

noir, could, that most French settlers in Algeria were not the owners of large agricultural estates but modest members of the working class. In truth, Camus had long been a more articulate critic of French colonial rule than Sartre or most of the Parisian left. Indeed he quit the Communist Party after two years in the late 1930s in protest against its general indifference to colonial issues. But Camus could not get past the violence of the National Liberation Front (FLN). The man who had courageously denounced the savage French repression at Sétif in 1945 could not, a decade later, appreciate that FLN violence had almost always been preceded and exceeded by that of the French. Camus had been ahead of his times in protesting the abuses of colonial rule; what ultimately escaped him was that the problem lay in the colonial system itself. Sartre, for all his periodic blindness, understood this perfectly.

Aronson's insistence that the rupture between Sartre and Camus was a tragic product of the Cold War is well argued. Yet it is entirely possible that some parting of the ways would have happened anyway. Camus was notoriously thin skinned. Sartre and his companion Simone de Beauvoir had always been slightly miffed that, despite the genuine friendship that existed between the three in the 1940s, Camus was never prepared, as so many of their acolytes were, to be part of the couple's adoring "famille" on the Rue St. Germain. It cannot have been easy for Sartre, the senior by eight years and the most prestigious *normalien* of his generation to be considered the equal of a man with the functional equivalent of an MA from a provincial university and to have received his Nobel prize seven years after his younger colleague. And, as both men were avid womanizers, it cannot have escaped Sartre that the infinitely more handsome Camus enjoyed a substantial advantage in that department.

Nonetheless this is an important book. Aronson is at ease with the philosophical nuances of both men's writing; he is also comfortable with the historical context. His writing is lucid and delightfully free of jargon. Although a great deal has been written about the post-1945 intellectual history of France, this book is high on the list of "must reads."

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Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home. France in the Global Age* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

Those who are interested in the cultural identity of twentieth-century France, and more precisely in the struggle for the legitimate cultural identity of France, cannot avoid Herman Lebovics' scholarship. After, among other works, *True*

France The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945 (1994), the author of *Bringing the Empire Back Home* tackles the period of the Fifth Republic and several milestones in its history: the farmers' protest movement of the Larzac region, the reconstitution of French ethnography, and the impact of Jean-Marie Le Pen on the debate over French cultural identity. The author is right to remind the reader that contrary to Samuel Huntington's highly questionable theories, a national cultural identity is not one-dimensional, nor does it refer to universal values (Christianity, for example); on the contrary, it develops from the tensions existing between the various stakeholders within a society (groups, social classes, etc.).

Lebovics' book could be summed up in a few words. To understand present-day France, one must explore, in his view, three historical vectors: first, the power of Paris in the history of republican France; second, the narrative and impact of regional aspirations and movements; third, at the intersection of the two vectors previously mentioned, the colonial and postcolonial Empire of France.

The provocative thesis of this book is that relations between Paris and its colonies were reproduced in metropolitan cultural policies towards the regions of France. This reproduction was mainly due to the redeployment of former colonial officials who possessed a certain "hands-on know-how" (180) as regional administrators following decolonisation. This practice was introduced by André Malraux, the Minister of Cultural Affairs (1959-69), and it sparked significant resistance from local movements. The mobilisation of farmers from the Larzac region in the 1970s was a good example that Lebovics explores.

The author shows that the success of the Larzac farmers was due, in part, to their ability to garner support from unexpected quarters. Against Michel Debré (former Prime Minister and Minister of Defense at the time) who, as did virtually all contemporary political and economic elites, supported modernisation (of the Army, for instance), the farmers broadened their audience by supporting a wide variety of causes such as "anti-colonialism, anti-militarism, the struggles for local power against a central domination, a new internationalised regional consciousness, ecology as a political force, and new-media-savvy strategies of resistance" (17). The Larzac area saw a convergence of people as diverse as: nationalist leaders from Caledonia (Kanak) and Corsica; Occitans; Japanese farmers; IRA sympathisers; Cheyenne native American activists; retired generals; journalists; Roquefort cheese producers; intellectual left-wing activists working in factories (the *établis*); social Catholics encouraged by the liberal politics of Rome after Vatican II, and so on. The only common characteristic between these disparate groups was that they were "allied – however uneasily – against the State and its army" (35). Pioneers of new forms of mobilisation (squatting, media actions, etc.), the Larzac farmers' success was all the more remarkable given that France, hit hard by the economic crisis of the

1970s, looked to a sanitized mythical past for a sense of stability and identity – a past where *produits du terroir* had no place.

The success of a handful of farmers against the power of an omnipotent central government is a singular one. Nonetheless, the leaders of this movement do not lend themselves readily to the image of farmers as traditionally conceived. As was shown by Anthony Obershall in *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (1973), the leaders of a movement such as this one possess traits which are clearly distinct from the groups for which they are the purported spokesmen. As regards the attempt to explain the mobilisations of these various groups (especially the “*établis*”) who were pitted against the government and the economic modernity that it embodied, Lebovics explicitly refutes Max Weber’s theory according to which such radical mobilisations are the product of an upheaval of the structure and social mobility of a given society (23). It is perhaps this point that deserves closer inspection. Several scholars, including Raymond Boudon, have suggested that it was the bloated system of education in France that lay at the origin, at least in part, of the student revolt of May 1968. Moreover, the devaluation of academic qualifications resulting from this distending of the education system led to surprising patterns among the holders of said qualifications such as the formation of hippy communities. José Bové, one of the leaders at the forefront of the French farming opposition, perfectly embodies this phenomenon: the son of university educated parents, and himself educated for a time at Berkeley College, he became a producer of Roquefort cheese in the Larzac region following a chaotic academic career.

Apart from and beyond the fight between central government and local political opposition groups, the quest for a legitimate cultural French identity is linked back to the role which each of these groups play(ed) in the social structure. Between a man like Michel Debré and the farming leaders there also lies the question of the legitimisation of social and political elites. Lebovics, in *True France*, made this same observation when analysing the radical opposition between Louis Marin, the champion of French conservative social science, and Paul Rivet, a member of the anthropological school of Durkheim and Mauss. Behind conflicting visions or paradigms of the world there also lies a battle for legitimacy.

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