This is a competent, informed book about recent French history, but it is a book that serves no clear function. As a work of scholarship, it has no glaring faults; its interpretations are balanced and judicious. The problem is that there are already enough general volumes of primary sources and good films like *The Adams Chronicles*, *La Nuit de Varennes*, and *Danton*, and you have the makings of a fine course.


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This is all the more true because the author does not follow up his suggestion in the preface that there is a logic in examining a period in French history bounded by two major experiences of socialist government, that of the Popular Front and Mitterrand. Had he organized the book in a more thematic or interpretative way, the result might have been more original.

Larkin's book is not well suited for students. It is more erudite than structured, more apt to allude than to explain. Because it assumes a high level of prior knowledge, the reader who can fully understand the author's ironies and nuances really doesn't need this kind of book at all, whereas the student will most likely be confused. In particular, the author's frequent use of French expressions and arcane allusions may amuse the specialist but not the undergraduate.

This is essentially old fashioned political history with some additional materials on economics and some passing comments about society. There is a three-page appendix on the arts, but that only calls attention to the book's narrow scope. The Mitterrand regime receives 25 pages and deserves more. The book contains no conclusion. Despite its author's command of the material, this work will not serve to introduce students to the complex realities of modern France.

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