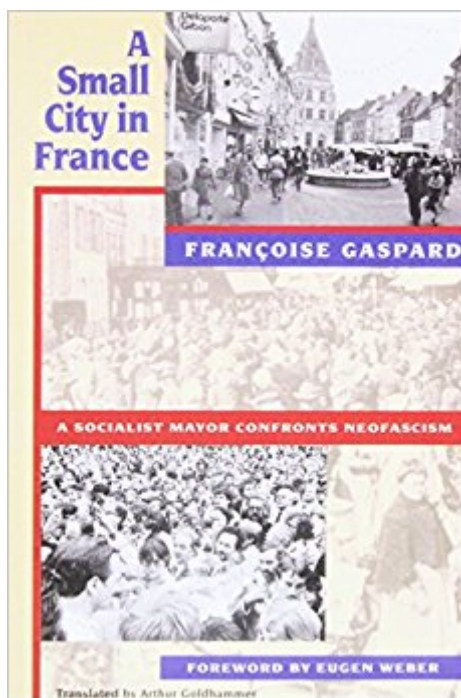


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A Small City In France



Synopsis

The picturesque town of Dreux, 60 miles west of Paris, quietly entered history in 1821, when Victor Hugo won the hand of his beloved there. Another century and a half would pass before the town made history again, but this time there was nothing quiet about it. In 1983, Jean-François Le Pen's National Front candidates made a startling electoral gain in the Dreux region. Its liberal traditions had ended abruptly. With the radical right controlling the municipal council and the deputy mayor's office, Dreux became the forerunner of neofascist advances all across the nation. How could it happen? A trained historian, Gaspard was born in Dreux and served as the city's socialist mayor from 1977 to 1983. She brings this experience to bear in her study, giving us an evocative picture of the town in all its particularity and at the same time fitting it into the broader context. Local history, collective memory, political life, the role of personality, partisanship, and rumor, the claims of newcomers and oldtimers, Muslims and Catholics: Gaspard sifts through these factors as she crafts a clear and rousing account of the conditions that brought the National Front to power. Viewed amid the explosive consequences of recent demographic and economic transformations, Dreux, with a population of about 30,000, is facing big-city problems: class conflict, unemployment, racism. This is a book about the decline of small-town "virtues" and, more ominously, the democratic ideal in France. With its disturbing implications for other European nations and the United States, it could well be a parable for our time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Françoise Gaspard's account of how the Front National was able to put down roots in the small town of Dreux, sixty miles west of Paris, is a highly interesting work of political anthropology...[Gaspard] has delved deep into the history of Dreux...The book has been well translated by Arthur Goldhammer, and offers a brilliant portrayal of the lost civilization of small-town France. It describes with accuracy and insight, as well as with passion, the cultural tensions between locals and immigrants which grew up in the new suburbs and their gleeful exploitation by the Front National, for whom a Muslim-run shop that wouldn't sell ham was a political gift. (Peter Morris Times Literary Supplement)An elegant case study of the appearance in France of the racist Front National (FN). Gaspard, a historian and native of Dreux, the city in question, was its mayor and parliamentary deputy when the FN broke through in the mid-1980s...This is an ominous and profound story, made all the more compelling by Goldhammer's stellar translation. A Small City in France may sound far away, but, with similar phenomena threatening in other parts of Europe and North America, it may be closer than we realize. (George Ross Contemporary Sociology)This intelligently constructed book is not the apologia of a defeated politician. It is an ethnographic and social history of more than French importance, for the problems of accelerated growth and abrupt decline which the author describes are international. (Phoebe-Lou Adams The Atlantic)The most significant book I have read on France in the Fifth Republic. Dreux's story is that of France. In considering the Front National, Gaspard does not simply condemn, she explains. Especially, her consideration of the problem of citizenship and the question of how to make democracy work in times of crisis is powerful. (John Merriam, Yale University)

The most significant book I have read on France in the Fifth Republic. Dreux's story is that of France. In considering the Front National, Gaspard does not simply condemn, she explains. Especially, her consideration of the problem of citizenship and the question of how to make democracy work in times of crisis is powerful. --John Merriam, Yale University --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gaspard, a historian and the one-time socialist mayor of the small town of Dreux, sets out to explain how the extreme-right National Front took control of the municipal council of Dreux in the 1980s. What follows is an insightful and provocative analysis of the failure of politics in an era of changing economic fortunes. There's much to learn here on patterns of immigration, town planning, and local politics. It is not beach reading, but should be considered essential for anyone who wants to understand the crisis of integration in France today.

I am astonished that this book might be the support material of a Harvard course...First of all, there is a massive mistake on the backcover of the book "Jean-Francois Le Pen" is in fact "Jean-Marie Le Pen". It is such an obvious mistake - it looks like a joke !But OK, let's admit it's only a translation mistake, it doesn't change the overall quality of the book. Just to let you know, the author is part of the left side of the french left wing - She is a typical example of the generation of "soixante-huitard" french intellectuals, who use to support the maoism if not the stalinism.

very interesting village in franc

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