

H-France Review Vol. 18 (May 2018), No. 97

Christopher Guyver, *The Second French Republic 1848-1852: A Political Reinterpretation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. xi + 366 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$100.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-1375-9739-7.

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Many histories of the Second Republic focus on the definition, evolution, unfulfilled potential, and downfall of the regime's republicanism. Since the 1970s and following a historiographic tradition that stretches back to Marx, scholars like Maurice Agulhon, Georges Duveau, Peter H. Amann, amongst scores of others, have analyzed the February Revolution of 1848, which toppled the July Monarchy; the growing tensions between the aims of moderate republican leaders and the needs of Parisian workers that came to a head with the suppression of the June 1848 revolt; and the December 1848 presidential election by overwhelming popular rural acclamation of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, all within the context of the development, varieties, and limits of mid-century republicanism both as theory and as popular movement. Special attention has been paid to the flourishing of republican newspapers, associations and clubs in Paris and the provinces after the February Revolution, as well as to the socio-economic and regional composition of the Republic's supporters both before and after the spring of 1848. Historians like John Merriman and Ted Margadant chronicle the ever-more conservative government's increasing repression of democratic-socialist groups, which culminated in the arrest and sentencing of tens of thousands of republicans who resisted the December 1851 coup d'état by Louis-Napoleon, that ended the Republic. Such historians, even those focused most fully on the creation of left-leaning or social republicanism, although never ignoring the more conservative elements of various strands of monarchism, Bonapartism, and bourgeois economic liberalism at play during the Second Republic, usually emphasize, as Merriman puts it, the "agony" of the ever-more repressed left, rather than the rationales and viewpoints of anti-democratic forces.[1]

Christopher Guyver's *The Second French Republic 1848-1852: A Political Reinterpretation* aims to add fresh insight into the Second Republic's formation and eventual demise by shifting the frame of study away from moderate and radical republicanism and its leaders to their legitimist, Orleanist, and other conservative counterparts. This is a story of high politics and politicians. To tell it, Guyver focuses tightly on a small group of powerful Parisian elites, the type of men whom Roger Price calls "the *state elite*, the ministers, deputies, and senior civil servants, and military commanders who to a large degree determined how the authority and the power of the state should be exercised." [2] The aristocrats and notables at the heart of this story first wielded political power and social influence during the July Monarchy in the Chamber of Peers

and Chamber of Deputies, as members of Louis-Philippe's various cabinets, and in Parisian salons. Although such men were "displaced in February 1848" by the revolution that toppled the monarchy, Guyver stresses that they were "absorbed back into power in the following months and years" (p. 2). After the early days of the republican Provisional Government, with its declaration of universal suffrage and creation of the Luxembourg Commission and National Workshops to quiet agitation by the unemployed working class, the Second Republic quickly moved rightward as national elections to the constituent assembly returned a large conservative majority. Of the 900 new representatives, "700 would have been eligible for election to the Chamber of Deputies" during the July Monarchy, which had imposed strict property tax requirements for all candidates, and 306 actually had been in that Chamber, mostly as members of the Dynastic Opposition, a group of Orleanists who desired a slightly wider franchise to include a larger group of propertied and business elites (p. 92). Thus, "after a short but eventful eclipse of the spring and summer of 1848, the habits learnt by the political elites over three and a half decades resurfaced" (p. 54).

Central to Guyver's narrative is his argument that though "the Second Republic was founded by republicans and killed by Bonapartists [,] in between, however, its politics was dominated by former constitutional monarchists" (p. 15), many of whom, like Adolphe Thiers, "accepted the republic as a historical fact," (p. 91) but came late to even the most conservative brand of republicanism and acted mostly in the interests of a continued "parliamentary oligarchy" (p. 298). These conservative elites were united against socialism, which they defined in a vague manner as a dangerous "materialism" amongst the lower classes and linked to state-sponsored idleness in the National Workshops, poverty, and crime (p. 114). Apart from this shared fear of the radicalized lower classes, which Guyver insists alongside other historians like Thomas Forstenzer was a real phenomenon and not simply a tactic to curry support, not much unified these men. This group included allies of the Bourbon claimant to the throne, the Comte de Chambord, as well as Orleanists and conservative republicans who grudgingly accepted the extension of suffrage, and both ultramontanists and more moderate Catholics.[4] This diverse set of elites spread influence and ideas in three primary ways: through writings both in books and Catholic-monarchist newspapers, through political reunions and plotting by like-minded representatives and their supporters, and via speeches before the Assembly on key pieces of legislation.

In crafting his analysis, Guyver turns to the tried and true primary sources of elite political history: memoirs, published political treatises, accounts of contemporary events in the newspapers owned and edited by leading conservative politicians and journalists, and legislative debates as recounted by eye-witnesses, the local press, and near-contemporaneous histories. Through Guyver's analysis of an impressive array of these sources, a core group of conservative voices emerges as the focus of his particular attention throughout the book. Some of these, like the Catholic champion of church schools, the Comte de Montalembert, or representative Charles de Rémusat, come to the forefront thanks to their voluminous memoirs detailing political intrigues. Adolphe Thiers, former Orleanist minister, emerges for Guyver as the key potential king-maker during the Second Republic through his speeches at the Assembly and in private correspondence. Still others, like the duchesse de Maillé, furnish accounts of social jockeying and the social fear of revolutionary violence. Thus, Guyver moves his narrative from detailed debates over specific pieces of proposed legislation, to the rumors of socialist bloodthirstiness that shook elite circles, to the numerous times Montalembert sent his wife and children to Belgium for safety in anticipation of social unrest, to the occasions when old elites of

the July Monarchy and the wives of newly elected representatives attended the same charity events.

Several conclusions arise from this detailed chronology of the legislative and political events of the Second Republic. First, Guyver demonstrates that reunions of legitimist, Orleanist, and other conservative representatives, especially the Reunion of the rue de Poitiers, were crucial for the formation and planning of various political strategies, since they allowed newly elected men to mix with seasoned politicians to form alliances and debate tactics. The rue de Poitiers reunion initially attracted nearly 200 representatives at the end of May 1848, grew to more than 400 by July, and acted on several occasions as a liaison between conservative politicians and Louis-Napoleon. By July, this reunion “began to increase its influence and to formalize its procedures, focusing on coordinating voting strategies within the Assembly” (p. 141). The rue de Poitiers group eventually turned into a central committee, or *Union électorale*, working under the umbrella moniker of the Party of Order to coordinate successful anti-socialist campaigns throughout the provinces in the 1849 elections. Such reunions, although nearly invisible to common people (p. 112), were for Guyver just as important as the republican clubs and associations that have received so much historical attention.

Second, Guyver stresses that many of the open Orleanists and conservative *républicains du lendemain*, politicians who tepidly rallied to the Republic after the February Revolution, continued to be uncomfortable with universal suffrage and the idea of mass democracy, which they feared would lead to socialist policies and unending worker unrest. These politicians simultaneously worked to reintroduce limits on suffrage and to support candidates whom they believed might eventually usher in a new constitutional monarchy, or at least shore up a conservative political oligarchy. Working through the rue de Poitiers coalition, men like Thiers and Montalembert helped assure that the post-June 1848 government, headed by the moderate republican general Cavaignac who had squelched worker uprisings that month, included many ministers with ties to the old laissez-faire elitist Third Party of the July Monarchy. Later, while legitimists like Falloux and Molé tried to organize a fusion of supporters of the Bourbon pretender with Orleanists, Thiers supported the presidential candidacy of Louis-Napoleon precisely because he felt Bonaparte could be directed from the wings to restore the sort of more limited, elite-oriented constitutional government, which he envisioned as France’s best way forward. Thiers even boasted to his mother-in-law “that he had done more than any other person to secure Bonaparte’s electoral victory” (p. 159). Whether or not this was true, after Louis-Napoleon became president in December 1848, Thiers and Molé “set about creating Bonaparte’s presidential image,” and largely orchestrated the new president’s first cabinet (p. 159). This “Orleanist experiment in the Second Republic,” did not last long, however, since Louis-Napoleon replaced them with more “pliable” newcomers in October 1849 (p. 200). Thiers quickly moved away from his early support of Louis-Napoleon, allying with General Changarnier (see below) and even contemplating supporting the prince of Joinville, the Orleanist pretender, in the approaching presidential elections.

Third, for Guyver the biggest threat to President Louis-Napoleon’s consolidation of power from mid-1849 to early 1851 lay neither with the republican opposition nor in the machinations of constitutional monarchists, but in the figure of General Nicolas Changarnier, commander of both the National Guard in Paris and the army of the department of the Seine. Changarnier first came to prominence by leading National Guard units that countered Parisian workers protesting the delay of national elections in April 1848. Later that year, he was elected

representative and was proposed by legitimists as a candidate for president, which he refused, although his name remained on the ballots. After his troops put down a republican demonstration in July 1849, Changarnier's "prestige was now at its zenith...his influence was at its peak" (p. 196), both in the Assembly and in terms of the loyalty of the army. Evidence of the troops' devotion to their leader, coupled with Changarnier's opposition to Louis-Napoleon's attempt to have the constitution modified to allow him to run for re-election, caused the President to strip Changarnier of his command in early 1851. To do so, Louis-Napoleon had to dissolve yet another cabinet, turning to new men who would help pave the way for his December 1851 coup d'état. For Guyver, this was a pivotal moment in the history of the downfall of the Second Republic, since it rid the Republic of the one man with potentially enough support both in the Assembly and in the army, who might have countered the coup.

Finally, Guyver argues that the Second Republic's rise and fall cannot be understood outside of the context of the earlier July Monarchy. The structure of his three hundred-page book underscores this fact: rather than starting his history of the Second Republic with the 1848 February Revolution, he begins it with the 1815 restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, and over the first fifty pages analyzes both the 1830 Revolution and political divisions in the subsequent July Monarchy of Orleanist King Louis-Philippe. This allows Guyver to tell the story of the many conservative elites who disliked the July Monarchy's 1830 birth in an illegal revolution, but endorsed constitutional monarchy in theory. After that regime's demise in 1848, such men believed a new constitution crafted by an elected Assembly of conservative aristocrats and notables like themselves might be the best route towards a legitimate constitutional monarchy, even if the new regime had to pass through moderate republicanism in its infancy. That Louis-Napoleon briefly embodied these hopes for many of the politicians of the Party of Order confirms for Guyver the importance of understanding his rise not only in the context of the Second Republic, but in terms of a decades-long search by political and social elites for the proper relationship between their own dominance and the legality of a constitutional state. This is where Guyver's book is most useful, for it re-envisions the traditional fault-lines of the narrative of nineteenth-century French political history to analyze the entire Second Republic, not just the days of the February Revolution, as part of a decades-long journey in constitutionalism that began in 1815, thus reading the various regimes of the period from 1815 to 1851 together as one story.

Guyver's book is not the first history of the Second Republic a reader new to the field should choose, for the account assumes the reader knows the history of key republican moments like the February Revolution and failed June uprisings. True to Guyver's focus, neither the February banquets, nor the events of the June barricades, nor, indeed, the identities and political beliefs of the common people are described in detail, though the conservative reaction to both gets much attention. But the prodigious detail on specific legislative debates and political maneuverings amongst conservative ranks makes this book a welcome tool for scholars tracing the evolution of specific conservative political stances and actors through the Republic. This self-proclaimed political reinterpretation of the history of the Second Republic reminds us that that the spread of republicanism and democratic-socialist ideas, while key to that history, is far from the only story to be told of the regime, and, according to Guyver, perhaps not the most important one.

NOTES

[1] See, for example, Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Peter Amann, *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Sylvie Aprile, *La IIe République et le Second Empire: du prince président à Napoléon III* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2000); Georges Duveau, *1848, The Making of a Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); William and Adrian Fortescue, *France and 1848: The End of Monarchy* (London: Routledge, 2005); Ted W. Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979); John M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1978).

[2] Roger Price, *People and Politics in France, 1848-1870* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 20.

[3] Thomas R. Forstenzer, *French Provincial Police and the Fall of the Second Republic* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981).

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ISSN 1553-9172