

**POLITICAL ECONOMY  
PAST AND PRESENT: A  
Review of Leading Theories  
of Economic Policy**

By Lord Robbins  
Columbia, 1976  
203 pp. \$12.50  
L of C 76-7264  
ISBN 0-231-04128-4

Lord Robbins, retired chairman of the *Financial Times*, long a professor at the London School of Economics, presents a concise overview of classical economic theories in the light of contemporary problems. He deals at length with Adam Smith, Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, and Hume; later theorists, including Keynes, get less attention. The treatment is thematic: What do these thinkers say about such basic matters as consumption, the organization of production, the stability of the economic system as a whole (tendency to glut? to inflation?), welfare and income distribution, international trade? Robbins is committed to the European liberal (free market) tradition, which he sees as having been in no way undermined by modern economic developments.

—Jon McLin

**THE PEASANTS OF  
LANGUEDOC**

By Emmanuel Le Roy  
Ladurie  
Univ. of Ill., 1974  
370 pp. \$16  
L of C 74-4286  
ISBN 0-252-00411-6

Twentieth-century studies of old French rural society have produced some of the finest historical reading available. Le Roy Ladurie's book first appeared in France in 1966 and justly acquired a reputation as a classic. The sharply abridged 1969 edition has since been translated into English. A "total history" of the Languedoc peasantry, it opens at the end of the 15th century and closes with the beginning of the 18th. The Languedoc story pits agricultural production, which remained mostly stagnant, against the demographic curve (the two blades of the Malthusian scissors). In the mediation between food and population, nature and culture were both so intractable that the chief mediator could only be death.

Weber's book covers all of rural France, from the birth of the Third Republic (1870) to the start of World War I. By the time it opens, the class that governed France had long since moved away from the policies and values of a traditional culture that Le Roy Ladurie describes as "destructive of its own economic foundations." Not so the peasants. Economic backwardness reinforced the chasm between "carnivorous" urban havens and the "herbivorous" rural territory, where,

**PEASANTS INTO  
FRENCHMEN: The Mod-  
ernization of Rural France  
1870-1914**

By Eugen Weber  
Stanford, 1976, 615 pp. \$20  
L of C 75-7486  
ISBN 0-8047-0898-3

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in 1863, one-fifth of the people did not even speak French. With the ruthlessness of B-movie villains, though employing civilized weapons (schools, roads, savings banks), Republican governments moved to colonize the minds and life of a peasantry for which ancestral tradition soon ceased to be the only rational option.

It is a pity that neither of these fine books has adequate maps.

—Joaquín Romero-Maura

**THE FILE ON THE TSAR:**  
**The Fate of the Romanovs**  
—Dramatic New Evidence  
By Anthony Summers and  
Tom Mangold  
Harper, 1976, 416 pp. \$12.50  
L of C 75-25050  
ISBN 0-06-012807-0

Two British journalists have unearthed evidence that only Nicholas II and his son Aleksei were shot in July 1918 by the Bolsheviks in Ekaterinburg: The Czarina, Alexandra, and her four daughters were seen as late as December in Perm, 200 miles away; George V and Lloyd George refused them asylum in England; pressure from Kaiser Wilhelm kept the women alive until after Germany's defeat; a German diplomat predicted that the Bolsheviks would fake a massacre; in 1919 White Russian investigators ignored pertinent testimony in order to create martyrs; today's forensic experts question evidence of a massacre. The author's credible spade-work and judicious conclusions make *File* a good read for historical detectives, amateur and professional.

—Robert C. Williams

**PLAGUES AND PEOPLES**  
By William H. McNeill  
Anchor Press/Doubleday,  
1976  
369 pp. \$10  
L of C 76-2798  
ISBN 0-385-11256-4

Historical writing usually assumes good public health, almost always mistakenly so. This work stands apart. Taking world history as his preserve, McNeill gives us a book that bristles with linkages between the devastations of plagues and the development of political and social elites; between disease and the decline of Rome, the structure of society in India, settlement patterns in China. World history is the story of communication, including the spreading of contagion among civilizations. Exchanges of microorganisms and parasites, McNeill shows, have gradually converted the isolated disease pools of antiquity into one interlocking world pattern.

—F. Gregory Campbell