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TED W. MARGADANT. — *French Peasants in Revolt. The Insurrection of 1851*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp. xxiv, 379.

Ted Margadant has made a noteworthy contribution to the historiography of the Second French Republic by examining in great detail provincial opposition to Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of December 1851. His findings not only elucidate a relatively unexplored historical question, but, by adding to the growing corpus of studies on the Second Republic, help to demonstrate the extreme diversity of French provincial development. Significantly, this book follows closely upon the publication of a monograph by John Merriman which traces the process whereby Louis Napoleon's government was able to repress leftist republican movements in certain areas of France (Limoges, and the departments of the Nord, Creuse, Ariège, and Finistère) during the period between his election to the presidency and his illegal seizure of power in 1851. Professor Margadant's work introduces a different perspective, showing the ability of Montagnard republican structures in scattered communities throughout two dozen departments of the South-east, South and Centre to resist repression and even succeed in challenging Louis Napoleon's *coup* by insurrectional demonstrations.

Margadant's book aims at revising the standard interpretation that resistance to Louis Napoleon's seizure of power was centred in Paris. He points out that, while less than 2,000 Parisian republicans took to arms, nearly 100,000 provincial insurgents in approximately 900 communes confronted the authorities in different sorts of armed or unarmed protests, resulting in "the most serious provincial uprising in nineteenth century France" (p. xvii). At the same time, Margadant advances the theory that these provincial insurrections had the effect of "modernizing", or politicizing, many French rural elements who for the first time joined with city dwellers in building a leftist republican political infrastructure. Although the author thoroughly analyses the possible economic stimuli behind the events of 1851 and the ways in which these insurgencies conform to recent findings on social protest movements, he differs from historians such as Philippe Vigier and Roger Price who have emphasized the socio-economic underpinnings of these incidents. Instead, Margadant's principal theme is that the provincial rebellions of 1851 were essentially political phenomena.

Margadant interprets the uprisings as the response of local social-democratic republicans to the campaign of repression launched by Louis Napoleon's administration prior to his *coup*. Successful Montagnard opposition to Louis Napoleon's actions could occur only where leftist republican organizations had become firmly implanted in individual localities; and this development was possible only where "proto-urbanization", or "the expansion of urban influence over rural communities" (p. 55), was realized. This latter process saw Montagnard cadres from towns provide the inspiration for the establishment of leftist republican cells in neighbouring *bourgs* or villages. The successful implantation of this clandestine Montagnard infrastructure depended, however, upon the organizational and leadership qualities of local leftists, along with the ability of these local units to stave off government efforts at repression. Margadant maintains, furthermore, that repressive actions (arrests of local republican leaders, dissolution of Montagnard societies, etc.) actually strengthened the resolve of many of the social-democratic groupings involved. Thus, when individual or regional Montagnard leaders (there seems to have been no real republican network extending beyond the region) issued the call for opposition to Louis Napoleon's *coup*, many clandestine republican organiza-

tions in certain parts of provincial France responded by mobilizing, marching off behind their leaders, and confronting local government authorities. Margadant insists, though, that leftist republican insurgents had completely deluded themselves about their chances for success (or simply had failed to weigh the consequences). Unarmed or partially armed Montagnard demonstrators were able to intimidate isolated local officials and small detachments of gendarmes; and they actually gained brief control of numerous communes and a dozen towns. However, these Montagnard rebels tended to melt away or flee in panic upon the arrival of regular army units. The lesson learned by provincial insurgents in 1851 was that republican-inspired underground networks could not hope to confront successfully the organized power of the state. The investigations, trials, arrests and deportations which the government carried out following the abortive uprisings effectively destroyed the Montagnard movement. Nevertheless, Margadant contends, the 1851 episode constituted an important development in the "political modernization" of the French countryside, for the "progressive alliance of townsmen and villagers" which had been forged by the Montagnards "became a characteristic feature of southern French politics during the Third Republic" (p. 340).

Margadant's interpretation of the events of 1851 as a first step in the political modernization of rural France is original and thought-provoking, but also debatable. His assertion could be contested by arguing, on the one hand, that a similar politicization of the countryside had been effected by some small-town Jacobin clubs during the First Republic, or, on the other hand, that political modernization apparently occurred only on a limited regional basis under the Second Republic. Moreover, Eugen Weber, who based his findings primarily upon Southwest France, insists in his monograph (*Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*) that rural politicization was realized only as of the 1880s. Another possible criticism of Margadant's book is that it tends to place too much importance upon the Montagnard political infrastructure as the key factor determining the mobilization of provincial rebels. To be sure, the author acknowledges that both political and traditional considerations were involved in the mobilization, but throughout his work he stresses the former rather than the latter; on the contrary, Maurice Agulhon (*La République au village*) emphasizes local loyalties and pressure for conformity in explaining the success of the 1851 mobilization process in the close-knit communities of south-eastern France. In the same vein, it could be argued that the title of Margadant's book is a misnomer, for it insinuates that the insurrection of 1851 was indeed a "peasant revolt", while the entire content of the work indicates that it was a "provincial revolt" in which towns played a greater role than rural areas. These reservations about Margadant's interpretation, however, are not intended to deny the value of his contribution. The book is thoroughly researched and very well written, if perhaps wordy and somewhat repetitive; and Margadant proves extremely adept in examining the many complexities of Montagnard motivation, organization and operation in select regions of Second Republic France. In sum, this book contains a wealth of insights into and information on the structure of leftist republican politics in mid-nineteenth-century France. It should be read by anyone interested in the political development of provincial France, or in the general questions of insurgency, collective violence and political protest.

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