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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 32356

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TEXT
TAGS: PGOV, FR
SUBJECT: THE FRONT NATIONAL -- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND
PROSPECTS

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1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

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SUMMARY

2. JEAN MARIE LE PEN AND HIS FRONT NATIONAL (FN) PARTY
HAVE GIVEN THE SOCIALISTS A BOOST TOWARD VICTORY IN NEXT
YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BY EXACERBATING THE
DIVISIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNING CENTER-RIGHT COALITION.
LE PEN ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT ON 26
APRIL. HIS SUPPORT HAS REMAINED AROUND 10 OF THE
FRENCH ELECTORATE SINCE 1984, WHILE THE FN HAS HAD 35
DEPUTIES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SINCE MARCH, 1986.
THE FN OWES ITS STRENGTH TO THE PROPORTIONAL VOTING
SYSTEM PUT IN PLACE BY THE PREVIOUS SOCIALIST

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GOVERNMENT, TO A RISE IN UNEMPLOYMENT, AND TO THE ARRIVAL OF NORTH AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE. MANY FRENCHMEN SUPPORT THE FN OUT OF FEAR OF SOCIAL GROUPS DIFFERENT FROM THEMSELVES AND OUT OF RESENTMENT OVER THE SOCIAL BUFFETING CAUSED BY ECONOMIC DIFFICULTY. FN STRENGTH SHOULD DECLINE ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL AFTER THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS SINCE A MAJORITY VOTING SYSTEM HAS BEEN REINSTATED, BUT MAY REMAIN A FACTOR AT THE LOCAL LEVEL FOR YEARS TO COME. FN SUPPORT IS STRONGEST IN AREAS WITH LARGE IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS, HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, AND SIGNIFICANT "PIED NOIR" COMMUNITIES.

3. THE FN'S PROGRAM CONSISTS LARGELY OF ANTI-IMMIGRANT, "PRO-FRANCE" SLOGANS. ITS PROGRAM INCLUDES THE DEPORTATION OF MUCH OF FRANCE'S IMMIGRANT POPULATION AS A SOLUTION TO FRANCE'S UNEMPLOYMENT. THE FN ALSO ADVOCATES DETAINING AIDS VICTIMS IN SPECIAL HOSPITALS, RESTORING THE DEATH PENALTY, AND FORBIDDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOSQUES.

4. LE PEN'S CANDIDACY HAS SPLIT THE GOVERNMENT INTO THOSE WHO WISH TO ATTEMPT TO DRAW FN SUPPORT TOWARD THE RULING PARTIES BY ADOPTING SEVERAL OF THEIR THEMES, AND THOSE WHO WISH TO PROTECT THE APPEAL OF THE RULING PARTIES TO THE CENTRIST VOTERS WHO STRONGLY REJECT LE PEN'S THEMES. PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC'S DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PUSH PASSAGE OF A NEW NATIONALITY CODE THIS FALL WILL GIVE A GOOD INDICATION OF HOW CHIRAC WILL ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH THE FN. INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION THIS AUTUMN WOULD BE A SIGN OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO TRY TO COOPT FN THEMES. WHATEVER THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION, THE FN HAS SHIFTED THE TERMS OF POLITICAL DEBATE TO THE RIGHT AND PROVEN SOMETHING OF A PANDORA'S BOX. END SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION: THE FRONT NATIONAL AND ITS LEADER

5. BY GATHERING THE EXTREME, DISAFFECTED ELEMENTS OF THE FRENCH RIGHT UNDER THE BANNER OF HIS PARTY, THE FRONT NATIONAL (FN) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, JEAN-MARIE LE PEN, HAS INCREASED THE DIVISIVENESS WITHIN THE GOVERNING CENTER-RIGHT COALITION. HE HAS FORCED COALITION MEMBERS TO DEFINE THEMSELVES IN TERMS OF HIS AGENDA AND HAS HELPED MAKE SOCIALIST VICTORY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR MORE LIKELY.

6. THE EXTREME RIGHT FRONT NATIONAL PARTY, WHOSE PRINCIPAL THEMES ARE LAW AND ORDER, NATIONALISM AND OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENCE AND LIFE STYLES OF NON-WESTERN IMMIGRANTS, BEGAN ITS RISE WHEN IT CAPTURED 11 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE 1984 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THE FN ENTERED THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MARCH, 1986 WITH 35 DEPUTIES -- AS LARGE A PARLIAMENTARY GROUP AS THAT OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) -- THANKS IN LARGE MEASURE TO THE FORMER SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO

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INSTITUTE A PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM FOR LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. THE FN ALSO WON SOME 130 SEATS IN THE FIRST DIRECT ELECTION FOR FRANCE'S 22 REGIONAL COUNCILS. ALTHOUGH SOME BELIEVED (OR HOPED) THAT THE FN'S SUPPORT WOULD WANE UNDER A CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT, POLLS SHOW IT CONTINUES TO HAVE A FOLLOWING OF AT LEAST 10 PERCENT. EFFORTS BY THE GOVERNING RIGHT, IN PARTICULAR

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

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SUBJECT: THE FRONT NATIONAL -- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND THE NEO-GAULLIST RPR, TO INDUCE FN DEPUTIES TO LEAVE THE FN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP HAVE MET WITH ONLY MODEST SUCCESS. ONLY TIME, AND THE 1988 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, WILL TELL WHETHER THE MAINSTREAM RIGHT'S STRATEGY OF WEANING THE FN'S ELECTORATE AWAY WILL BE MORE SUCCESSFUL.

LE PEN'S PERSONAL APPEAL -- DESPITE SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

7. DETAILS ON LE PEN'S CHECKERED POLITICAL AND PERSONAL PAST -- INCLUDING HIS HISTORY OF PUBLISHING NAZI RECORDINGS, ALLEGATIONS THAT HE "HELPED TO HIS DEATH" THE MAN WHO LEFT HIM A CONSIDERABLE FORTUNE, AND ACCUSATIONS THAT HE WAS A TORTURER DURING THE ALGERIAN WAR -- HAVE BEEN REPORTED PREVIOUSLY (SEE REFTEL A). IT IS OF INTEREST TO REITERATE HERE, HOWEVER, THAT THE "REVEREND" MYUNG SUNG MOON'S SECT IS WIDELY RUMORED TO BE ONE OF THE FN'S FINANCIAL BACKERS AND THAT SEVERAL OF LE PEN'S RECENT OVERSEAS FORAYS (NOTABLY TO THE US AND JAPAN) WERE AT LEAST PARTIALLY FACILITATED BY THE UNIFICATION CHURCH OR ITS CLOSE AFFILIATES.

8. BECAUSE OF THE DISTURBING ASPECTS OF HIS PAST, AND THE UNSAVORINESS OF MANY OF HIS PARTY'S PRINCIPAL THEMES, A MAJORITY OF FRENCHMEN ARE OPPOSED NOT ONLY TO VOTING FOR HIM BUT ALSO TO SEEING HIS PARTY ENTER A FUTURE GOVERNING COALITION. 55 PERCENT OF FRENCHMEN IN A RECENT POLL THOUGHT THAT THE FN IS "A DANGER TO DEMOCRACY" (UP FROM 50 PERCENT IN 1985), AND 73 PERCENT SAID THEY ARE "CERTAIN NOT TO VOTE FOR HIM" AS PRESIDENT OF FRANCE. NEVERTHELESS, LE PEN'S CONSIDERABLE TALENT AS AN ORATOR AND HIS SKILL AS A DEMAGOGUE HAVE ALLOWED HIM TO ATTRACT AND HANG ON TO HIS ELECTORATE. EVEN HIS WORST CRITICS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HE IS CHARMING EVEN WHILE BEING VULGAR OR INSULTING, AND THAT HIS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IS ATTRACTIVE AND FORTHRIGHT.

WHY A FRONT NATIONAL TODAY?

9. ASIDE FROM LE PEN'S PERSONAL CHARISMA, THE FN'S RISE AND CURRENT INFLUENCE ARE DUE PRIMARILY TO TWO FACTORS: THE RISE IN DOMESTIC SOCIAL TENSIONS DUE TO HIGH

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UNEMPLOYMENT AND AN INFLUX OF NON-EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS, AND THE PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM OF VOTING. THE RISE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN FRANCE -- NOW AT 11.1 PERCENT, WITH CONSIDERABLY HIGHER FIGURES FOR YOUTH -- WAS PRECEDED BY A STRONG INFLUX OF NORTH AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE LATE 50'S AND 60'S IN RESPONSE TO DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN (NOTABLY ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE) AND TO A NEED IN FRANCE FOR UNSKILLED LABOR.

10. THE FN HAS SKILLFULLY SEIZED UPON POPULAR FRUSTRATION OVER BOTH JOBLESSNESS AND THE POOR LIVING CONDITIONS IN PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS WHERE IMMIGRANTS ARE NUMEROUS, TO FOSTER THE IDEA THAT IMMIGRANTS ARE THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF FRANCE'S PROBLEMS. MANY FN SUPPORTERS FEEL THAT IMMIGRANTS THREATEN THEIR JOBS, THEIR HOMES, THEIR WOMEN, AND WHATEVER LITTLE STABILITY THEY HAVE HAD. THE EXTREME RIGHT'S SLOGAN "THREE MILLION UNEMPLOYED EQUALS THREE MILLION IMMIGRANTS TOO MANY" HAS CONSIDERABLE APPEAL TO AN ELECTORATE WHICH REACHES WELL BEYOND THE CORE OF EXTREME RIGHT IDEOLOGUES.

11. SUCH TENSIONS HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED IN FRANCE. FRANCE HAS LONG HAD EXTREME RIGHT SPLINTER GROUPS, WHETHER RACIST, NATIONALIST, OR CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC. BUT A PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM HAS GIVEN LE PEN THE CHANCE TO BRING THEM TOGETHER. THE PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM PUT IN PLACE BY THE PREVIOUS SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, AND SINCE REPEALED BY THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT, ALLOWED THE FN TO ENTER THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE FIRST TIME AND IN SUFFICIENT NUMBERS TO FORM A PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WITH ALL THE STAFFING AND BUDGETARY ADVANTAGES A GROUP PROVIDES. BY GIVING THE FN THIS NATIONAL PLATFORM THE PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM HAS PROVED PERHAPS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE PARTY'S SUCCESS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.

12. PARADOXICALLY (IN PHILOSOPHICAL TERMS--BUT NOT TACTICALLY) THIS BOON IS EXPRESSLY DUE TO THE PREVIOUS SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, WHICH INTRODUCED THE PROPORTIONAL VOTING SYSTEM TO DIVIDE THE RIGHT BY FOSTERING THE RISE OF THE FN. NOW THAT THE FRENCH ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS ONCE AGAIN BASED ON A SIMPLE MAJORITY IN SINGLE MEMBER

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SUBJECT: THE FRONT NATIONAL -- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND DISTRICTS, HOWEVER, ONE CAN EXPECT THE FN TO LOSE MUCH OF ITS CLOUT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AFTER THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. THE FN WILL RETAIN MORE OF ITS CURRENT INFLUENCE AT THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS, ALTHOUGH IT IS LIKELY TO SUFFER DEFECTIONS TO THE MAINSTREAM PARTIES AS A RESULT OF ITS DIMINISHED

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NATIONAL ROLE. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT THE FN WILL IN PART REPLACE AN INCREASINGLY MORIBUND COMMUNIST PARTY AS THE RADICAL PARTY OF EXCLUSION, EXTREMES AND REJECTION IN FRENCH NATIONAL LIFE FOR YEARS TO COME, THOUGH ITS REDUCED POWER WILL MAKE IT MORE OF A NUISANCE THAN A THREAT TO THE MAINSTREAM.

THE FRONT NATIONAL'S PHILOSOPHY AND PROPOSALS

13. THE FN'S SET OF BELIEFS IS STRONGLY REMINISCENT OF THE "PHILOSOPHY" OF "NATIONAL RENEWAL" PROMOTED BY VICHY FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR II, OR THAT OF FRANCIST SPAIN. IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT THE PARTY ITSELF IS FAR FROM HOMOGENEOUS AND THAT ITS ELECTORATE IS EVEN MORE VARIED IN ITS CONVICTIONS. MANY FN SUPPORTERS HAVE RADICALLY DIFFERING POLITICAL GOALS, SINCE THE PARTY CONSISTS OF PEOPLE RANGING FROM DISAFFECTED COMMUNISTS THROUGH RACISTS TO ELEGANT MONARCHISTS. MOST FN SUPPORTERS, HOWEVER, BELIEVE IN ETHNIC HOMOGENEITY. THEY WISH TO RESTORE THE "NATURAL" HIERARCHIES IN SOCIETY. THEY TEND TO CHARACTERIZE AS SUBVERSIVE THOSE POINTS OF VIEW NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH LE PEN AND THE FN. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE STATE IS THE GUARDIAN OF VALUES, RATHER THAN THE GUARDIAN OF RIGHTS. THEY REJECT TOLERANCE OR MODERATION AS SIGNS OF DECADENCE -- ONE OF LE PEN'S FAVORITE TERMS ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL. THEY EXALT A "NATIONAL WILL," OR A "NATIONAL ENTITY," WHOSE INTERESTS TRANSCEND THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR OF LAW. THEY SPECIFICALLY REJECT MULTICULTURALISM AS A SORT OF MONGRELIZATION WHICH CAN ONLY LEAD TO THE DECLINE AND ULTIMATE DEMISE OF THE "REAL" FRANCE. THEY MAKE REPEATED REFERENCES TO A MYTHICAL FRENCH HERITAGE AND CONCORD, AS THOUGH FRANCE HAD ALWAYS BEEN OF ONE MIND AND HAD NEVER KNOWN SOCIAL STRIFE BEFORE. LE PEN AND THE FN HAVE EVEN REHABILITATED THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE SASH AS A SIGN OF PATRIOTISM, AND OFTEN STRETCH THEIR RIGHT ARMS OUT IN SALUTE, MUCH AS ANOTHER PEOPLE ACROSS THE RHINE TWO GENERATIONS AGO REVERED SIMILAR SYMBOLS OF UNITY AND COMMITMENT.

14. MOST OF THE FN'S SUPPORT DERIVES FROM A VISCERAL IDENTIFICATION WITH ITS MIXTURE OF BELIEFS, BUT THE PARTY HAS MADE A FEW SPECIFIC POLICY PROPOSALS. THE FN ADVOCATES "SOLVING" UNEMPLOYMENT BY EXPELLING MOST OF FRANCE'S ESTIMATED 3,000,000 IMMIGRANTS, REGARDLESS OF HOW LONG THEY MAY HAVE LIVED LEGALLY IN FRANCE. THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS WOULD BE SUMMARILY DEPORTED, WHILE LEGAL IMMIGRANTS WHO LOSE THEIR JOBS, WOULD BECOME INELIGIBLE FOR CONTINUED RESIDENT STATUS AND OBLIGED TO RETURN "HOME" WITH A SORT OF SEVERANCE PAY AMOUNTING TO THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FRENCH SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM. THE FN ADVOCATES COMPULSORY CULTURAL ASSIMILATION FOR FOREIGNERS WHO REMAIN IN FRANCE. IT

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PROPOSES, FOR EXAMPLE, TO FORBID THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANY MORE MOSQUES IN FRANCE AS A MEANS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF ISLAM AND STIFLE IDENTIFICATION WITH ONE'S CULTURE OF ORIGIN. IT ALSO ADVOCATES MAJOR REFORM OF THE FRENCH NATIONALITY CODE TO ELIMINATE AUTOMATIC ACQUISITION OF FRENCH CITIZENSHIP BY THOSE BORN IN FRANCE OF FOREIGN PARENTS.

15. AS PART OF THE FN'S FOCUS ON LAW AND ORDER, IT WISHES TO REINSTATE THE DEATH PENALTY AND FOCUSSES ON "PORNOGRAPHY" AS ONE OF THE SIGNS OF FRANCE'S CULTURAL DECADENCE AND THREATS TO ITS MORAL FIBER. THE PAUCITY AND IMPRACTICALITY OF THE FN'S PROGRAM IS WHAT IS MOST STRIKING, IN SPITE OF THE FN'S OCCASIONAL CONCRETE PROPOSALS. ONE ADHERES TO THE FN OUT OF XENOPHOBIA OR MORAL ABSOLUTISM, NOT TO FIND A COHERENT PROGRAM. PART OF THE APPEAL, AS WITH ANY OPPOSITION PARTY, IS THAT IT HAS THE LUXURY OF BEING ABLE TO CRITICIZE SOCIAL WRONGS, WITHOUT HAVING TO TRY TO RECONCILE SOCIETY'S CONFLICTING GROUPS AND GOALS.

FRONT NATIONAL SUPPORT AND TACTICS

16. AS ONE WOULD EXPECT GIVEN SUCH VIEWS, LE PEN'S SUPPORTERS ARE A MIXTURE OF MONARCHISTS, FASCISTS,

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SUBJECT: THE FRONT NATIONAL -- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND RACISTS, TRADITIONALIST CATHOLICS (WHO REJECT VATICAN II) AND OTHERS WHO MAINLY FEEL THREATENED IN THEIR JOBS OR THEIR HOMES BY SOCIAL CHANGES, WHICH ARE EASILY PLACED AT THE FEET OF FRANCE'S NORTH AFRICAN POPULATION. THE FN IS STRONGEST IN PARIS, IN THE EAST OF FRANCE AND ALONG ITS MEDITERRANEAN COAST, THE EXACT REGIONS WHERE THE PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGNERS IS STRONGEST. IN THE SOUTH THE FN FINDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AMONG THE LARGE "PIED NOIR" COMMUNITY (FRENCHMEN WHO HAD TO LEAVE NORTH AFRICA, PARTICULARLY ALGERIA, AT INDEPENDENCE), SUN-BELT RETIREES AND MILITARY PERSONNEL. (IT IS IN THE SOUTH WHERE POLLS SHOW SOME DEPARTMENTS WHERE THE VOTE FOR LE PEN IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE 1988 PRESIDENTIALS TO BE AS HIGH AS 25-30 PERCENT, AND IT IS THE CITY HALL OF MARSEILLE WHICH GIVES LE PEN MOST REASON TO HOPE TO "CAPTURE" A MAJOR TOWN IN THE 1989 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.) FN SUPPORTERS GENERALLY DO NOT POINT OUT THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGNERS IN FRANCE IS NO GREATER TODAY THAN IN 1936, OR AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. THEY DO NOT MENTION EITHER THAT CRIES OF CULTURAL SOILING WERE RAISED THEN AGAINST THE FATHERS OF MANY OF TODAY'S FN MEMBERS. IRONICALLY, FN SUPPORT IS PARTICULARLY HIGH AMONG SECOND GENERATION FRENCHMEN. IF FN SUPPORTERS DO ACKNOWLEDGE

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THIS FACT, IT IS ONLY TO ADD THAT EARLIER IMMIGRANTS WERE EUROPEAN CATHOLICS WHILE CURRENT IMMIGRANTS ARE "UNASSIMILABLE" MOSLEMS.

17. THE FN HAS FOCUSED CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS ON EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES, ALTHOUGH IT IS ALSO ACTIVE AS AN OPPOSITION FORCE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. IT REGULARLY ORGANIZES LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF WIDE-SPREAD POPULAR SUPPORT AND TO WIN CONVERTS TO ITS CAUSE (REFTELS B AND C). THIS APPROACH IS ALSO IN TUNE WITH THE FN PHILOSOPHY THAT PARLIAMENT, AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY, DO NOT REFLECT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE. FOR THE FN AND MANY OF ITS FOLLOWERS, THE POLITICIANS AND BUREAUCRATS HAVE "STOLEN" DEMOCRACY FROM THE PEOPLE. A MAJOR FN PLANK IS TO INSTITUTE A DIRECT POPULAR REFERENDUM. THEIR DEMONSTRATIONS, WHICH FREQUENTLY GENERATE COUNTER-DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIOLENCE, ARE ALMOST ALWAYS CENTERED AROUND THE FN'S MAIN CONCERN: "SENDING THE FOREIGNERS HOME." MANY DEMONSTRATIONS LINK THIS DESIRE TO "NATIONAL FESTIVALS", THE FN HAVING ADOPTED JOAN OF ARC AS ITS HEROINE.

18. LE PEN HAS SOLID CONTROL OVER HIS PARTY, WHICH WOULD LIKELY BREAK INTO COMPETING FACTIONS WITHOUT HIS UNIFYING INFLUENCE. NEVERTHELESS, PREPARATIONS FOR HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAVE CAUSED STRAINS IN THE FN ORGANIZATION. LE PEN HAS BROUGHT RELATIVE MODERATES, LIKE BRUNO MEGRET (A FORMER UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR WHO IS NOW LE PEN'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN MANAGER) TO JOIN THE TOP LEVELS OF THE PARTY IN AN EFFORT TO WIN THE SUPPORT OF A WIDER SECTION OF FRENCH SOCIETY. THIS HAS BEEN RESENTED BY THE OLD GUARD OF TRUE BELIEVERS LIKE JEAN-PIERRE STIRBOIS (LONG TIME FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JEAN MARIE LE PEN AND THE FN'S NUMBER TWO MAN). THE NEW TEAM, WHICH COEXISTS ALONGSIDE THE TRADITIONALISTS, HAS DEVELOPED A CAMPAIGN STRATEGY WHICH FOCUSES ON THE PARTY'S GREATEST AND LEAST DIVISIVE ASSET: LE PEN THE MAN. THE IMAGE OF THE FN IS STRONGLY REPULSIVE TO MANY, BUT LE PEN HIMSELF HAS A CHARISMATIC EFFECT EVEN ON SOME WHO DISAGREE WITH MUCH OF WHAT THE FN REPRESENTS. THE RECENT, MEDIA-CONSCIOUS ARRIVALS ARE IN THIS WAY ATTEMPTING TO BROADEN THE FN'S SUPPORT WITHOUT CHANGING ITS BASIC THEMES.

19. LE PEN DECLARED HIS CANDIDACY ON 26 APRIL, BECOMING THE FIRST TO ANNOUNCE FOR THE OFFICE. THE COMBINATION OF BEING FIRST AND BEING THE LEADER OF THE FN DREW INTENSE MEDIA, AND HENCE POLITICAL ATTENTION FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. LE PEN FOLLOWED HIS ANNOUNCEMENT BY APPEARING ON THE "HOUR OF TRUTH" (FRANCE'S FACE THE NATION), WHERE HE STIRRED CONTROVERSY BY ADVOCATING SUCH POSITIONS AS THE OBLIGATORY QUARANTINE OF ANYONE TESTING POSITIVE FOR AIDS. THIS GENERATED YET MORE PUBLICITY, WHICH LED IN TURN TO A PUBLIC DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS WITHIN THE MAINSTREAM CONSERVATIVE PARTIES AND THE FRENCH

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GOVERNMENT ITSELF.

DIVISIONS ON THE RIGHT EXACERBATED

20. MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, GENERALLY BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY UDF COALITION MEMBERS, QUICKLY LASHED OUT AT LE PEN. THOSE WHO SPOKE OUT WERE REFLECTING SINCERE

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SUBJECT: THE FRONT NATIONAL -- RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND MORAL OUTRAGE AT LE PEN'S STATEMENTS, THOUGH IN SOME CASES CONCERN OVER THE FN'S RACIST AND DISCRIMINATORY APPROACH ALSO COINCIDED WITH THEIR OWN POLITICAL CALCULATIONS. MINISTER OF COMMERCE, MICHEL NOIR, A MEMBER OF CHIRAC'S RPR, TOOK THE LEAD BY DECLARIM "IT IS BETTER TO LOSE AN ELECTION EVEN IF IT IS A PRESIDENTIAL ONE THAN TO LOSE ONE'S SOUL" (REFTEL D). CLAUDE MALHURET, MINISTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS, HITHERTO A RELATIVELY OBSCURE MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT, LEAPED TO PROMINENCE BY DENOUNCING THE FN'S POSITIONS AS CONSISTING OF "VIOLENCE, HATE, AND CONDEMNATION OF OTHERS". THOUGH HE IS WIDELY REPUTED TO SHARE HIS MINISTERS' ABHORRENCE OF THE FN'S THEMES, PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC REPRIMANDED HIS MINISTERS FOR THEIR OUTBURSTS AND REMINDED THE "OFFENDERS" THAT MEMBERS OF CABINET ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO SPEAK ON MATTERS OUTSIDE THEIR MINISTERIAL COMPETENCE.

THE RIGHT'S DILEMMA: HOW TO REACH THE ELYSEE DESPITE LE PEN

21. ASIDE FROM THE MORAL ISSUES INVOLVED, THE RIGHT -- AND PARTICULARLY CHIRAC'S RPR PARTY -- FACES A CHOICE BETWEEN TWO COMPETING STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN THE 1988 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. ONE APPROACH, FAVORED BY PASQUA AND OTHERS IN THE "OLD GUARD" OF BOTH THE RPR AND THE PARTI REPUBLICAIN, IS TO SEEK TO WIN OVER FN VOTERS BY ADOPTING SOME OF THE FN'S THEMES. THE OTHER STRATEGY, FAVORED BY MOST OF THE UDF AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN THE RPR, IS TO CONCENTRATE ON HANGING ON TO CENTRIST VOTERS WHO, IT IS FEARED, COULD BOLT TO THE LEFT IF THE RIGHT SEEMS TO BE COZYING UP TO LE PEN'S THESES.

22. CHIRAC'S ELECTORAL CHANCES IN THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION -- INDEED HIS PROSPECTS OF WINNING THE RIGHT'S PRIMARIES OVER LIKELY CONTENDER RAYMOND BARRE -- ARE THE MOST THREATENED BY LE PEN AND THE FN. PERHAPS ONE HALF OF THE FN'S SUPPORT CAN BE CONSIDERED POTENTIAL RPR VOTERS, AND THEY WILL ALL BE NEEDED FOR VICTORY. ACCORDING TO INTERIOR MINISTER PASQUA AND OTHERS IN THE RPR "OLD GUARD," THE OBJECTIVE IS THEREFORE TO AVOID OSTRACIZING FN VOTERS WHOSE SUPPORT

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WILL BE NEEDED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IF THE RULING MAJORITY CRITICIZES THE FN TOO DIRECTLY, AS NOIR, LEOTARD, AND OTHERS HAVE DONE, IT RISKS ALIENATING FN SUPPORT. HENCE THE STRATEGY -- WHICH AT PRESENT HAS CHIRAC'S BLESSING -- OF NOT ATTACKING LE PEN TOO DIRECTLY AND ADOPTING SEVERAL FN-SOUNDING THEMES. PASQUA, FOR EXAMPLE, SPOKE LAST MONTH OF PREPARING SPECIAL TRAINS FOR DEPORTING UNDESIRABLE IMMIGRANTS. THIS WAS A SHOCKING CHOICE OF WORDS, WHICH CONJURED UP IMAGES OF NAZI DEPORTATIONS 45 YEARS AGO, JUST AS THE **KLAUS BARBIE** TRIAL WAS GETTING UNDERWAY, BUT ONE CLEARLY INTENDED FOR AN AUDIENCE OF FN SYMPATHIZERS. OVERALL, HIS STRATEGY IS TO SHOW THAT THE GOF CAN BE AS TOUGH AND AS EFFICIENT AGAINST IMMIGRANTS AND DELINQUENTS AS THE FN COULD BE.

23. PURSUING A DIFFERENT ANALYSIS OF FRENCH ELECTORAL POLITICS, MOST IN THE UDF, THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN CHIRAC'S RPR, AND A FEW OTHER CHIRAC ADVISORS BELIEVE THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL BE WON BY APPEALING TO THE SWING VOTERS IN THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. THE MORE ONE CURRIES FAVOR WITH THE FN, THEY BELIEVE, THE LESS SUPPORT THE RIGHT'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COULD EXPECT FROM MODERATE VOTERS, WHO FAR OUTNUMBER POTENTIAL FN VOTERS.

LE PEN -- LESS OF A HEADACHE FOR BARRE

24. LEOTARD AND THE FRENCH REPUBLICAN PARTY HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD PREFER RAYMOND BARRE TO CHIRAC AS THE RIGHT'S NOMINEE IN THE SECOND ROUND FACE-OFF WITH THE SOCIALISTS. THEIR CRITICISMS OF THE FN, BY ALIENATING FN SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT LED BY JACQUES CHIRAC, SERVE TO WEAKEN CHIRAC'S CHANCES AGAINST BARRE. THIS SERVES BARRE'S INTERESTS, AT LEAST WITH REGARD TO THE FIRST ROUND OF VOTING, AND HIS OWN REACTION, AS IT IS WITH MOST THINGS, HAS BEEN TO AVOID TAKING A POSITION AND TARNISHING HIS GAULLIAN, OLYMPIAN STANCE ABOVE THE POLITICAL FRAY. BARRE HAS OCCASIONALLY BEEN PROMPTED TO ISSUE A GENERIC CONDEMNATION OF RACISM TO PROTECT HIS CREDENTIALS, BUT HIS STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FN PER SE HAVE BEEN MOST NOTABLE BY THEIR ABSENCE. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE FN ELECTORATE WOULD SUPPORT HIM, HOWEVER, IF HE WERE TO BEAT CHIRAC IN THE FIRST ROUND.

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259 ONE INDICATION OF HOW CHIRAC WILL NEXT ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH THE FN WILL COME FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S