

l'État." It is a shame to mar a useful study by suppressing evidence contrary to one's thesis.

James A. LEITH  
Queen's University

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NICOLE HAESENNE-PEREMANS. — *La pauvreté dans la région liégeoise à l'aube de la révolution industrielle: Un siècle de tension sociale (1730-1830)*. Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1981. 509 p.

*La misère* was an integral dimension of European societies in the century beginning in 1730 and spanning the *ancien régime*, the Revolution, and the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Utilizing a number of official inquiries into the problem of poverty, Nicole Haesenne-Peremans provides a primarily statistical local study of the poor in the Liège region. After describing its economy — an agriculture that in poor areas featured peasant ownership but in more fertile areas required them to rent land from the clergy, nobility or urban bourgeoisie, and a varied industrial base in which two of the three principal industries were in decline by the end of the eighteenth century — she turns to the poor created by this socio-economic structure.

A feature of her analysis, although it relates to only one element of the poor, is a demographic study based on reconstitution of families that inherited poverty. Using successive lists of the poor with parish records, Haesenne-Peremans compares the demographic behaviour of these poor families with the general population. She finds that in the countryside the poor married at about the same age as their better-off neighbors, while in the city poor women married later than the rest of the female population. Household size, however, was considerably smaller for the poor — 3.6 persons versus 4.8 — than for the general population. The poor were more often women than men, a fact attributed to the relatively weak position of women in the labour force, lacking skills and forced to work in poorer paying occupations.

Most striking is that increasing industrialization of the region did not noticeably improve their lot, and may have made matters worse. The development of industry put many out of work, and placed them among the ranks of the poor. The availability of a large work-force that would labour for minimal wages made it possible for industrialists to keep down the labour costs of industry and made the region an attractive place for industrial development. Haesenne-Peremans gives little indication that this created social conflict; she provides, in fact, the striking example of the poor of Liège welcoming back to the city during the Revolution a merchant who would provide them with work. A second feature of her analysis, however, is her description of the growing sense by the bourgeoisie that the poor were to be feared and kept separate from the rest of society. There is no indication that this was the case — the seamier side of poverty, especially the criminal side, remains outside Haesenne-Peremans' study — but nevertheless the poor were segregated, first in their own quarters in the cities, and later in institutions that were expressly designed to prevent their contact with the rest of the population.

The statistical emphasis of this study provides much information about the poor and poverty in the Liège region, but there is a cost. The relationship of poverty to the developing industrial economy receives short shrift, in spite of the impli-

cation that the poor of the pre-industrial economy became the proletariat of the industrial period. There is a sidestepping of the role of capitalism in shaping social organization, opportunities, and the poor themselves. The state is seen largely as a collector of data on poverty; its own role, as an increasingly powerful factor in social and economic life, receives less attention than it deserves. Finally, amidst all the numbers, we receive little inkling of the cultural world of the poor: after the pessimistic portrait provided by the statistics, one is left wondering how any of these people managed to survive. Nonetheless, this is a valuable work that contributes much to our growing knowledge of the underside of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European society.

James R. LEHNING  
University of Utah

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HUBERT WATELET. — *Une industrialisation sans développement: Le bassin de Mons et le charbonnage du Grand-Hornu du milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Ottawa, Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980. 538 p.

This is a study of industrialization — “restructuring”, in the author’s terminology — of a region, the Mons coal basin (Hainaut, Belgium), and of entrepreneurship in a coal-mining firm in that region, the Grand-Hornu, during the period approximately 1750-1850. The evolution of the Grand-Hornu enters the study as a subplot in the larger drama of transition to industrial capitalism in the region as a whole, from the seigneurial period when coal merchants and Newcomen pump contractors dominated coal producers. Growth preceded industrialization during this period, in the sense that output increased largely in the traditional framework of largely parcellized mine ownership and extraction, close capital-labour relations, and subordination of producers to merchants. By the second decade of the 1800s, however, a significant reorientation of business outlook and industrial structure became apparent; the role of the producer was revalorized *vis-à-vis* the merchant, and investment in more advanced techniques and in more capitalized and functionally integrated enterprises materialized. The Grand-Hornu enters the scene as one of the more spectacular examples of this reorientation — exceptionally so, in fact, given its location on the geologically inauspicious periphery of the rich deposits of vieux Borinage. The successes of the enterprise from 1810, when it passed into the hands of the coal merchant Henri De Gorge, through the early 1830s set it apart as a model innovator in the Schumpeterian sense.

The second act of the drama climaxes, both for the regional economy and for the Grand-Hornu, in the severe price deflation of 1824-34, when intense intra-regional competition accentuated the malaise of falling profits. At this juncture of long-term cyclical downturn (a crisis of overproduction) and short-term political destabilization, centred around the 1830 revolution, the atypical nature of the Grand-Hornu was revealed. While its sister firms in the Mons basin succumbed to the domination of the bank, notably the Belgian *Société générale*, it continued to finance its innovating investments through retained earnings. Thus it preserved financial autonomy and family ownership while most other firms passed to the state of finance capitalism, becoming *sociétés anonymes*. It also maintained more intimate ties with its workers, at least under De Gorge’s direction, while relations between owners and workers became more distant in the other firms. The long