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Pierre Horn, *Le défi de l'enracinement napoléonien entre Rhin et Meuse, 1810-1814: l'opinion publique dans les départements de la Roë, de l'Ourthe, des Forêts et de la Moselle* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017). 474 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, and indexes. \$70.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-3-1104-1519-3.

Review by Michael Rowe, King's College London.

This book adds to the recent proliferation of works on Napoleonic empire building. Like many, it adopts a regional focus, exploring in depth a small fraction of an empire that, at its height, stretched from Catalonia and Rome all the way up to the Baltic. Pierre Horn looks at a cluster of four departments, namely the Roë, Ourthe, Forêts and Moselle, covering an area bounded by the rivers Meuse and Rhine. What makes this region interesting is that it straddles the great linguistic divide between Germanic and Romance Europe. Today it is divided between Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg, and before the Revolutionary-Napoleonic era it displayed even greater heterogeneity when it came to territorial affiliation. Horn's work examines above all public opinion in this region. In the past, historians working on popular responses to Napoleonic rule produced, with some exceptions, accounts heavily skewed by their own national contexts. After the Second World War, as Horn notes in his thorough survey of the historiography, a more benign yet equally politicized agenda left its imprint on works that underplayed the importance of linguistic and cultural difference in thwarting the integration of the peoples who populated Napoleon's empire. This book, which is based largely on official papers such as correspondence between prefects and police commissioners and their superiors in Paris, establishes a much more plausible degree of balance and sophistication in its argument.

The Napoleonic state was keen to integrate the recently annexed departments that were filled with people who spoke little or no French. Horn is quite right in expressing skepticism over comparisons between Napoleon's empire and the colonial empires of a later period founded on notions of profound and indeed unbridgeable racial difference. The problem with the Napoleonic empire was that its agents, dispatched from "old France" to take up senior administrative positions in the new departments, were psychologically ill-equipped to do so. They naturally shared in the arrogant assumption of the superiority of all things French. However, the sense of acute homesickness (*mal du pays*) and alienation that this produced amongst them discouraged the kind of mixing with native elites that might have encouraged that part of their brief, which included the propagation of the French language and culture. Their sense of isolation did not diminish over time, but instead grew as Napoleonic power began to unravel further to the east after the catastrophic Russian campaign of 1812. It became quite overwhelming in the final weeks of French rule, in late 1813 and early 1814, when armies of the anti-Napoleonic coalition finally crossed the Rhine and invaded the four departments. It led to a collapse in morale amongst 'Old Frenchmen' stationed in the new departments who prematurely fled into the interior in advance of the invasion. Napoleonic power in the new departments effectively evaporated even before the appearance of the first enemy soldier. The flight of "Old Frenchmen" occurred less because of a fear of what enemy troops might do to them, but rather a belief that they might come to harm at the hands of the "New Frenchmen" amongst whom they were living. "New Frenchmen," even if they held important administrative posts under Napoleonic rule, in contrast stayed put as the enemy invasion swept over. They did so least in the expectation of a

subsequent peace settlement that would reverse the Napoleonic annexations and result in the return of their previous sovereigns.

Horn argues that the lack of allegiance demonstrated by “new Frenchmen” to the Napoleonic empire had nothing to do with nationalism. Nor was it even informed by lingering dynastic loyalties to the ruling houses displaced by the French invasions of the 1790s. What “new Frenchmen” did on the whole hope for was a return to the pre-1789 order that had been distinguished by relative peace, local autonomy, lower taxes, and generally “light-touch” government. An added twist, and this part of Horn’s argument is especially cogent, is that both “new” and “old” Frenchmen were skeptical about the solidity of any of the territorial changes that had occurred since the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars in 1792. Earlier acquisitions by France under the Old Regime, including notably of Lorraine, were assumed to be durable, even though in some cases they had occurred almost within living memory. Products of revolutionary change, including the territorial transfers that had occurred after 1792, in contrast appear to have had an aura of unreality about them; it was assumed that they would be reversed one day, with the consequence that no one properly committed themselves to what looked like a temporary order.

This was a pretty fundamental barrier to imperial integration and the fusion of “Old” and “New” Frenchmen. One might speculate whether the passage of additional years or even decades of imperial rule by Napoleon or one of his heirs could have overcome this sense of impermanence. Those years were not in the offering, thanks to military setbacks in Central and Eastern Europe in 1812 and 1813. These came on top of a serious economic downturn that had started already in 1811, and helped poison sentiment amongst the urban business elite that had in many ways benefitted from Napoleonic rule. Rural areas, in contrast, had always lost more than they gained under Napoleon, even before the 1811 economic downturn. Both taxes and conscription fell disproportionately hard upon country dwellers, who received very little in return from the state. After 1812, things got even worse, as Napoleon sought to extract even more levees from age cohorts--those born in 1792 or after--betraying the negative demographic impact of the first stages of the Revolutionary/Napoleonic Wars. “Old” and “New” Frenchmen alike could no longer sustain this kind of intense exploitation. However, a shared experience of adversity did nothing to overcome the barrier between them; quite the opposite, given that the sense of crisis after 1812 made the end of an order that had always seem temporary appear all the more imminent.

Horn’s analysis is an interesting one, and indeed compelling given its grounding in meticulous and extensive archival research. His conclusions are thought provoking as to the processes of empire building and acculturation more generally. Despite its many impressive achievements in areas such as the development of new administrative and judicial institutions, Napoleon’s empire appears a decidedly fragile affair in the pages of Horn’s book. After all, if imperial authority could be blown away by the appearance of a few Cossacks in its Carolingian heartlands, what chance did it stand in the outer reaches like Illyria or the Hanseatic cities? The answer is very little.

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