

traditional political and social hierarchies declined while a negativist, nationalist, and possessive individualism rose. The contradiction between these two currents caused the revolution, which occurred when a united front of bourgeois and nobles abandoned the monarchy. Then Jacobin leaders from 1791 to 1799 all faced the same basic question: "How far should the propertied revolutionaries, incited by universalist rhetoric . . . and in desperate need of allies, agree to travel in tandem with the people" who had never forgotten their own communitarian traditions? Thus the American and French Revolutions developed differently because of the different qualities of individualism in the two countries.

Higonnet's analysis, which glows with erudition in both fields, is penetrating, subtle, convincing, and humane. One only wishes that it were written more clearly. Like Deane, Higonnet reduces complex concepts to single words, rarely defined straightforwardly, and then packs them into sentences that are so heavily freighted that his train of thought derails. Sometimes his style is eloquent: "In the administrative and social void caused by the collapse of the ancien régime, the Feuillants mistook the echo of their own words for the voice of the assembled nation." But more common are passages like these: "maieutic nationalism furthered yet another new politics, pluralistic but still messianic and exemplary;" or "many of the problems that brought down the elitist, individualist-universalist program of enlightened reform were not of the meritocrats' own making." If the author had taken the time and trouble to explain his ideas more thoroughly and express them more clearly, this book would be longer but much more useful in the classroom and even attract readers outside academe.

Nevertheless, *Sister Republics* is now the best comparative study of these two revolutions. With careful interpretation by an instructor (or better, two instructors, one for each revolution), this book could become the heart of an excellent course comparing these revolutions. Its arguments are bold enough for all students to see, and it navigates through the crowded waters of contemporary revolutionary studies in a way that will raise their historiographical awareness. Add a couple of 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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Maurice Larkin. *France Since the Popular Front: Government and People, 1936-1986.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Pp. xxix, 435. Cloth, \$64.00; paper \$19.95.

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 texts that deal with this period. To be sure, most deal with either the pre or post-war, but that's not a sufficient justification for a new book.

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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