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Gilles Candar and Vincent Duclert, *Jean Jaurès*. Paris: Fayard, 2014. 686 pp. Notes, chronology, bibliography, and index. 27.00€. (pb). ISBN 2-213-63336-7.

Review by Geoffrey Kurtz, Borough of Manhattan Community College, The City University of New York.

Without understanding Jean Jaurès, it would be impossible to understand the character of France's Third Republic, the development of the contemporary French left, or the differences between democratic and authoritarian socialisms over the past century. Jaurès's career in public life included two decades' service in the Chamber of Deputies, a steady stream of commentary for republican and socialist journals, and leading roles in two political parties (the Parti socialiste français and the Parti socialiste, section française de l'Internationale ouvrière). During that career, he championed Alfred Dreyfus, rose as a tribune of the labor movement, helped to found the social democratic political tradition, and became Europe's most prominent voice for peace during the years leading up to the First World War. In his intellectual work—philosophical and historical writings, essays, and a book-length proposal regarding “l'organisation socialiste de la France”—he developed an original conception of reformist socialism, rooted in his perception of an unresolved dialectic of the ideal and the real.<sup>[1]</sup> Few members of his pivotal generation stand so large in popular memory; few touched so many areas of public life.

Candar and Duclert's biography will be the standard historical reference work on Jaurès for years to come. Benefiting from its authors' deep expertise and from decades of “*recherche collective*” on the part of numerous French historians (p. 525), this is without doubt the most comprehensive biography of Jaurès in decades, and is arguably a more substantial scholarly work than any previous Jaurès biography. The authors aim to sum up the state of historical research on Jaurès and to open the way for a new era of *jaurésien* studies. They have to an admirable degree succeeded in the first objective, and are likely to succeed in the second as well.

Theirs is a work of excellent scholarship. Duclert, the author of the book's first ten chapters, writes chronologically (with one major exception, noted below) about Jaurès's formation: his youth, education, embrace of “the social question,” and gradual development of ties to the socialist movement, culminating in his crucial role in bringing a substantial sector of the French left into the Dreyfusard camp at the close of the nineteenth century. Candar, in the book's subsequent eleven chapters, writes more thematically than chronologically, sometimes touching on a particular year in three or more chapters. This approach allows him to tease out different threads in the high period of Jaurès's complex career: domestic policy, foreign policy, relations with the socialist movement, relations with center-left republicans, et cetera. (The two authors collaborated on the book's brief introduction and conclusion.) Both Duclert and Candar have the good habit of quoting large extracts from Jaurès's writings and speeches: quotations of two hundred words or more are not uncommon. Scholars and students will benefit from the book's detailed chronology of Jaurès's life and his remembrance in France and its superb and well-organized bibliography of works by or about Jaurès. Furthermore, the book's last two chapters (by Candar) tell the stories of the political uses made of Jaurès since his death and of *jaurésien* research to date, providing useful critiques of both.

Published in conjunction with the centenary of its subject's assassination, *Jean Jaurès* is unmistakably a *political biography* (as the authors acknowledge on p. 10). Although Candar and Duclert mention Jaurès's major philosophical and historical writings, and although they rightly describe him as seeking "l'union entre l'action et la pensée" (in Candar's words, p. 546), they have understandably set limits on what their book tries to achieve. Consistently, they focus on Jaurès the politician and political commentator, relegating to the background his longer writings and his deeper intellectual concerns. For example, Duclert offers only brief comments on Jaurès's doctoral theses or on his *Histoire socialiste*, while the critique of Marx and Marxism developed in his essays of 1901 and 1902, during the separation between the reformist and revolutionary wings of the socialist movement, receives no substantial discussion at all. Instead, the authors discuss at length Jaurès's role in the Dreyfus Affair, in the formation of the center-left ministries that governed France between 1898 and 1905, and in the anti-war and anti-colonial politics of the 1910s. They write much about the importance of his family, friends, and formative impressions of the Tarn countryside, but little about the books and teachers that shaped his thinking. They often quote Jaurès's letters, journalism, and speeches, but rarely his books. These are legitimate decisions—one book cannot do everything—but they do mean that the definitive *intellectual biography* of Jaurès remains to be written, and that those seeking studies of Jaurès's political thought will need to look elsewhere.

Most French biographies of Jaurès up to now have been more popular than scholarly, and the principal scholarly biography—by an American historian, Harvey Goldberg—has been superseded by a half-century of new scholarship.<sup>[2]</sup> Candar and Duclert's book is notable in part because it draws extensively on that body of scholarship—especially on the new series of *Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès* begun by their book's publisher, Fayard, in 2000.<sup>[3]</sup> That new series, of which eight of a projected seventeen volumes have been released to date, is directed by the Société d'études jaurésiennes, a scholarly collaboration in which Candar and Duclert both figure, and for which the late Madeleine Rebérioux was the leading light. The Fayard *Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès* include a fuller sampling of Jaurès's letters, journalism, and speeches than Goldberg cited in his biography of Jaurès, and Candar and Duclert make good use of this wealth of sources. The authors also have the advantage (unlike Goldberg) of being able to draw on several monographs by Société members dealing with specific aspects of Jaurès's life and career. (They also mention, but make less use of, the series of Jaurès's works being released by another publisher, Vent Terral.<sup>[4]</sup>)

Candar and Duclert speculate that there has been no major scholarly French biography of Jaurès before theirs in part because French historians have been slow to take up twentieth-century history, but even more so because the French have been caught up, all too often, in the mystique with which they have surrounded Jaurès, making him a political saint immune from serious examination. It is telling, thus, that Candar and Duclert's book is dedicated to Rebérioux and another historian, Jean-Marie Mayeur. Where Goldberg's biography of Jaurès was, in sum, a partisan work, an impassioned call for a non-reformist democratic socialism, Candar and Duclert write as scholars, for scholars, in a (relatively) dispassionate scholarly mode. This approach, of course, has its price: it tends to relegate its subject to the past, and makes it hard to explore its subject's contemporary meaning. Nevertheless, given the hagiographic tendencies of much French writing about Jaurès, Candar and Duclert's is on the whole a salutary approach. They do make one major concession to the French urge to canonize Jaurès: their book's first chapter (by Duclert) is about 1914, the year of Jaurès's assassination—a writerly decision that invites readers to approach Jaurès foremost as a martyr. On the whole, however, although they are appreciative of and even affectionate towards Jaurès, Candar and Duclert nevertheless provide a careful and measured account of those questions about Jaurès's life that have been most hotly contested by those who would claim him as a political ancestor. When and how did Jaurès become a socialist? To what extent was this *adhesion* the result of books he had read and to what extent the influence of labor militants? Was Jaurès always a socialist (as he himself would claim), or did his views and commitments undergo a substantive change during the late 1880s and early 1890s? And, most important: what kind of socialist was he? A consistent reformist? A budding revolutionary? Something in between? On matters

like these, Candar and Duclert present nuanced (and, I think, persuasive) accounts: Jaurès's socialism had roots in his early experiences, they argue, but it was also a real transition; at the same time, his republicanism was not a phase he outgrew, but rather the consistent underpinning of his political thought. Jaurès's socialism was thoroughly republican and reformist, they conclude, but at the same time he maintained a sense of the socialist "final goal" that some of his contemporaries, like the German reformist Eduard Bernstein, did not.

The great achievement of Candar and Duclert's biography of Jaurès--an achievement assisted by the Fayard *Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès* and the other Société d'études jaurésiennes works on which they rely--is that it clears aside the sectarian battles over Jaurès's legacy that have cluttered French writing about Jaurès. Doing so, it reframes Jaurès as a subject for conscientious scholarly research. The Jaurès whom Candar and Duclert give us is an unorthodox dialectician who links the ideal and the real, Republic and labor militancy, democracy and socialism, refusing to make a final choice among any of these pairs--and, no less, a committed and responsible political actor. The question that remains--a question that Candar and Duclert's work does not answer, but that it better positions us to answer--is how Jaurès might come to be seen neither as a saintly martyr nor as a dead man of a past era, but as a source of living political ideas.

## NOTES

[1] Jean Jaurès, *De la réalité du monde sensible* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1891); Jean Jaurès, *De Primis socialism germanici lineamentis apud Lutherum, Kant, Fichte et Hegel* (Toulouse: A. Chauvin et fils, 1891); Jean Jaurès, ed., *Histoire socialiste, 1789-1900*, 13 vols. (Paris: Jules Rouff, 1901-08); Jean Jaurès, *Études socialistes* (Paris: Éditions des Cahiers, 1902). See also Jean Jaurès, *Studies in Socialism*, ed. and trans. Margaret Minturn (London: Putnam's, 1906) and Jean Jaurès, *L'organisation socialiste de la France: L'armée nouvelle* (Paris: Jules Rouff, 1911).

[2] For relatively recent French biographies of Jaurès, see Max Gallo, *Le Grand Jaurès* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1984) and Jean-Pierre Rioux, *Jean Jaurès* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), which Candar discusses on pp. 531-532. Goldberg's book, which Candar discusses on pp. 516-517, is Harvey Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaurès* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968; French edition, Paris: Fayard, 1970).

[3] For the most recent information on the Fayard *Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès*, see <http://www.fayard.fr/jean-jaures> (accessed January 22, 2015).

[4] For the most recent information on the Vent Terral *Oeuvres philosophique* of Jean Jaurès, see <http://www.vent-terral.com/blog/category/selection/jean-jaures-selection/> (accessed January 22, 2015).

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