of the traditional right generally opposed an alliance with the National Front. Although the reasons for this evolution are difficult to pinpoint, there seems to have been some influence by both the church and other anti-racist movements. Additionally, the success of the extreme right during the European elections probably convinced established party leaders that the National Front was not simply experiencing a transitory victory, but actually presented them with a formidable political challenge. The RPR later issued a formal announcement that there were to be no alliances whatsoever between its party members and those of the National Front--even on the local level. 26

Although the National Front had lost some support among voters of the traditional right, many of Le Pen's themes remained quite popular. It is due to this very fact that the gradual distancing of the rightist parties from the National Front was accompanied by the incorporation of Lepenien themes onto their national agendas. For example, both the RPR and the UDF proposed measures aimed at encouraging immigrants to return to their native countries, as well as at reducing social benefits paid to permanent residents. In addition, the RPR suggested reforms of the naturalization laws to make becoming a citizen more difficult. 27

Gradually, more and more anti-immigration rhetoric has found its way into the speeches of party leaders. Politicians generally came to believe that Le Pen's success implied two things: first, the legitimacy and gravity of the

immigration issue, and second, the problem of the National Front as a drain on their electorates. In order to win back some of their voters, party leaders agreed that they must attack the problem at its source. For example, Jacques Chirac "hit out at the immigrant population of France as a source of unemployment and urban tension, and as a drain on the national purse." And, the ex-president of France, Giscard d'Estaing, responding to the question of how the opposition--that is, the right--should deal with the National Front, stated that "the problem of the extreme right's success must be tackled at its root: immigration." 28

This evolution of the right from an attitude of support to an absolute refusal to collaborate has continued to the present. During the 1988 presidential elections the RPR leader Chirac found himself in a very difficult situation. After the first round of elections, the Socialist Mitterand stood with 34% of the vote; Chirac had less than 20%. In order for the latter to win the second round, he would have to get all the votes given the centrist UDF candidate Raymond Barre--an extremely unlikely prospect--plus the great majority of the National Front voters. Obviously this presented a sticky situation since he would have to please people on both ends of the rightist spectrum. Should he make a plea for the 14% who voted Le Pen and risk sending many moderates into the Socialist camp? Or should he give in to the liberal constituency and ignore the extremists completely? 29 The political strategists in all camps were hard at work the weeks between the first and second rounds. Chirac's advisers

finally agreed on absolutely no discussions with Le Pen. One of them told him: "Your future does not end on May 8th. You have another ten years ahead of you. Don't compromise yourself by playing, for example, a violin under Le Pen's balcony." 30

The situation was, of course, not just in Chirac's hands, for Le Pen had a choice to make as well. Knocked out of the final race, he could still influence its outcome by asking his loyal electorate to vote for either Mitterand or Chirac. He could even ask them to abstain completely. However, certain men at the top of the National Front hierarchy were at odds as to whom they should endorse. Some preferred the right for its political values while others believed the National Front would fare better if the country were in the hands of a Socialist. 31 So we see the difficult situation Chirac was put in by the power and presence of the National Front. And, interestingly enough, the Socialists have not been immune to its challenge either.

The victory at Dreux, a turning point for Le Pen, as well as for the platforms of the established right, also affected the policies of the leftist government. In 1984 the Socialist Prime Minister, Laurent Fabius, said on national television that although he disagreed with Le Pen's solutions, the questions he posed were indeed valid. One month later new measures were enacted to help control the influx of immigrants. For example, "stiffer sanctions against illegal immigration were announced, together with new measures to clamp down on wives and families joining immigrant workers in France. Stricter border controls were to be brought into force, with a more rigorous system for

tracking down 'fake tourists.'" 32 These measures are especially significant in light of Mitterand's traditional stance on immigrants: namely, that all immigrants residing on French territory for at least five years will, or should, have the right to vote in municipal elections. However, the rise of the National Front has forced Mitterand to de-emphasize this proposition considerably. In 1985 Mitterand conceded the unpopularity of the proposal and claimed it was not worth alienating the people from the government. 33

Mitterand seems to have given in to the other Lepenien theme of 'law and order' as well. Although the Socialists have dealt with the problem of "insecurity" cautiously in the past, they have recognized the necessity of addressing the public's concern about crime. Over the past three years the French government promised 400 million [English pounds] to a new training program and new technology for the police force--which came at a time of public spending cutbacks. Here again we see the influence of the National Front reaching far beyond its own political boundaries. 34

These governmental actions may have been enforced somewhat reluctantly. However, there are many who claim the Socialists have only themselves to blame. In 1985, Mitterand instituted a change in the system of representation. He changed it from a majority system--in which only the party receiving a majority of the votes sends representatives to parliament--to a system of proportional representation, in which each party is represented according to its proportion of the total vote. The

majority system favors the large parties because it denies the others entrance into legislative government. The proportional system, on the other hand, benefits the smaller parties by allotting them at least a few seats. By instituting this change, Mitterand hoped to divide the right, so the Socialists--who had lost their majority--could maintain power. In his desire to break the opposition, however, it seems he was responsible for Le Pen's first real victories, and consequently, legitimation by proof of support. Mitterand has been sharply criticized for this action, and he must certainly wonder if he has created a monster. 35

The success of the National Front following the institution of proportional representation had two important results. First, it gave Le Pen's party some legitimacy. Second, and perhaps more crucial, is the fact that, in some cases, the National Front actually holds the balance of power with which to break a tie in the National Assembly. In addition, the opposition has been forced to work with the National Front in certain committees in order to achieve a bare majority. An example is the Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee in which the National Front holds the balance of power. This bargaining position even extends to the regional level where the parties of the right depend on National Front support in several districts. 36

The National Front made the 1988 elections more difficult for Mitterand as well. As we have seen, he had to modify his positions on immigration and law and order, not only to please

his electorate, but also in an attempt to regain those of his supporters who had defected to the National Front. These are the voters, mostly factory workers, who began with the Communist Party, then switched to the Socialists, and finished eventually with Le Pen. 37

Having won the election, Mitterand now has a chance to repair the damage he caused during his first term. He will change the system from proportional back to majority representation. With this it is probable that the National Front will lose most of its seats. However, it is clear that with the support the National Front has already received, it will not disappear too quickly. 38

Let us finally turn to consider the relation of the National Front to the Communist party. Although this is a party of the extreme left, in the case of France it has long been considered one of the four established parties. Over the past decade, however, the Communist party has experienced a sharp drop in electoral support. There are varied reasons for this, but perhaps the main one is simply the political climate of the country. When the Communists were popular, a conservative party was in power. The Communists began their gradual decline in 1981, despite the coalition formed with the eventually victorious Socialists in the late seventies. The situation was further exacerbated by the public's disenchantment with the leftist government a few years later. This, in addition to internal strife and subsequent division, contributed significantly to their downfall. It is at this point that we

witness the rise of the National Front. In fact it is striking how closely the fall of the Communists parallels the rise of the National Front. In 1979 the Communists won 20% of the vote, in 1981 only 15%, 11% in 1984, and in 1988 the Communist candidates received only 5% of the vote. 39

Another interesting factor about the Communist party is that it was really one of the first parties to actively discuss the problems of immigration and security. Recognizing, perhaps, that a large proportion of their electorate was--or claimed to be--negatively affected by liberal immigration policies, the Communists addressed these issues nationally during the 1981 presidential election campaign. At this time, the other established parties had discussed immigration problems only on a local level. However, the Communist party retreated from its strident campaign after realizing that it was not in accord with its basic ideology. Although the major party leaders generally opposed the initiatives of the Communists, many local leaders supported them. Nevertheless, all parties agreed that the problems of immigration, race and law and order existed, and that a solution had to be found. 40

Le Pen certainly believes he has the answers, and so do a sizable number of French citizens. As we have seen, however, the influence of Le Pen and the party he created radiates far beyond the borders of his electorate. The reason he gained so much support in the first place can certainly be attributed to the gradual process of legitimation. Political scientist Martain Schain claims that this process was three-fold. First,

the party received a small amount of electoral support.

Secondly, the National Front was accepted as a "carrier of key issues." Finally came the acceptance by the political leaders of the National Front "as a legitimate partner for influence, mobilisation and/or decision-making." 41 By the time of the Dreux victory, this three-fold process had been completed.

Thereafter a seemingly more important aspect of legitimation occurred: namely, the incorporation of Le Pen's themes into the platforms of the major parties. This conscious decision by political leaders was essentially aimed at retrieving some of Le Pen's supporters. However, it is likely that the established parties' acceptance of the National Front and its premises further legitimized its position in the French political system. Moreover, Le Pen can be seen as indirectly determining the issues of debate and controlling political dialogue. This was especially apparent during the election of 1988. 42

The implementation of proportional representation, and the coalitions formed with the traditional right, gave the National Front a more actively influential position. The right, forced to work with the National Front, had to offer them fairly powerful positions. Since the Socialists lack a strong majority, both the right and the left hang on the decisions of the extreme right, since the National Front often holds the balance of power. Even the results of the 1988 presidential elections hung somewhat on Le Pen's decision as to whom he would throw his votes.

Obviously, then, the National Front has legitimized its

position as a real party of opposition. It has extended its influence into all the established parties of the country, and has acted as catalyst, "setting in train a radicalization of policy across the political spectrum." 43 Its members hold key positions in parliament, keeping the right on a leash, and determining the outcome of potentially crucial issues. But how long will this last? Is this the beginning of a great party, or merely the high point of an historically inconsequential one? This is difficult to predict. Yet, a clue may lie in the fate of the extreme right parties of France's past.

The National Front's success is based on its conservative platform and extensive support base. Moreover, the party's electoral victories have allowed it to extend its influence into the national arena of contemporary French politics. Yet the question arises as to how long the National Front will be able to maintain its popularity. Le Pen and his party are considered partakers in the classical right-wing tradition of twentieth-century France. Therefore, one indication of the future of the National Front is to analyze the success and/or failure of similarly constructed parties. France has a long history of extreme rightist movements, some more and some less radical. These include the Action Française, a less radical and very long-lasting party, especially popular during the 1930s; two other parties of the 1930's: the Parti Social Français, and the Parti Populaire Français, which exhibited both enormous popularity and high rates of participation, but which were rather short-lived; and finally, the Poujadist movement of the 1950's, of which Le Pen himself was a member.

The Action Française was founded on June 20, 1899. It grew out of the celebrated Dreyfus Affair, in which an innocent (Jewish) man was accused and convicted of treason in order to cover up the corrupt actions of several top men in both the government and the army. As the scandal was revealed, the founder of the Action Française, Charles Maurras, wrote an article in defense of the army. That is, although he certainly suspected that some of the military men were guilty, he felt that the army was a vital institution whose integrity must, at

all costs, be kept intact. He believed it was in the interest of the nation to keep the army out of the courtroom and off the scandal sheets.⁴⁴

Nationalism, then, was at the very core of the movement. This nationalism led them, by reflection, to believe that monarchism was the best political solution. This concept sounds outdated to our modern ears, but at the time it seemed fairly natural. One must understand that the Third Republic was created in 1870, and therefore had only been in working operation for about a decade. The political situation was rather fragile, and the members of the Action Française wanted security. For them, a strong nationalistic government was the answer, and this meant monarchism. However, although they had "come from nationalism to monarchism by way of logical reflection and practical empiricism, the men of Action Française were always to remain basically more nationalist than monarchist.." ⁴⁵ The ideology of the Action Française was simple, and it had a direct emotional appeal: patriotism, absolute sovereignty for France, antiparlamentarism, authoritarianism, and Catholicism. They yearned for action, and feared the people whom they believed threatened the ethnicity and independence of the French people; for example, the external threat of Great Britain, and the internal threats posed by the Jews and Freemasons. ⁴⁶

The period between the wars was a time of extreme political activity. Unstable politics, heightened by the economic hardship of the Depression, led to the formation of many small

extremist parties (or leagues) on both the left and the right. Moving with the times, the Action Française became more active as well, even though they were never formed into an actual political party. Historian Gordon Wright claims that the movement's "rabid nationalism, its refurbished traditionalism, and its arrogant elitism appealed to young activists in much the same way that Leninism attracted another segment of youth."⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Action Française was only moderately radical, and perhaps this is the reason it endured nearly forty years. For when the national political climate was subdued, the Action Française was the sole movement to voice the concerns of the conservative right. But when the situation became critical, many other, more radical, movements appeared which often overshadowed the Action Française. Of course, Maurras' party did benefit at these times of crisis because it could ally itself to another movement, and thereby pick up momentum. For example, in 1924, a leftist coalition, called the Cartel des Gauches, was electorally successful and took control of the parliament. As a result, all the rightist parties banded together and increased their activism. They were rewarded with a growing popular shift towards the right. ⁴⁹

Although it was originally the Catholic constituency which made the Action Française a success, it was also the cause of its downfall. According to Wright, many Catholics had become increasingly suspicious of Maurras, and came to resent the movement's tendency towards violent criticism. After having studied the movement extensively, the Vatican condemned it in

1926, and asked all French Catholics to ignore the Action Française and the paper it published. This devastated the group, which lost a major portion of its supporters. And,

When the crisis decade of the 1930's arrived, the Action Française found itself quickly outdistanced by newer authoritarian groups. Yet the insidious doctrines of the movement had made their way into the minds of an important minority of the French elite and had softened up that element for fascist or proto-fascist agitators.⁵⁰

In comparing this movement to the National Front, then, we see some similarities. Like the National Front today, the Action Française was very nationalistic, and claimed external and internal dangers were threatening the French identity. It also stressed the need for an authoritarian government, although certainly the National Front does not support a monarchy--a concept much too outdated for our times. Nevertheless, there are some major differences. The National Front is a legitimate political party, and wants to participate in the electoral system. Consequently, although Le Pen does verbally accuse his opponents of many things, he remains within the limits of acceptable political discourse. Violence and especially terrorism are not condoned by Le Pen or his party. The Action Française, on the other hand, never participated in elections, although they often claimed many members elected under other rightist labels.

The question we are asking here, of course, is can we reach any conclusions as to the future of the National Front by

examining the fate of the Action Française? The Action Française is an example of a fairly stable movement of the traditional French right. It endured almost forty years as the voice of the conservatives, at times when the political atmosphere was relatively calm. But the movement never evolved into an independent political entity, and although essentially nationalistic, it leaned on both Catholicism and monarchism as the foundation of its support. When the Church abandoned the movement, it basically fell apart because it never had developed a loyal electorate.

Next, I shall look at two movements which appeared rather spontaneously during the 1930's and which received extensive political support. The first is the Croix du Feu, which developed into the Parti Social Français; and the second is the Parti Populaire Français.

The Croix du Feu was founded in 1928 and began as a group for honored veterans. Although it began small, with approximately 500 members, it grew rapidly under strong leadership and substantial financial patronage. By the end of 1932 the group claimed thirty-six thousand members, and in 1933 it became clear that the leaders of the Croix du Feu had political ambitions. The movement's "appeal depended in part on its amorphous vagueness; any patriot who wanted strong government and disliked communism could feel at home here."⁵¹

By 1935, the Croix du Feu was the largest of the leagues in France, and maintained considerable influence over its members. A turning point in its development came in 1936 when the Leftist

government declared all leagues illegal. The Croix du Feu transformed itself immediately into a political party and changed its name to the Parti Social Français (French Social Party), or, PSF. Apparently, they had been convinced that participation in the political system was valuable, and could increase their influence significantly. They experienced their greatest success following this conversion. Unfortunately for them, it took place too late to realistically take part in the 1936 elections, and consequently only a few men made it into parliament under the wings of other rightist parties.

Nevertheless, the PSF did claim a huge proportion of the population: around three million by 1938. The party was well and strictly organized, with many local organizations, as well as groups for the children of party members. Their rise to power and influence, however, was cut short with the advent of World War Two. The preoccupation of this world disaster led to the dissolution of the PSF (among others). And finally, any hopes for a regrouping after the war, were dashed with the death of the party's strong and charismatic leader, Colonel de La Rocque. 52

The similarities between the National Front and the French Social Party are striking. Like the National Front, the PSF was guided by a conservative ideology which insisted on a strong, anti-communist government. Moreover, the leaders of the PSF decided to fully participate in the electoral system, and hence had the opportunity to gain considerable political clout. Although the Action Française lasted a long time, its own

doctrine, outdated beliefs, and lack of political constituency, were the cause of its downfall. In the case of the PSF, however, it seems their downfall was caused by external circumstances. Who knows where they might have gone had the war not interrupted their rise to power? Even the party's chance of a reunion was foiled by the death of its powerful leader. So, the social and political state of the country, as well as the continual support of a powerful and charismatic leader, could be two factors which determine the success and duration of a political party.

I will now briefly examine one other movement which appeared during the same time period. The Parti Populaire Français (French Populist or Popular Party) appeared in 1936 under the leadership of Jacques Doriot. The most interesting thing about the PPF is the political orientation from which it drew most of its support. Doriot himself had been an active member of the Communist party, and even held some fairly high-ranking positions. But in 1933 he did an about-face and, like Mussolini, who later supported his party, became a fascist. Anti-communism was really the only platform the PPF maintained, but it became quite popular nevertheless, eventually attaining nearly one-half million members. These members came mostly from two very distinct political camps: communist defectors, and more traditionally-minded conservatives, most likely misled by patriotic rhetoric. This was not a party which wanted to maintain the status quo, or reestablish the power of the elite. Their goal was revolution. They wanted to abolish the old

traditions and create a new elite. 53

The greatest similarity between Doriot's party and the National Front, is the composition of their support bases. As noted in a previous section, much of Le Pen's support comes from both the traditionalist camp as well as the communist one. Nevertheless, Le Pen's electorate is much less radical than the Doriot's electorate was. Obviously, the National Front is not at all in favor of a revolution. On this issue, Le Pen's party is much closer to the ideals of both the Action Française and the French Social Party, both of which were less radical, and wanted a conservative pluralistic system in which traditional institutions were respected. There is another big difference between the National Front and the PPF. The latter never developed a political platform which went any farther than declaring war on Communism. Consequently, the party could not attract anyone whose interests and concerns extended beyond this basic concept. It seems as if Doriot's party simply dissolved, perhaps due to a lack of support, and, of course, the war. Doriot's PPF is a party whose support base resembles Le Pen's, but whose ideology and tactics do not.

The final party which I would like to discuss is the Poujadist movement of the 1950's. It began with Pierre Poujade, a shopkeeper upset by the government's new tax enforcers (the officials sent to investigate the widespread practice of tax evasion). Poujade claimed that this practice was an absolute necessity if small-town shopkeepers were to survive. Poujade organized the Union in Defense of Shopkeepers and Artisans in

1953. This group grew very quickly; in fact it grew so quickly that it inspired him to turn it into a political party. His deputies, including Jean-Marie Le Pen, took part in the 1956 legislative elections and were so successful that fifty-two of them made it into the Parliament. The people who supported the "Poujadists" were principally those who feared the impending modernization of the country. This victory, however, did prove to be quite temporary. Pierre Poujade was not a skilled or talented leader. In addition, their platform, which was "ultra-conservative, ultra-nationalist, and decidedly--if mutedly--antisemitic," was not diverse enough to maintain a serious following. In fact, this party is noted for being a typical movement of the extreme right which disappeared about as quickly as it appeared. This is in keeping with some of the other movements I have discussed, for example, both Doriot's party and the French Social Party. 54

Where, then, can we draw the parallels between Poujadism and the National Front? The latter has indeed very often been labeled a neo-Poujadist movement--a misnomer in the eyes of both Poujade and Le Pen. Of course there are some similarities: basic ideology, and support base. The National Front is, like most of the parties discussed, nationalist, conservative, perhaps even slightly anti-semitic, and certainly xenophobic. Le Pen certainly draws some support from small businessmen as well. What caused the fall of Poujadism? Poujade did: he was an inept leader, and was not capable of developing a more diversified platform. Eventually, the party dissolved, leaving

its followers, like Le Pen, to create or attach themselves to other movements.

Our examination of these different French rightist movements, has, perhaps, offered some ideas as to which elements might be essential for continued success of a political party on the right. The Action Française failed due to its lack of political participation, thereby missing out on the establishment of a loyal electorate. It was a sort of political paralysis. Their dependence on Church support proved fatal when the Church withdrew. Their organization and influence was not strong enough to withstand this blow. While the Action Française failed due to internal problems, the French Social Party plummeted due to external circumstances. The advent of World War Two stopped this popular, diversified, and well organized party in its tracks. Its leader was powerful and charismatic, but he died before his party could be reconstructed. Doriot's radical French Populist Party never developed a diversified political platform, and therefore could not generate a substantial and faithful electorate. Finally, Poujade's party also maintained only a very limited platform, but failed mostly because Poujade was not a gifted leader, and he did not organize his party well.

In sum, then, some of the qualities which might prove important in the fate of a political party are the following: political participation and involvement; a strong, charismatic leader; solid organization; a well diversified party platform; a variegated, loyal, and voting, electorate; and finally, a

political, social, and economic situation conducive to political growth. Certainly, there are other factors which play important roles. However, from the study of the parties presented here, these qualities appear to be most significant.

What does a consideration of these factors suggest in regard to the future success of the National Front? Certainly, the National Front is well entrenched in the political electoral system of France, with representatives and local party headquarters all over the country. Le Pen has also proved himself to be a very strong and charismatic leader, who knows well how to organize his party. Although the platform of the National Front is centered on a few principle issues, there has at least been an attempt to diversify the party platform around issues ranging from education to European defense. Since 1984, it seems there has been a development toward establishing an electorate--but their ultimate loyalty has yet to be determined. The final condition is the social and political state of the country, and this certainly cannot be predicted. It is, then, entirely possible that the National Front will develop into a powerful party in the future, assuming that Le Pen remains the charismatic and undisputed leader that he is today.

The success of the National Front has sent ripples throughout the national and international political community. It is a phenomenon which exemplifies the possibilities available to small, marginal parties within the French electoral system. The passionate patriot, Jean-Marie Le Pen, has taken his moral and ethical beliefs to the public--and has received resounding approval. Le Pen has followed up with stiff anti-immigration proposals. He charges the primarily North African foreign population with having severely contributed to the rising unemployment and crime rates. This, along with his other themes advocating strong state security, less bureaucracy, and traditional values, is veiled in a shroud of fanatic conservatism and patriotism.

Le Pen is the superb orator who has virtually singlehandedly propelled the National Front from obscurity into becoming the fourth major party in French politics. Over the years, his electorate has evolved into one which houses defectors from the established parties of both the left and the right. Le Pen's supporters are generally encouraged by his rhetoric, persuaded into believing there is a way to relieve the depressed economic conditions under which they suffer.

As the National Front's electorate has steadily increased, Le Pen has extended his political influence. Le Pen's themes have become every politician's themes, both rhetorically, and in the form of concrete proposals. The question of whether or not each politician negotiates with Le Pen is a personal decision. However, one can be sure that it is very strategically

calculated, and critically observed. Nevertheless, it is clear that the National Front has affected contemporary French politics in a significant way.

The reasons explaining why Le Pen's success deserves the title "phenomenon," are now obvious. However, exactly what kind of phenomenon will it end up being? Essentially, is the National Front waning, or is it on the rise? This question I have attempted to answer with my analysis of similarly constructed parties. By isolating the fatal flaws of these losing parties, one can perhaps more accurately prognosticate the future of the National Front.

In my opinion, Le Pen has a good chance of promoting his party, and increasing his political influence. His superior leadership abilities allow him to both organize his party, and strategically develop his platform. So far, his support base has increased steadily, and it appears to be evolving into a loyal political constituency. Naturally, there are certain external circumstances which could severely curtail the party's rise to power. In fact, since the 1988 elections, President Mitterand has changed the election system back to one of proportional representation. As a result, the National Front received only one seat in the French parliament. This does not, however, mean that the party has lost its support. On the contrary, it is acknowledged that his electorate remains very much in tact. Nevertheless, it looks as if the political climate might be changing. Recently, another, ideologically opposed party, the environmentalist Greens, celebrated up to

twelve percent victories in certain areas of France. Clearly, then, the political situation is ever-changing, and every prediction is dependent on the stability of the existing system.

The eventual fate of the National Front hinges on various elements. The most important factor is probably the direction in which the party's Breton captain leads it within the next few years. And, as Le Pen navigates his political ship through the ocean of French politics, one can only wait and see whether he will sink or swim.

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