

H-France Review Vol. 2 (August 2002), No. 69

Bertrand Taithe, *Citizenship & Wars. France in Turmoil, 1870-1871*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. viii + 263 pp. Tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$90.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-415-23927-3; \$29.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-415-23928-1.

Review by Paul Lawrence, The Open University (UK).

The evolution of the concept of citizenship in France has intrigued historians for some considerable time and is a topic that has delivered (and indeed continues to generate) a very diverse body of research. [1] Equally, the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune have occupied an extremely significant place in the historiography of nineteenth-century France and of the Third Republic. Bertrand Taithe attempts an ambitious task. His aim is to link these two fields of research in a consideration of the question, "What does citizenship mean in times of war?" Drawn from an impressive array of sources garnered from work in five departmental archives, three municipal record offices, as well as numerous more specialized holdings (such as the *Archives de la préfecture de Police de Paris* and the *Archives épiscopales de la ville de Paris*), Taithe presents his material in an imaginative and wide-ranging text.

He argues initially that the concept of citizenship in France has been conceptualized by most historians via use of the metaphor of education. In other words, citizenship has been viewed as something that can be taught as knowledge, by intellectuals and politicians (and hence is little more than "civilisation revisited"). Thus, citizenship is often seen as something only reached after a long period of "apprenticeship." He claims that "it is obvious that the whole narration of citizenship constructed since Rousseau has stuck with dated educational thinking and with positivist teleology," and argues that, in fact, the narrative of citizenship is not linear but staccato, and that changes in the concept of citizenship can erupt suddenly in response to specific events (p. 2). Thus it is the **practice** of citizenship, rather than the **theory**, which holds his attention. As he notes, "Citizenship is not simply a conceptual right: it is or it is not in the detail of its practice" (p. 4). While he certainly does not claim that 1870 was a *tabula rasa*, his main aim is to show "How the French renegotiated their citizenship in relation to a state in chaos [...]" (p. 4).

The book begins with an overview and discussion of the historiography of the period, and Taithe is again quick to challenge what he refers to as the "canonical chronology" constructed since 1870. He notes that the myth of the nation in arms has tended to obscure the fact that the government in Paris quickly became little more than the government of Paris. This led to a real power vacuum, which decentralist forces soon attempted to fill. While still considering the Paris Commune, Taithe thus also looks in depth at areas other than Paris—Lyon, the Hérault, Creuse, Corrèze, and Haute-Vienne. These areas he claims, somewhat bafflingly, are not often "representative of anything but themselves," although he does note that they can be seen as "interesting exemplars" or "highly suggestive instances of what took place in France" (p. 16). As with much of the book, Taithe does not aim at a conclusive and sweeping "final statement" on the issues he discusses but rather towards a thought-provoking tapestry of ideas and impressions.

In chapter two (the first after the long introduction) Taithe sets the scene by assessing recent debates

on "Total War," debating whether the Franco-Prussian War can really be considered as such. He considers the issue of public participation in the war as central and devotes particular attention to the role of *francs-tireurs*, who he feels have not received the attention they warrant and who "didn't deserve subsequent bad press" (p. 27). By use of a statistical appendix he notes that "the mobilisation effort of the republican war of 1870 compares well with the later conflict [The First World War] in spite of a much more desperate and disorganised situation" (pp. 25-6). There was also a great deal of civilian involvement in the war, particularly in the provision of medical care--possibly prompted in part by the fact that hospital property was protected under the Geneva Convention! In addition to this, a series of interesting points are made concerning artistic involvement in the war. For example, during bad weather in Paris a snow sculpture entitled *La Résistance* by Fagluière became a popular tourist attraction for besieged Parisians. Thus in considering the notion of "modernity" in relation to the Franco-Prussian War, Taithe argues convincingly that "the war and representations of the war shook the notion of self and many concepts of identity" (p. 36).

However, he also asserts, "The Franco-Prussian war and the Commune were truly international events in which foreign powers played an active part, eventually pouring most help were it was most needed, on the French side. Out of this humiliating position as the recipient of alms the French obtained a moral victory of sorts by reversing their responsibility in the conflict to that of victim" (p. 37). By stressing victimhood, the French (according to Taithe) turned the war into a conflict of values and civilisation. While, again, thought-provoking and insightful, occasionally such statements can appear a little speculative, although this is in fact an issue which Taithe has explored in greater detail elsewhere.[2]

Chapters three and four both move on from this to consider "the way in which citizenship was structured to face the challenge of the invading armies" (p. 18). More specifically, chapter three explores "the rhetoric of citizenship and the key institutions through which it was defined" (p. 40), by looking at the National Guard, at the deployment of space in regional visions of citizenship and at the social dimension, reified as *La Sociale*. No specific methodological justification is given for this choice of division, although all three sections contain much of interest. The collapse of the French army in August witnessed the devaluation of the imperial legend, only to see it replaced by the cult of the revolutionary mass-war, and Taithe explores well the way in which the National Guard in fact "contributed to shaping the values they were meant to defend" (p. 44). Also vital in shaping the nature of debates about citizenship were regional organisations such as the *Ligue du Midi*, which was, as Taithe notes, "a debating arena which allowed many nuances to emerge" (p. 50). Eventually, however, patriotism became the one common language of all political sides, as "decentralist efforts were thus drowned in the mass of patriotic feeling which did not allow for a more vigorous debate" (p. 53).

Chapter four explores "Municipal Freedom and the War" through a consideration of the center-periphery relationship and the way in which the unrest of the period potentially gave local authorities increased bargaining power. For example, the war initially gave more power to the municipalities because this was where conscripts reported first. Moreover, the powers of republican prefects were lessened as they were no longer in charge of welfare, as this function increasingly was devolved downwards. Taithe is, however, clear to highlight the ways in which this process was far from uniform. In Lyon, on the one hand, the proclamation of a commune was primarily a reaction to a long period of imperial dominance by the prefect, and the elision of the two struggles "against invaders and against corrupting practices" also "served a municipal agenda" (p. 64). The municipality thus soon began to legislate in areas of finance and welfare without recourse to the prefect. Whereas "Tulle, on the other hand, presents an instance of royalist decentralization, which centered its vision of local democracy on the values of religion and peace and order" (p. 68).

There were always obvious limits to any tendency to decentralization, and many cities were reluctant to follow the example of Paris and radically oppose local and national sovereignty. When it came to the test, anything deemed "destructive of national unity" was unlikely to succeed. Interestingly, he notes

that the decentralist debate had important echoes in Paris. The first action of the government of 4 September 1870 was to hand local administration back to the Parisians. Each *arrondissement* took full political rights, and "only at the most local level could politicians find the support and small-scale power that was so vital in establishing a durable administration" (p. 72). The role of the National Guard is again stressed as, for Taithe, "the bond between citizen and state thus developed through the mediation of its elected council and of its National Guard" (p. 73). It is clear overall that a great deal of renegotiation of individual-state relations took place on a municipal level.

Chapter five develops this appraisal, but on a smaller scale, by looking at individual identities and how religion could or could not be integrated into discourses on citizenship. While "religion and citizenship in France remained two separate categories in nineteenth-century France [...]," they in fact occupied the same space and could only expand at the expense of the other (p. 81). There was some negotiation between the Church and the Republic, but, essentially, it retreated after the Commune uprising to its traditional monarchist allies and a "generation-long opposition to the Republic" (p. 19). The 1870 crisis came at a moment when the Church perceived its growing loss of importance in French society, and it reacted using emotive language and mysticism, which in turn helped to radicalize anti-clerical views among Republicans and Radicals to the point where Gambetta could claim "Clericalism, here is the enemy!" Thus Taithe concludes that "from the elastic definitions of citizenship of the Second Empire, wanting in democratic practice but all-inclusive in religious terms, the new republic found its own base and practices narrowed down and expressing an exclusive and, in its own secularist terms, sectarian definition of citizenship" (p. 103).

Chapters six and seven then both examine the tensions that led to such breakdowns of communication and to the "brutalisation" of French politics. Chapter six—"The Enemy Within"—notes that the processes of exclusion sketched out along religious fault lines were not the only ones and that issues of gender, age and "otherness" also have to be considered. In 1870, for instance, France was seized by a mania of spies and traitors, and Taithe concludes that "within the political language developed by the republicans, the term "Prussians within" (*prussiens de l'intérieur*) became increasingly useful in singling out their political opponents and negating their national identity" (p. 107). Overall, processes of exclusion increasingly narrowed down the definition of citizenship to a "core of male, law-abiding citizens of fighting age [...]" Suspected foreigners, prostitutes and criminals, paupers and invalids were thus evacuated" (p. 121). Chapter seven—"The Brutalisation of French Politics"—is the culmination of the reflections on exclusion of the previous three chapters and makes use of recent theories of brutalization. Hence, as with much of the rest of the book, a fair degree of prior knowledge is required to draw the most from the material and indeed to appreciate fully the range of the ideas offered. Taithe takes a number of case studies (including the murder of Hautefaye analysed by Alain Corbin, where a young man denounced as a spy is killed and roasted on a spit, and the spontaneous murder of Arnaud, a National Guard officer in Lyon) to illustrate "the end of an age of innocence where the shared memories of a republic under the empire could still bind together the most divergent view and political aspirations" (p. 134).

The last two chapters of the book then provide an extended conclusion, which attempt to pull together the experience of the war and the Commune and to assess their impact on the making of modern France. Testing his material against the Weber thesis, Taithe concludes that, while certainly not a celebration of pre-1870 unity, a pronounced "centrifugal force" did exist.[3] As he notes, "the remarkable fact that a handful of deputies were able to proclaim a new republic using the prestige of their title of deputies of Paris revealed the almost unanimously accepted centrality of Parisian politics" (p. 147). The federalist approach failed to gain a hold during the Commune, largely because the state gave the communes of France the amount of freedom (and the political support) that was later to characterize the Third Republic. He concludes that the truth of the freedom of the Third Republic can be found in the constant negotiating between a "strong but cash-starved administration" and a "weak political leadership" that gave deputies the ability to intervene on behalf of their constituency and thus maintained electors "at

the heart of the political debates" (p. 163).

In *Citizenship and Wars* Bertrand Taithe sets himself an ambitious task, which he tackles with vigour and imagination. A wealth of diverse source material is utilised to produce a sophisticated and thought-provoking analysis. The thematic, heavily-footnoted nature of the text enables much information to be conveyed in a relatively concise book. However, perhaps in slight contradiction to the sleeve notes that assert the suitability of the book for undergraduate courses, this does mean that a reasonable amount of background knowledge of both the historiography of the period and of recent theoretical writing is required to obtain the most out of the book. Moreover, while the style is lively, this (perhaps necessarily) means that certain statements can appear a little sweeping or speculative. It is perhaps unusual, for example, to claim (without a footnote) that, "Without going into the details of policy, much of the Commune's action pre-existed the Commune and was enacted by the *arrondissement* mayors" (p. 73). However, it is more than possible that this brevity is due to constraints imposed by the publishers. Overall, this is an intriguing and imaginative book, which will be of use to specialists in the fields of citizenship and the Franco-Prussian War as well as to informed readers interested in the history of nineteenth-century France.

NOTES

[1] As regards as a diversity of approaches see, for example, Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France 1789-1799* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1994); and Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[2] B. Taithe, "De la supériorité de l'Angleterre sur la France? Regards sur la France dans la crise de 1870 et naissance de l'humanitaire," in K. de Queiros Mattoso (ed.), *L'Angleterre et le Monde, XVIIIe-XXe siècle, l'histoire entre l'économique et l'imaginaire, hommage à Francois Crouzet*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), pp. 311-39.

[3] Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen, The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Princeton, N.J. and London: Princeton University Press, 1976).

Paul Lawrence
The Open University (UK)
p.m.lawrence@open.ac.uk

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