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Paul Miller, *From Revolutionaries to Citizens: Antimilitarism in France, 1870-1914*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002. xii + 277 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$64.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-8223-2757-0; \$21.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-8223-2766-X.

Review by Norman Ingram, Concordia University.

Paul Miller has produced a fine book on antimilitarism in France from 1870 to 1914. He looks at the subject through the prisms not only of syndicalism but also of anarchism and socialism in an attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the French working class responded to the problems of war and militarism in the forty-four years before the outbreak of the Great War. The author not only says much that is new about this neglected side of working-class political culture but also has important things to say about the notion of citizenship and about the nature of opposition to war. That said, while it claims to be about the entire forty-four year period before the outbreak of war in 1914, it is really very much a book about the immediate pre-war period from roughly the turn of the century onwards.

Miller distinguishes clearly between left-wing *antimilitarism* on the one hand, and what he calls that “other, often neglected nineteenth-century movement: pacifism” (p. 9), which he sees as essentially bourgeois and working towards arbitration and disarmament within the construct of capitalist society. Antimilitarism, for him, is the “ideology and activities of socialists, syndicalists, and anarchists aimed at reducing the civil power of the military and, ultimately, preventing international war” (p. 8). Miller thus enlarges on the analyses of Sandi Cooper, Verdiana Grossi, Roger Chickering, and others, who have examined the anti-war movement in France (and Europe generally) before 1914, largely from a middle-class perspective.[1]

Miller also is to be congratulated for not falling into the trap other historians have succumbed to, in not, as he puts it, being “blinded by the outcome.” He criticizes the historical tradition that has allowed scholars to try to explain “why antimilitarists ‘failed’ to move a single man to resist war in August 1914” while failing themselves “to look closely at the steps that led the Left to do nothing in the first place” (p. 2). In other words, he does not view working-class antimilitarism as a “failure,” in the words of Jacques Julliard, or as a “cause without rebels,” to use Peter Stearns’ phrase, simply because it was somehow unable to prevent the outbreak of war in 1914.

French militarism is arguably one of the by-products of the Revolution. Alan Forrest has shown how the military demands of the new French state were accepted only with great difficulty in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods; many Frenchmen chose simply to desert rather than submit to the demands of Mars.[2] This rejection of things military waxed and waned in importance over the course of the century, but by the advent of the Third Republic it had begun to take on a new virulence. Miller begins by taking us back to the decapitation of the French working class in the Commune, following the defeat of France at the hands of the Germans in 1871. The Restoration and Second Empire had seen lively debates in France on the nature of the military; Gambetta was certainly not alone in advocating the abolition of the professional army in favor of a national militia. The Franco-Prussian War changed all that. The Right was guilty of appeasement; the Left had resisted the invader. Revenge was now the order of the day, and the result was to turn “these antimilitarist insiders into

outsiders and even exiles of their own political culture” (p. 15). The sense of internal exile was exacerbated by the fact that the Third Republic, particularly in the last two decades before the Great War, used the Army as a kind of ersatz police force, putting down strikes, riots, and working-class demonstrations with sometimes deadly ferocity. It is no wonder that the various strands of the working class should have seen in the Army a force inimical to all that they cherished. There is much new material worthy of consideration here. Miller does an excellent job of explaining the *enjeux* in the great working-class clashes with the state and its military. From Fourmies to the “*Sou du soldat*,” to the revolt of the 17th Infantry Regiment, Miller paints a detailed picture of the reasons for working class antipathy towards the Army. He demonstrates how this antimilitarism was not an adjunct but rather an integral part of what it was to be part of the working class before 1914. In short, antimilitarism was a key part of working-class consciousness in ante-bellum France.

Was it a false consciousness, however? Eugen Weber and others have argued that the common experience of compulsory military service is one of the elements which turned “peasants into Frenchmen.”^[3] Jean-Jacques Becker contends that the Carnet B was not needed in 1914 because the left-wing antimilitarist movement had collapsed like a deck of cards in the face of the imperious call of the *Union sacrée*.^[4] Miller, on the contrary, makes the case that it was not compulsory military service that turned the working class, at least, into Frenchmen, but paradoxically it was antimilitarism that did so.

Many historians see the Dreyfus Affair as the catalyst that changed the perception of the Army in French society. Miller does not agree with this analysis either, writing that “Before anyone had even heard of Alfred Dreyfus, socialist congresses were debating the all-important question of what to do in the case of war” (p. 34). And while Miller believes the government to have been “constan[t] and coheren[t]” in its policy-making and strategic thinking around 1900, the same could also be said of the antimilitarists who seemed to have done a very good job of “getting indicted” (p. 38). Indeed, one of the themes of this book is that no matter how apparently powerful and fearsome antimilitarism might become, in many respects it remained a bit of a Potemkin *façade*. Government repression of virtually any manifestation of antimilitarist activity seems to have been a given, and yet government surveillance of the movement waxed and waned with its appreciation of the danger the latter supposedly represented for the nation.

If one were to quarrel with any of the arguments of this book, it might be in the contention of the author that “By looking at how they expressed themselves, we can begin to make sense of the process by which these antimilitarist citizens came to identify their cause with that of the often vilified *patrie*; a process that was consummated, not commenced, when war broke out in 1914” (p. 3). One of Miller’s theses is that by 1914 the antimilitarist working class had “come in from the cold,” so to speak, and had begun to identify with the nation and in particular with its institutional form, the Third Republic. This is an important thesis because it runs counter to the generally-accepted wisdom that it was the Popular Front, some twenty years later, that saw the French working class assume its place in French political society. Miller argues that this process had already reached fruition by 1914, although the mechanics of the change are left a little blurred. Thus, according to Miller, in the summer of 1914, “In the days before the ‘collapse’ of the antimilitarist Left, its pleas were less to salvage revolutionary ideals than to preserve the spirit and human decency of all Europeans, then and for the future” (p. 207). He makes a strong case for a paradigmatic shift in working-class sensibility, but it is hard to see how this sudden *embourgeoisement* of working-class antimilitarism is consonant with the previous forty years of anarchist, syndicalist, and socialist opposition to *la chose militaire*. As he himself argues, “as war became more imminent, antimilitarism was becoming less directly a means to secure a better future for the working classes than to prevent this ‘challenge thrown against Progress and Humanity’” (p. 207). These are terms and arguments with which any good middle-class pacifist of the mid-century point could have agreed.

So what are we seeing here? Is this really the story of working class antimilitarism, *pur et dur*, or is it rather the story of how opposition to war solidifies and broadens in France on the eve of the Great War to include discourses and ideas that cut across class lines? Is this not an example of how, to use Martin Ceadel's analysis (borrowed from Max Weber), peace was becoming an "ethic of ultimate ends"?^[5] There is good reason to believe that this is what was actually happening. Many of the bit players in Miller's narrative (the Victor Méric's, the Francis Delaisi's, and others) become the star attraction in the *pacifism* of the thirties, the new-style pacifism that really gave the French government pause. The difference is that in the 1930s, or at least at the beginning of the decade, far from being a sectarian withdrawal into a class-based analysis of the peace/war question, the Ligue internationale des combattants de la paix (LICP), founded by Méric—a pre-war anarchist antimilitarist turned pacifist—sought to cut across class lines and provide a home for all who were opposed to war, by whatever means.^[6] And in 1933, just as the situation *outré-Rhin* started to heat up in earnest, the government of Edouard Daladier was suddenly transfixed by the spectre of a conscientious objection crisis which seemed to have spread across these same class lines.^[7] The much-dreaded fusion of working-class antimilitarism and middle-class pacifism seemed finally to have occurred. All of which is merely to question whether, *pace* Miller, this process was really consummated in 1914 as he argues or, on the contrary, was just beginning.

Miller has done an enviable job of ferreting out archival material, not only in the usual Paris archives but also in six departmental and municipal archives and—even rarer amongst historians of France—in the archives of the German Foreign Ministry. The book is also based on a wide reading in the press of the socialist, syndicalist, and anarchist movements. While the translations and copy-editing occasionally leave something to be desired, the end result is a very good book which will be a standard reference source for years to come for anyone interested in opposition to war before 1914. Miller is to be commended.

NOTES

[1] See Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815-1914* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Sandi E. Cooper, "Pacifism in France, 1889-1914: International Peace as a Human Right," *French Historical Studies* 17:2 (Fall 1991): 359-386; see also the comparative chapter on France in Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World without War: the Peace Movement and German Society, 1892-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); and Verdiana Grossi, *Le Pacifisme européen, 1889-1914* (Brussels: Bruylant, 1994).

[2] Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[3] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[4] Jean-Jacques Becker, *Le Carnet B: Les Pouvoirs publics et l'antimilitarisme avant la guerre de 1914* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973).

[5] Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

[6] Norman Ingram, *The Politics of Dissent: Pacifism in France, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). See especially Part II "Pacifisme nouveau style, Or the Politics of Dissent," pp. 121-245.

[7] Norman Ingram, "The *Circulaire Chautemps*, 1933: The Third Republic Discovers Conscientious Objection," *French Historical Studies* 17:2 (Fall 1991): 387-409.

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