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Hunt, Lynn Avery. *Revolution and Urban Politics in Provincial France: Troyes and Reims, 1786-1790*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978. Pp. viii, 187. $11.50

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Philips neglects one other aspect of this vast subject more perhaps than might have been expected--punishment. It is true that he reports and occasionally discusses the numbers imprisoned or transported for various offences. But there is no discussion of the punishments themselves, and this in a period when penal methods, especially imprisonment, were subjects of passionate debate. This is another area in which the book is briefer than the richness of the material would seem to deserve. But this suggestion is also a measure of how valuable Philips' work is. He has presented a great deal of fascinating data and his analysis of it is intelligent and clear-minded. One can only hope that he will take up some of the questions not fully explored here in his further work.

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Hunt, Lynn Avery. Revolution and Urban Politics in Provincial France: Troyes and Reims, 1786-1790. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978. Pp. viii, 187. $11.50.

This is an exasperating book to review: the reviewer cannot find anything wrong with it. It examines by nearly every procedure known to modern historians the urban revolution that occurred in two French industrial towns, Reims and Troyes, from 1786 to 1790. At the beginning of the period the towns were governed by the agencies of the French administrative monarchy: the intendant of Champagne residing at Châlons; the subintendants at Troyes and Reims; town councils, composed of a mayor, a procureur-syndic, and councillors, including in Reims clerical deputies; police magistrates, officials of the rural gendarmerie, baillage courts, taxation courts, and local masterships of water and forests. The town councils were staffed and controlled by a patriciate of a few families, nobles and well-to-do merchants who were bound by kinship ties of birth and marriage.

The events of the calling the Estates-General, the election of deputies and the concurrent preparation of cahiers of grievances, the municipal uprisings in the summer of 1789 paralleling that of Paris, and the election in each town of revolutionary governing committees politicized the entire urban population. Economics (the price of bread, for example), social, and political issues were now fought out in the political arena of open committee debate. This fluid period of political activity when old structures were dissolving, new ones were emerging, and no one knew what was coming next was temporarily closed when the municipal legislation of the National Assembly installed throughout France elective town councils and executive and judicial officials. In securing election to town office kinship with important people was less significant than demonstrated ability to lead the crowd through tumultuous events.

Throughout the revolutionary year, from April, 1789 to April, 1790, the patriciate of Reims rode out the storm, skillfully managed people and events, and emerged in control of the new elective institutions. In Troyes, the patriciate, less flexible, less pliable, more snobbishly exclusivist, in brief socially arrogant and stupid, forced polarization between the haves and have-nots, provoked violent, murderous confrontations between themselves and the mob, and in the elections were replaced by more populist leaders. The difference in the two histories of two neighbouring industrial towns in the same region can be explained in large part by differences in the economy (woollen weaving versus cotton spinning, moderate prosperity vs. acute depression), the social structure (the wool merchants and clothiers of Reims were closer to their handloom weavers than the Troyes capitalists were to their cotton spinning proletariat), residential patterns, and the presence in Reims of a common enemy--the archbishop and his deputies. The two patriciates were part of two different structures and mentalities of economic-social-political relationships, and hence responded differently to the unrolling of political events. This argument would seem to give primacy to socio-economic circumstance and only derivative status to politics. But Dr. Hunt's thesis is that the political occurrences and processes of that year merit equal attention, because they politicized the French town-dwellers, brought them into the arena of political agitation and debate, and created new political structures which then affected individual and group mentalities and socioeconomic circumstances.

Dr. Hunt has a gift for both analysis and narrative synthesis, and also for hard work. His study is based largely on archival sources, although he has also read nearly everything worth reading in print. For analysis of social structures, he has gone to tax rolls; for residential patterns, to lists of addresses and maps of towns; and for the events, to the reports of intendants, subintendants, and other officials, the minutes of meetings, the letters of deputies, and eyewitness accounts. His narrative of events interweaves individuals, groups, structures, and accidents in an integrated ongoing story that fascinates by reason of its human interest and to a fellow professional historian, by reason of its skill. If history should be totally experienced and totally analyzed (which is, of course, totally impossible), then this essay is a model of how to approximate that ideal.

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