



Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age (Radical Perspectives)

Herman Lebovics

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Thirty years ago, an international antiglobalization movement was born in the grazing lands of France's Larzac plateau. In the 1970s, Larzac farmers were joined by others from around the world in their efforts to prevent the expansion of a local military base: by ecologists, religious pacifists, and urban leftists, and by social activists including American Indians and South American peasant leaders. In 1999 some of the same farmers who had fought the expansion of the base in the 1970s—including José Bové—dismantled the new local McDonald's. That gesture was part of a protest against U.S. tariffs on specified French exports including Roquefort cheese, the region's primary market product. The two struggles—the one against expanding a French army camp intended to train troops for postcolonial wars, the other against American economic might—were landmarks in the global campaign to preserve local cultures. They were also key episodes in the decades-long attempt by the French to define their cultural heritage within a much changed nation, a new Europe, and, especially, an American-dominated world.

In *Bringing the Empire Back Home*, the inventive cultural historian Herman Lebovics provides a riveting account of how intense disputes about what it means to be French have played out over the past half-century, redefining Paris, the regions, and the former colonies in relation to one another and the world at large. In a narrative populated with peasants, people from the former colonies, museum curators, former colonial administrators, left Christians, archaeologists, anthropologists, soccer players and their teenage fans, and, yes, leading government officials, Lebovics reveals contemporary French society and cultures as perhaps the West's most important testing grounds of pluralism and assimilation. A lively cultural history, *Bringing the Empire Back Home* highlights not only the political significance of France's efforts to synthesize the regional, national, European, ethnic postcolonial, and global but also the chaotic beauty of the endeavor.

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