“The Souls of Soldiers”: Civilians under Fire in First World War France*

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1915, a cartoon appeared in Le Figaro depicting two soldiers (poilus) immobilized in their trench. One expresses the hope that “they hold on.” When asked who “they” are, he replies, “the civilians.” These two trench-bound soldiers symbolize the “real” war, yet their reliance on the civilians’ ability to hold on suggests the importance of noncombatants and of their morale for the successful waging of this war. The punch line adapted from this cartoon—“Pourvu que les civils tiennent” (Let’s hope the civilians hold on)—has been cited often enough in studies of France during the First World War to have become something of a shorthand for the altered experience of modern, total war.1 While military history continues to treat soldiers as if their exploits were unquestionably

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preeminent, the ability of civilians to sustain such tasks as the production of munitions and the maintenance of morale has been linked to various war efforts’ success or failure. The very nature of “total” war, with its suggestion of the need for the entire population to be involved, can be traced back to the 1793 levée en masse, which outlined appropriate roles for everyone from young to old, women to men. Furthermore, the militarization of civilians—understood as their experiencing war through the rationing of food and fuel, greater restrictions on their civil liberties, and a transformation of their waged (and unwaged) labor—has always been part of the study of the “other front” during the First World War.

New means of waging war helped to change the perception of civilians’ relationship to warfare during World War I. Yet the story of civilians under fire during this military conflict and of the consequent attention to their morale is one that remains curiously forgotten and uncommemorated even as it has been recognized that the emergence of modern, total war required the participation of the entire population. Historians like George Mosse have hypothesized that the process of coming to terms with the mass death of modern wars, starting with the Great War, caused “a heightened indifference” to individual loss of life and a brutalization of the postwar world. More recently, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker have tried to place particular experiences of unarmed civilians under the rubric of the war’s culture of violence, but they have looked particularly at those under occupation. Yet historians of the First World War need to pay more than cursory attention to what occurred when new military techniques brought this war home to civilians well beyond occupied territory. This essay will explore

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6 For studies of life in occupied France, see Helen McPhail, The Long Silence: Civilian Life under the German Occupation of Northern France, 1914–1918 (London, 1999); Becker, Oubliés de la grande guerre. The very titles of these books, with their implications of forgetting and silence, themselves suggest the impression of the neglect of this subject. For an early account of the travails of occupied France, see Georges Grommarien, L’occupation allemande en France (Paris, 1925). See also the recent collection of news-
the plight of those ordinary members of the civil population who had to come to
terms with destruction and loss quite literally in their backyards.

The technological changes that accompanied the First World War, particularly
the use of zeppelins and airplanes to attack civilian populations, challenged the
idea that the home front and the war front were naturally separated. They also
undermined the assumption that only those in the military (notably men) could
claim an authentic experience of being under fire. The introduction of air raids
and, toward the war’s end, of heavy artillery to bombard Paris when it found
itself in the “zone of armies” nonetheless marked an especially significant break
with previous wars.7 Such novel methods were viewed from the start as altering
the consensus over what constituted the legitimate realm of war. Bombing raids
that struck nonmilitary positions challenged conventional ideas about defense by
rendering the entire nation a potential target and, in the words of contemporary
commentators, terrorizing local populations. Thus the militarization of civilians
during this war was due in part to the new strategy of waging war far from
battlefields. This essay begins by exploring the prewar debates over the possibility
and legitimacy of attacking nonmilitary targets, especially by air. It then tells the
relatively unknown story of the bombardment of civilians in France from 1914
through the war’s end and of how the government and media responded to such
attacks. The essay’s final section explores how such bombing came to be under-
stood discursively, emphasizing the implications of this for how the gendered
spaces of “battle” and “home” front aligned and realigned themselves during the
war.

7 For a discussion of the erosion of boundaries between “home” and “war” fronts, see
Grayzel, Women’s Identities at War. For a brief discussion of some of the consequences
of the attacks on Paris, see Mindy Jane Roseman, “The Great War and Modern Mother-
hood: La Maternité and the Bombing of Paris,” in Women and War in the Twentieth
THE PREWAR CONTEXT FOR ATTACKING CIVILIANS

The decades before the outbreak of the First World War witnessed international conferences designed to regulate the means of waging war. This suggests an acceptance of future conflict between nations as well as a desire to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate military tactics. Certainly, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 had to grapple with probable as well as existing military techniques and weaponry. The potential of bombardment from the air as a new means of attacking civilians was discussed in terms of the rules of engagement set forth in the Hague Conventions of 1899 and further clarified in the second Hague Conventions of 1907. As a postwar study summarized it, the 1899 Hague Conventions forbade “the throwing of projectiles from a balloon or an airplane on cities, villages, habitations, or buildings that were not defended.” Such “open” cities were to be protected from violence “even for the purposes of reprisal.” Modifications to article 25 of the Land Warfare Convention in the Hague Conventions of 1907 stressed that attack “by whatever means, of towns, villages, dwellings or buildings which are undefended is prohibited.” Significantly, the Naval Convention of 1907 differed, and while it prohibited the bombing of “unde- fended ports, towns, villages, dwellings, or buildings” by naval forces, it permitted the naval bombardment of “military works, military or naval establish- ments, depots of arms or war materiel, workshops or plants which could be utilized for the needs of the hostile fleet or army, and the ships of war in the harbor.” In other words, one aspect of the agreement protected “undefended” locales but another made anything that even potentially served a military purpose—anything that might help an army or navy—a legitimate target.

Furthermore, as Nicoletta Gullace has pointed out, while the Hague Conventions stated that “family honor and rights, the lives of individuals and private property . . . must be respected,” this again was with a great deal of leeway as to what that might mean. The intent of all such measures was to insure the protection of civilians from both traditional and novel means of waging war. Aerial


9 “Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV), October 18, 1907,” amendment to art. 25, in “The Laws of War,” at the Avalon Project at Yale Law School (http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/hague04); also cited in Biddle, “Air Power,” 142.


bombardment certainly had the potential to attack directly the lives and property of all noncombatants, but whether it had been classified as a forbidden form of warfare remained open to interpretation.

Prewar literature also predicted the use of air raids against civilian targets. The decade before the outbreak of war in 1914 saw a number of novels that used actual breakthroughs in aeronautics as the basis for imagining future aerial warfare. H. G. Wells’s 1908 *The War in the Air* is perhaps the most well known, and the publication of a French translation (*La guerre dans les airs*) in 1910 made his vision of the transformation of warfare and the vulnerability of all to aerial bombardment accessible to prewar French audiences. Wells inaccurately predicted the predominance of airships, not airplanes, but many of the earliest attacks in World War I were indeed carried out by dirigibles. Moreover, his emphasis on first Germany and then the “Asiatics” as the primary enemies of Britain (and of France and the United States by extension) must have resonated with contemporary audiences. If *The War in the Air*’s hero is a scrappy Englishman, the arch villain is a German crown prince who does not hesitate to order the destruction of the civilian population of a great city, in this case New York. Moreover, the book is filled with warnings both specific, such as the presentation of France’s air fleet as being no match for that of Germany, and general, such as the depiction of the full-scale destruction of civilization that follows the use of indiscriminate air power.

Some homegrown imaginings of air warfare also appeared in France around the same time as *La guerre dans les airs*. French author Emile Driant’s two popular novels *L’aviateur du Pacifique* (1909) and *Au-dessus du continent noir* (1911) imagined a France able to subdue its colonial subjects and win future wars through its domination of the skies. With their combination of assumptions based on nationality, race, and gender, Driant’s works envision the terrifying power wielded by those in the airplanes (white and French and virile) against those on the ground (“native” and feminized). As Robert Wohl has further observed, “European minds nationalized, then militarized aviation . . . long before general staffs were willing to take flying machines seriously as a means of waging war.”

When the First World War broke out in the summer of 1914, air power was initially not taken seriously as an offensive weapon and was utilized instead mainly for reconnaissance. Once airplanes became equipped with weapons, these

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15 See the discussion of Wells’s *The War in the Air* and Driant’s *L’aviateur du Pacifique* and *Au-dessus du continent noir* among other works, in Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908–1918* (New Haven, CT, 1994), chap. 3, quote on 89.
were first used against troops or lines of supply. Slowly and with increasing effect, aircraft attacked cities, but only those allegedly containing military sites or defenses that made them “justifiable” targets. In contrast to Wells’s vision of metropolitan communities laid to waste, cities did not experience wholesale devastation, at least not from the air. Still, even the earliest aerial attacks destroyed homes and killed those most emblematic of civilian status and of “innocence”—women and children—with attendant emotional (and cultural) distress.16

While France suffered an invasion, an occupation, and a range of attacks on its home territory, air raids and the connections made between home and war fronts were not unique to France. For a variety of reasons—notably, that most of Germany remained inaccessible to Allied aircraft through much of the war—Allied capitals such as London and Paris experienced substantial air raids while Berlin did not.17 Of course, the Allied blockade of Germany inflicted its own kind of damage on German civilians, especially those residing in the capital.18 There were some aerial attacks on German locales as well, notably in border areas.19 Nonetheless, as will be addressed below, attacks on Paris and damages sustained by civilians in the metropolis carried a unique symbolic weight for the French.

In any case, the development of air warfare between 1914 and 1918 ignored the provisions in the Hague Conventions designed to protect “undefended” locales and, by extension, civilians. In part this occurred because, as we have just seen,

16 As theorist Cynthia Enloe has discussed, in times of international crises, particularly wars, “womenandchildren” becomes a compound noun. See Cynthia Enloe, “The Gendered Gulf,” in Collateral Damage: The “New World Order” at Home and Abroad, ed. Cynthia Peters (Boston, 1992). That women and children and, to some extent, the elderly were all seen as particularly “innocent” victims emerges in the contemporaneous media discussed later in this essay. As such, all three groups could display heroism, but all three also remained especially vulnerable and in need not only of literal protection but also of support for their morale. This vulnerability can be seen in the case of Madame Munier, who was reported to have become “mad” because of the raids. See the discussion below and in Rapport, “Bombardements de la région Nancienne,” commissaire spécial, Nancy, January 25, 1918, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, Archives Nationales (AN) F7 12730.

17 Lee Kennett, The First Air War, 1914–1918 (New York, 1991), 57. Information on the history of air warfare during World War I is also taken from Kennett, chap. 3. A general and fascinating exploration of aerial bombing that covers these raids can be found in Sven Lindqvist, A History of Bombing, trans. Linda Haverty Rugg (New York, 2001).


19 For more on these attacks and the interrelationship between civilians and soldiers in Germany, see particularly Benjamin Ziemann, Front und Heimat: Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern, 1914–1923 (Essen, 1997). See also several recent explorations of the new literature on aerial attacks against Germany during the Second World War that acknowledge this precedent, e.g., Mary Nolan, “Germans as Victims during the Second World War,” Central European History 38, no.1 (2005): 7–40; and Robert Moeller, “On the History of Man-Made Destruction: Loss, Death, Memory, and Germany in the Bombing War” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Seattle, January 2005).
the definition of what constituted an “open” city had never been fully clarified by the Hague Conventions themselves. The very prominent sight of zeppelins and airplanes floating above France’s capital and of the damage inflicted upon homes and women and children both in Paris and elsewhere called forth new ways of responding to the demands placed, at times paradoxically, on both a feminized and a militarized civilian population.

CIVILIANS UNDER THE BOMBS, 1914–18

With the German invasion of 1914, civilians in northern and eastern France as well as in Paris found themselves subject to bombardment and forced to confront homes that lay in ruins. Both the immediate invasion and, to a lesser extent, the occupation gave rise to accusations of atrocities. In their history of this invasion, John Horne and Alan Kramer demonstrate that the German military feared guerilla warfare, believed that they were being subjected to it, and retaliated with collective punishments. According to Horne and Kramer, after the rumors of mutilation and torture are sifted through, it is still the case that the German army caused the deaths of 6,500 civilians and the destruction of 20,000 buildings. For Germany, such violence was justified by its belief that “uncontrolled civilian participation in fighting was the height of barbarity”; for the Allies, it was the German actions that “represented barbarity and the breach of international law.” Nonetheless, what occurred in this sector of the war was still less novel than attacking those literally at home from such a distance as to render the attacker “safe.” Whatever the brutality of life under occupation—which included sexual abuse, starvation, disease, and forced labor—this story was only intermittently the object of the mass media, despite its initial popularity in Allied propaganda. Elsewhere in France, the government had to manage the expectations and concerns of a population that witnessed death, injuries, and the ruin of their homes both in Paris and in key provincial areas like Calais and Nancy. Devastation from the air was front-page news when it occurred, while the ongoing plight of those in occupied France receded from the media.

With the launching of air raids, not only the range but also the cultural understanding of these attacks on civilians subtly began to change. If aerial warfare had been anticipated, its actual deployment was both worse and, oddly, less traumatic than predicted. Postwar histories of wartime Paris provide a full reckoning

22 Ibid., 424. See also the compelling discussion of the German occupation in Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practice of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2005).
of the dead: from air raids alone 275 were killed, and 636 more were injured in and around the metropolis. When injuries from long-range shells are added in, the number of casualties comes close to 1,500. An accounting of the dead and injured broken down by men, women, and children for each raid on the city was printed as a separate appendix to Jules Poirier’s *Les bombardements de Paris*; this forms the basis for the information in table 1. Information about the civilian toll from raids elsewhere in France is more fragmentary. The impact of the attacks was mostly localized, as we will see, but raids against the capital resonated beyond its borders.

Because of censorship and the lack of precision in targeting, those living through the raids had little notion either of what had been hit or at what the Germans might have been aiming. Rather than accepting any idea that civilians might, for example, merely be unfortunately located near a factory producing war-related material, all public commentators condemned the expansion of the battlefield into civilian spaces. They viewed this as being due to the barbaric and deviant means by which Germany (particularly its men) waged war and decried it as being intended to sow terror. Above all, they denied the legitimacy of any attack beyond the so-called war zone.

Numbers do not fully illustrate the raids and their effects, but official and media accounts shed light on how civilians experienced this type of warfare from 1914 until 1918, both in Paris and in the provinces. Within the war’s first month, Germany initiated aerial attacks with a raid on Paris on August 30, by one plane whose five bombs killed one man and left three women and one man wounded. Thus, from virtually the onset of the war, civilians were under fire from the air. There were daily raids over the next four days, of no more than three planes at a time, and the total casualties from all five raids during September 1914 amounted to five dead and nineteen injured. Things took a turn for the worse in October, after the first Battle of the Marne successfully stopped the German offensive and prevented Paris from being overrun. The most serious air raid of 1914 occurred in the middle of the day on October 11, when eighteen bombs fell on the city, killing three men and two women and injuring nine men and fourteen women. Three bombs came so close to Notre Dame Cathedral during this raid that Cardinal Amette protested against the apparent targeting of this “venerable Basilica” as being a “sacrilegious act” that offended “the entire Christian world.”

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24 These numbers are derived from the appendix to Poirier, *Bombardements de Paris*, 307–10. Slightly different numbers are given in Maurice Thiéry, *Paris bombardé: Par zeppelins, Gothas, et Berthas* (Paris, 1921), 284, but unlike Poirier’s, no figures for individual attacks are given, so I have chosen to rely on those in Poirier.


26 See the discussion in Poirier, *Bombardements de Paris*, 5, 14, and summation of damage on 307. Poirier also notes that a plaque was placed at 68 rue des Maris, to commemorate “the arrival of the first aerial bomb,” 93.


Further damaging raids on Paris did not occur until zeppelin attacks commenced in March 1915.\textsuperscript{29} Late that month, zeppelin raids, which had already

\textsuperscript{29} By this point, zeppelins had attacked parts of England, including London, as well as the coast of France, especially along the Channel. On March 19, 1915, Calais experienced a nocturnal zeppelin raid that hit both its main station and a cathedral, sending debris into a hospital courtyard. Reporting on this raid, which both killed and injured civilians, \textit{Le Matin} recorded the firsthand impressions of an English nurse stationed at the hospital, who described patients “distracted with terror,” and the paper was not alone in speaking of these attacks as violating “the laws of humanity.” See “Le bombardement de Calais par un zeppelin,” \textit{Le Matin}, March 20, 1915.
affected provincial cities such as Anvers and Nancy as well as the Channel coastline, reached Paris. Compared with the 1914 raids, the increased number of bombs dropped in this first zeppelin incursion is impressive: on the night of March 20–21, seven bombs fell on the city itself and fifty-eight on the surrounding suburbs.30 The front page of Le Matin on March 22, 1915, recounted the attack of the “vikings of the air.” Instead of going after soldiers or military fortifications, the German airships chose stealth, “to drop their infamous bombs on a city where women, old people, and children slept—where there were no men at war. They thought thus to sow terror.”31 If that were their intention, they had failed, according to this and other newspapers. Now Parisians had joined the inhabitants of Anvers, Calais, Nancy, and the coast of England in receiving a visit from zeppelins and had likewise met it with more “curiosity” than “fear.” Le Petit Parisien claimed that the material results of the attack were as “null” as its effects on morale.32

Despite censorship, photos of destroyed buildings appeared on the front pages of daily newspapers and in illustrated magazines, but the tone of the accompanying articles remained defiant. When the entire city was plunged into instant and complete darkness on the night of the March 20–21 raid, according to Le Petit Parisien, the inhabitants maintained their “sangfroid.”33 While the raid did not kill anyone, it injured three men, three women, and seven children. Unsurprisingly, the press chose to focus on two young sisters, Suzanne and Marcelle Maindrot, who were badly burned in a fire started by a bomb dropped in Asnières and became perhaps the raid’s most celebrated victims.34 Paul Painlevé, Republican deputy of the Seine, in an article discussing the need for stronger defensive measures against air raids, praised the spirit of Parisians during the attacks and denounced the Germans, who deployed their “apparatus of murder in order to burn two young girls in their beds.”35 While filling its pages with photographs of damaged homes and injured children, including eight-year-old Suzanne Maindrot with bandaged legs, the popular weekly L’Illustration recorded how “Parisians had finally seen the zeppelins, without suffering seriously.”36 Nonetheless, this attack on Paris provoked Le Matin into offering a prize of twenty-five thousand francs to the first French aviator who brought down a zeppelin in the heart of Paris, a way of contributing to “the joy that will be given to France on the day that one witnesses the ignoble carcass of one of these pirates of the air squashed to the ground.”37 Still, more than anything else, L’Illustration asserted that in the aftermath of back-to-back raids “the brave ones fighting in the trenches had new

34 Updates on their progress were featured in the daily press, which noted their improving condition a few days after the attack. See “Les blessés,” Le Petit Parisien, March 23, 1915.
37 “Contre les pirates de l’air,” Le Matin, March 27, 1915.
proof that ‘the civilians will hold on’ and that the morale of Parisians is untouchable.”

While Paris was indeed untouched for the rest of the year, except for a brief attack in May, other proofs of German “barbarism” became the subject of French scrutiny when the ocean liner Lusitania was torpedoed by German U-boats and sank off the coast of Ireland on May 7, 1915. French newspapers did acknowledge the presence of a handful of French citizens among the dead and survivors, but their focus remained on American and British victims and on the potential political consequences of the attack. As was the case with victims of raids at home, media accounts highlighted the brutality of the German enemy in attacking without warning and killing the innocent, offering further evidence of its efforts to destroy civilization. Commentator Alfred Capus of the Académie Française went so far as to say that it was wrong to call such acts “crimes,” because Germany “no longer had a notion of what crime meant” and its inhabitants could thus “no longer be judged by human sentiments.” Crime had become “natural” for them, and the response of the French was a uniform “hatred” and “disgust for this monstrous people.”

Even so, the front page of Le Figaro, a few days after the attack, gave almost the same space to a zeppelin raid on the English coast that killed several civilians as it did to the Lusitania. The sinking of the ocean liner registered as providing further proof of German deviance, but it paled in comparison to the injury of innocents on Allied soil and, especially, in French homes.

When air raids returned with deadly force at the end of January 1916, they inflicted far greater damage on Paris and its inhabitants. On two successive nights, a sole zeppelin attacked the city and its suburbs. On January 31, the front page of Le Matin featured a large photograph of a destroyed home, the paintings askew on the walls and furniture visible amid the rubble. Its headline read “A Zeppelin above Paris,” and the paper noted that the victims of “the assassins” included “25 dead and 29 injured.” Above a photograph of a damaged home, Le Petit Parisien reflected on the ruins:

Dawn appeared. A small gray day. . . . Soon, it would make clear all the horrors, imperfectly seen in the black night, about which one could only guess, . . . all that frightful devastation, barbarous, mutilated.

Already, in that part of the city that had stayed awake . . . the shutters of the shops open

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39 “Le ‘Lusitania’ torpillé,” Le Figaro, May 9, 1915. A day later a follow-up article listed five French among the dead; see “Le ‘Lusitania’ torpille,” Le Figaro, May 10, 1915.
40 “Le ‘Lusitania’ coulé,” L’Écho de Paris, May 9, 1915, which urged that the “voice of the dead” be honored.
up and the people leave their dwellings. They fill the streets and all head toward the same points, toward the places where the bombs fell. They go without noise . . . one feels them moved and sad. They speak of the terrible thing, the abominable crime committed in such a cowardly way in the night. They have killed them, poor people like themselves. . . .

. . . Yes, two poor old people lived there, a husband and wife. . . . They are dead. . . . They were found in a deep hole, under the debris of their ramshackle house . . .

[Then one finds] the first floor of a house. A room where the wallpaper is covered by roses. Intact, hardly touched. The furniture is standing. All is in order. Only the bed is unmade. On the mantelpiece, the clock continues its sharp little ticktock against the silence of the dead.44

Sentimental and yet striving to illustrate why such an attack should have a profound effect on ordinary civilians, this piece showed its readers that here was a war that now killed people “like themselves” and peeled away the sides of their dwellings to reveal the poignant ephemera of their daily lives.

Other papers in France and abroad condemned the bombings. They provided graphic details of the injuries sustained during the raid, with an emphasis on those killed in their beds or at their dining-room tables and on the ages and genders of the most “innocent” victims. Following the lead of the London press in their response to raids on their city, papers such as Le Matin did not reveal the exact location where the bombs fell lest this aid the German attackers.45 They were eager, however, to record the reaction to the raids by both foreign and domestic papers. L’Information stressed the “useful consequences” of even “the worst things,” as the raid had reminded “the civil population that we are fighting against an adversary without scruples.”46 The Daily Telegraph spoke of how “the massacre of civilians” was simply part of how Germany waged war, and the New York Herald extolled the reaction of civilians who displayed “not a shade of panic . . . who were afraid of nothing.”47 Along with standard praise of the heroism of those under attack, the papers publicized that victims of these raids would receive special treatment by the government. The office of the Conseil Municipal announced that it would aid families affected by the attacks, particularly those who now found themselves homeless, and would also set up a fund for a special tomb at Père-Lachaise Cemetery for those who were killed.48

French newspaper accounts after the January raids of 1916 helped establish the publicly sanctioned response of Parisians, highlighting the development of “perfect calm” in the face of attacks designed to terrify them. When Capus reflected on “the lesson of the zeppelins” in Le Figaro, he noted the “spirit of sacrifice and

45 See the discussion of this in “Un zeppelin sur Paris,” Le Matin, January 31, 1916.
46 Quoted in “Ce que dit la presse,” Le Matin, January 31, 1916.
48 “Les obsèques des victimes,” Le Matin, February 1, 1916. A day later the paper noted that leave had been granted to two young soldiers (class of 1917) stationed in the garrison of Cherbourg whose family members were among the victims of the raids. This brief mention underscores the reversal of a soldier mourning a civilian parent killed in the war. See “Deux familles particulièrement éprouvées,” Le Matin, February 2, 1916.
virility always present” in a capital city that reacted to the “surprise” of the raid by remaining “marvelously calm and strong.” Parisians acknowledged that “absolute and total protection against an air raid [was,] for the moment, unrealizable,” and each one accepted the resulting risk. In such accounts, the focus on the universality of heroism trumps that on particular victims being more innocent than others because of their gender and/or age.

While Parisian newspapers noted some of the earlier attacks in other areas of France, the central government began to solicit details of the extent of air raids and of the public responses to them throughout the nation. Reports submitted to the Ministry of the Interior, mainly by departmental prefects or special police superintendents, often emphasized—and, indeed, sustained—the manufacturing of a stoic heroism and even the martyrdom of these noncombatants under fire. They also passed along criticism of the government’s and military’s efforts to safeguard the civil population. In some departments, little hostile action occurred; in others, the raids caused substantial damage. As might be expected, departments to the north and east such as Meurthe-et-Moselle received the brunt of the bombs. Other towns such as Calais and Boulogne in the Pas-de-Calais were subject to repeated bombings because of their strategic placement. So too were areas in the department of the Nord, notably Dunkerque. As a report from the general secretary of the Nord (to whom were delegated the functions of the prefect) to the minister of the interior noted in February 1916, residents of the Nord also faced the less widespread threat of chemical attacks from poison gases. Attacks on all of these strategic areas invariably involved civilians. The records of incursions by enemy aircraft took careful note of property damage, distinguished between civilian and military casualties, and kept track of the injured and the dead. The most conscientious accounts provided the names and ages of the victims and also attempted to describe the mood of the population and their reactions to this new type of war.

As the fighting around Verdun intensified in 1916, nearby cities like Nancy in Meurthe-et-Moselle suffered from sustained assaults and came to present a particular problem for authorities. Lengthy reports to the minister of the interior describing Nancy’s situation early in 1916 stressed the urgency of the city’s plight; it was “constantly menaced” by either long-range artillery or aircraft “from dawn until night.” The “last enemy dirigibles had demonstrated the power of their large bombs in a most tragic fashion” and, given “this state of things,” it was not astonishing that “mass exoduses” were occurring. The prefect asked for the ministry’s financial help in alleviating the plight of children uprooted by these at-

49 Alfred Capus, “La leçon des zeppelins,” Le Figaro, January 31, 1916. Further responses to these raids, referring to the deaths of women and children, continued to take Germany to task for using the means of “terror” to wage war; see “Aviation et psychologie,” Le Figaro, February 1, 1916.

tacks. Several months later, reports complained not only that the “boches were insupportable” but also that the censorship that prevented the publication of the location of bombs and numbers of victims had given rise to information that spread from “mouth to mouth” and exacerbated “the nervousness of the masses.” Such rumors, when they could not be clarified or contradicted in print, made the task of calming the crowd “extremely difficult.”

Later, in July 1916, the prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle pointed to the further frustration and agitation felt by inhabitants of the region. Few days passed without “boche planes” attacking Nancy or Lunéville or other parts of the region and, in one near catastrophe, a bomb fell in the interior courtyard of a hospice for the aged—“luckily, several minutes after the pensioners had retired. We could have had dozens of dead.” Despite this, the population remains “vexed” that “the communiqués never talk of them.” Thus “one hears them say on all sides ‘Nancy does not count!’ and . . . in a language that only the coarseness of the camps excuses, ‘So the bombs that one receives here, they’re dog’s dung!’ That human weakness takes strange forms! The noise of the explosions agitates the nerves of the Nancians who remain less than the silence of the press and of the communiqués.”

There are several striking things about the prefectural reports from Meurthe-et-Moselle. First, they take note of the potential civil unrest, agitation, and anger provoked by the attacks on civilians, especially without any sign of effective reprisals being made. They further claim that military attacks have thoroughly disrupted civilian life and that noncombatants such as the elderly, women, and children have been made especially vulnerable. In addition, they point out that the public wanted to know who was taking action and how its suffering would be acknowledged. If censorship was meant to calm the population by keeping “bad news” hidden, responses in Nancy indicated that this had backfired. The civilian population wanted to be recognized for its anguish, to “count,” to have

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51 Rapport, préfet, Meurthe-et-Moselle, to ministre de l’intérieur, March 8, 1916, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730. There are no figures given for those fleeing the city and environs. At other times during the war, notably during the offensive of spring 1918, there were reports of inhabitants leaving Paris and other threatened areas, but the discussion remained anecdotal and no hard numbers were given. Some organized evacuations of Parisian children took place in the summer of 1918; see Laura Lee Downs, Childhood in the Promised Land: Working-Class Movements and the Colonies des Vacances, 1880–1960 (Durham, NC, 2002), 137. Civilian evacuations would become an object of interwar debate, a subject that merits further inquiry.


54 See evidence complaining about the lack of reprisals by the French in Rapports, Meurthe-et-Moselle to ministre de l’intérieur, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730. Other departments that were heavily bombed made little mention of popular reactions; see, e.g., Rapports to ministre de l’intérieur, June 5, 1917, and July 6, 1917, Dossier Aisne, AN F7 12730.
these attacks acknowledged and, if possible, punished. These excerpts also indicate ongoing tension between Paris and the provinces, as inhabitants of the frontier wanted to stress their unrecognized equivalency with metropolitan victims of the war.

Concern about morale increased over time. By October of 1917, the prefect of the Meuse was writing to the minister of the interior to call attention to the “great extension” of air raids in the department, “now in communes quite far from the front” that “presented no military character.” The attacks with “incendiary bombs . . . destroyed entire neighborhoods and important buildings. The inhabitants are overwhelmed and, despite my exhortations, morale weakens at this moment.” Meuse’s prefect went on to say that “public opinion” demands “the reinforcement of the means to defend the home front [arrière front]” and asks what it may be possible to do “to calm the anxiety manifesting itself among the population.”

Less than two weeks later, the prefect was again noting that recent air raids “on cities of the home front” had vividly impressed the population, despite their confidence in the “success of the Allied armies,” causing “a nervousness and uneasiness that I have tried to calm by all the means in my power.” The prefect himself observed that among the population some remained “calm, firm, and resolute,” seeking to comfort the worried and “reaffirm the confidence of all.” Efforts to reassure the population, he continued, were most effective when combined with the development of alarms to signal the passing of enemy aircraft and the provision of shelters. Nonetheless, this “movement of opinion,” if it persisted, “would have profoundly negative repercussions from all points of view.”

Reports from the Nord offered few details about victims but commented frequently on the overall morale. That of the “population dunkerquoise” was described as “good” in June 1917, although “a certain unease” was growing “as a result of the frequency of raids of which the city is the object.” Prefectural reports from the Pas-de-Calais often listed the dead and wounded, taking note after the raids of August 19–20, 1917, that five women had been killed and an additional five women gravely injured. Raids the next month near Boulogne killed five, among them the following named civilians: thirty-year-old Mme Descamps (a widow), twenty-year-old Mme Magdonala, and fifteen-year-old Mlle Marguerite Corbec. At roughly the same time, bombardments killed ninety-two in and around Calais, where the dead included not only French inhabitants but also twenty Chinese workers and thirty German prisoners. Another raid in late

55 Rapport, préfet, Meuse, to ministre de l’intérieur, October 4, 1917, Dossier Meuse, AN F7 12730.
56 Rapport, préfet, Meuse, to ministre de l’intérieur, October 16, 1917, Dossier Meuse, AN F7 12730.
57 Rapport, commissaire central, Dunkerque, to directeur de la Sûreté Générale, June 27, 1917, Dossier Nord, AN F7 12730.
58 Rapport, préfet, Pas-de-Calais, to ministre de l’intérieur, August 21, 1917, Dossier Pas-de-Calais, AN F7 12730.
59 Rapport, commissaire spécial, Boulogne-sur-Mer, to directeur de la Sûreté Générale,
September 5, 1917; and Rapport, commissaire spécial, Calais, to directeur de la Sûreté Générale, September 6, 1917, Dossier Pas-de-Calais, AN F7 12730.

60 Rapport, commissaire spécial, Calais, to directeur de la Sûreté Générale, September 28, 1917, Dossier Pas-de-Calais, AN F7 12730.

61 Rapport, préfet, Oise, to ministre de l’Intérieur, December 13, 1917, Dossier Oise, AN F7 12730.


63 Rapport, préfet, Haute-Savoie, to ministre de l’intérieur, September 6, 1917, Dossier Haute-Savoie, AN F7 12730.
nérale in September 1917 stressed the “good order” that still reigned, even though “one constantly hears quite strong criticisms about the fact that enemy planes can come . . . without being disturbed before their arrival.”64 Here, in widely separate locales, the inability of the nation to defend its civilians against aerial bombardment roused indignation against the military itself, and the recriminations were strong enough that local leaders felt obliged to bring them to the attention of the central authorities.

By the end of 1917, government concern about protecting the civilian population from the effects of air raids led to new efforts to provide public shelters in Meurthe-et-Moselle and elsewhere. Attacks from September through December of that year produced civilian victims and damaged property, especially around train stations. Drawing upon legislation from the nineteenth century concerning states of siege (Law of 9 August 1849, art. 7) and the defense of cities under attack (Law of 5 April 1849, art. 97, para. 6), officials began to ask those with buildings that had “sufficiently secure” cellars to offer them to the public.65 New measures designed to reassure and render secure the resident population required local officials to determine which cellars could become shelters, balancing the need for public safety with the rights of property owners. Such shelters would open their doors “immediately in case of bombardment.” Among other strictures, the prefect asked that local mayoralities not choose, “except in cases of absolute necessity, cellars located in houses occupied by single women.”66 Balancing concerns about the safety of civilians with the other threats posed by sheltering “the public” in private homes, authorities seem to have sought to allay fears about immorality as well as damage to private property.

Growing concern for civilian morale on the local level elicited additional responses from the national government. In late December 1917, Georges Clemenceau, newly installed as premier and minister of war, took note in a message to the minister of the interior of the consequences of the frequent air raids in the Meuse region, especially near Bar-le-Duc and Commercy. The government offered to establish a squadron of planes to protect both locations, particularly from nighttime raids. Other anti-air war measures would include the positioning of barrage balloons and, when possible, antiaircraft artillery with the goal of providing “cities exposed to aerial bombs [with] the indispensable means to defend themselves materially . . . to assure the security of their inhabitants and to maintain their morale.”67 It is the concern with maintaining both security and morale that makes this defense something new. Yet the proposed measure of placing

64 Rapport, commissaire central, Dunkerque, to directeur de la Sûreté Générale, September 3, 1917, Dossier Nord, AN F7 12730.
65 See the discussion of this in a letter from General Gerard, October 30, 1917, and a letter from the préfet, Meurthe-et-Moselle, November 3, 1917, to maires du Meurthe-et-Moselle, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730.
67 Letter, président du Conseil and ministre de la guerre, to ministre de l’intérieur, December 27, 1917, enclosed in Dossier Meuse, AN F7 12730.
airplanes in strategic positions for the defense of the region also provoked dismay. The reaction from the Meuse to these plans expressed anxiety that putting airfields too close to some communes would themselves trigger further air attacks. They needed to be placed “sufficiently far away from localities so that their presence would no longer be a subject for anxiety among the population.” It is unclear to what extent this unease reflected an understanding that undefended or “open” cities as defined in prewar measures were viewed, at least theoretically, as illegitimate targets whereas defended ones were fair game.

As the war moved into its fourth year, reports from Meurthe-et-Moselle became more succinct compilations of specific details about the nature of aerial attacks and the resulting casualties. Raids continued throughout January and February and into the spring, as Nancy and its environs were heavily bombed. The reports reveal the extent of the damage. A particularly deadly raid on the night of January 24, 1918, killed eight people, including a nine-year-old boy, Jean Viriot, and his widowed mother, as well as a young wife, Mme Dumonteau, and her husband, Julian, a mobilized worker. Among the wounded was an eight-year-old girl, Marcelle Thiel. Three homes were completely destroyed, and, in an aside, the report records as one of the casualties that a Mme Munier “had become mad.” On the night of February 12, 1918, from 7 until 9 p.m., four planes released thirty-eight bombs. In their wake, No. 14 rue de la Monnaie was destroyed, leaving “13 victims, 6 dead, 7 wounded.” The dead included a Mlle Bauzet, 9 years old, and Mlle Jeanne Bauzet, 13 years old; Mme Bauzet, 55 (presumably related to the two dead girls), and Mme Larcelet, 22, were among the wounded. This level of detail made the losses more vivid, and such records were always careful to distinguish between military and civilian casualties. As was the case with nearly all

68 Rapport, préfet, Meuse, to ministre de l’intérieur, January 26, 1918, Dossier Meuse, AN F7 12730.
69 Sometimes the record contained little more than the notation that bombs had fallen with “no panic” and “no victims.” In other cases, the information about the attack provided some general details, such as a report on a bombing in Varangeville that left “five damaged houses, a woman killed, three civilians and three military personnel wounded.” See Rapports, commissaire spécial, Nancy, to directeur de la Sûreté Générale, June 18, 1917, and July 24, 1917, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730. The quote is from the July 24 report.
70 Rapport, “Bombardements de la région Nancienne,” commissaire spécial, Nancy, January 25, 1918, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730. “Insanity” induced by the war is of course most commonly associated with “shell shock” affecting soldiers. However, the defense offered for an infanticide case in London was something deemed “air raid shock.” (For a discussion of this case, see Grayzel, Women’s Identities at War, chap. 1.) Something similar seems to be indicated here.
71 Rapport, “Bombardements de la région Nancienne,” commissaire spécial, Nancy, February 13, 1918, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730. On one occasion five consecutive raids by German aircraft unleashed 160 bombs, and attacks in the spring were reported in official communiqués. See Rapport, “Bombardements,” commissaire spécial, Nancy, February 23, 1918, Dossier Meurthe-et-Moselle, AN F7 12730; and the reprinting of the official communiqué under the heading “Des bombes dans la région de Nancy,” in Le Matin, March 8, 1918.
accounts, they also highlighted the “innocence” of the civilians who were being attacked by emphasizing the age and the gender of some of the victims.

In contrast to the attacks on other areas, the bombing of Paris, which recommenced in 1918, was as much a national as a local event. This is revealed in reports from the provinces such as this one from Isère in March 1918, which noted that “the news of the bombing of Paris . . . has provoked a very vivid emotion” among inhabitants of Grenoble and the rest of the department.72 Meanwhile, reports from the department of the Seine focused on the new provisions for public shelters and reactions to this development. More detailed investigations of the condition of the civilian population during the war under the auspices of the Prefecture of Police further recorded some of the popular attitudes toward the attacks on Paris in 1918.

The implementation of measures to respond to the bombardment of a densely populated locale such as Paris evolved over the duration of the war, especially after an intensive aerial campaign against the city was renewed in early 1918. Unlike the previous aerial incursions against the city, shells from yet another new weapon, powerful long-range artillery nicknamed Big Bertha, alternated with air raids throughout the spring. While the local and national governments by now had some experience dealing with air raids, the indiscriminate attacks on the heart of the city and its civilian population in 1918 raised particular difficulties for authorities. Officials needed to find ways to alert the population to an impending attack, to establish a system of shelters throughout the city, and to maintain circulation and commerce despite nighttime lighting precautions designed to make the capital a less visible target. Discussions about the best method to alert citizens to an aerial attack and to provide shelter for them had occupied the prefect of police, the minister of the interior, and the military government of the city throughout 1917.73 After the return of aerial attacks on the night of January 30–31, 1918, the prefect of the Seine issued a report that included instructions to local officials to safeguard monuments and “the most precious works of art housed in museums or other municipal buildings.”74 When attacks on Paris resumed, posters went up giving details about the provision of shelters.75 The government privately cautioned local officials not to have this information produce a negative impact on “the morale of the population.”76 It was clear, however, that, as was the case in the provinces, full-scale war had come to Paris, and the city needed to be prepared. In order to insure the availability of shelters, a central commission would investigate each building for any unoccupied cellars or other rooms below the ground floor that could serve as shelters, and a list of public and private

72 Rapport sur l’esprit de la population, Isère, March 25, 1918, AN F7 12936.
73 See the discussion in Dossier Seine, AN F7 12730.
74 Rapport, préfet, Seine, to ministre de l’intérieur, February 6, 1918, Dossier Seine, AN F7 12730. This was one of the other things that made attacks on the city different; they were also attacks on the nation’s patrimony.
75 The contents of posters were also circulated through the press.
76 “Sur abris,” February 1918, Dossier Seine, AN F7 12730.
shelters would be posted permanently at the town halls, schools, and post offices of each locality.\textsuperscript{77}

The requisitioning of shelters, while conceded to be necessary, was not always welcomed. The prefect of Seine-et-Oise, when reporting the damage sustained by Versailles in the aerial attacks of 1918, also noted the potential dangers posed by the government’s use of private cellars as public shelters. In early March 1918, the prefect forwarded to the central government a letter that he had received from the mayor of Versailles asking for help in indemnifying the city against damages “caused by the occupation of cellars,” which had been requisitioned regularly under the prefect’s orders since mid-February. The mayor questioned the legality of using private cellars as shelters and was told that the minister of war (i.e., Clemenceau) himself had called for this. As the mayor explained, “The brusque introduction at night of the public into houses, some of which lack concierges, others where the concierges are women or elderly . . . exposes the buildings to plundering, the consequences of which neither the owners nor the renters can accept.”\textsuperscript{78}

Along with efforts to ensure safety and security, the government also sought to assess as rapidly as possible the damage sustained in these raids. Records giving minute-by-minute details of air raids against Paris were quickly compiled and distributed to cabinet ministers.\textsuperscript{79} In addition to providing a chronicle of where and when bombs fell, whom they injured, and what they damaged, authorities also sought to safeguard the morale of the Parisian population by monitoring their

\textsuperscript{77} The large posters appearing on February 6, 1918, offered inhabitants of the city quite specific information on shelters provided in case of attacks by enemy aircraft. The location and the number of persons that each shelter could hold would be designated by a sign featuring “black characters measuring 0 \text{ m} 20 \text{ on a white background “that spelled out “ABRI” [shelter].”}” At night and during alerts, a lantern would illuminate the sign, and “from the first signal of an alert until the signal for the end of the alert was given, the proprietors of locations designated as shelters or their representatives were required to constantly maintain free access to these locations; the doors must remain open.” Smoking would be forbidden in these locations. It cited laws that dated to 1790, culminating in decisions Clemenceau made on January 31, 1918, in the aftermath of the latest raid. Affiche “ABRIS,” February 6, 1918, Dossier Seine, AN F7 12730.

\textsuperscript{78} Letter, maire de Versailles to préfet, Seine-et-Oise, March 8, 1918, Dossier Seine-et-Oise, AN F7 12730.

\textsuperscript{79} On the night of March 8, the prefect of police sounded the first alert at 20h 35 and the military government sounded the second at 20h 40. By 21h 40 the six squads of enemy planes that had been spotted had begun to drop their bombs; at 21h 55 a large fire was sighted in Montmartre, and by 22h 12 bombs had claimed ten victims on Rue Geoffrey-Marie and another two on the Rue du Paradis. As the raid continued, bombs were dropped on the Avenue de la République and on Rue Nollet; the last victim claimed was at 0h 25 the next morning on the Boulevard Nationale. When the signal that recorded the end of the raid was sounded at 0h 28, the casualties included three dead in the city. For even more details, see “Raid d’avions sur Paris,” Dossier, March 8–9, 1918, and dossiers for other attacks through 1918, Archives du Service Historique de l’Armée de la Terre (A.S.H.) 6 N 101.
Grayzel

reactions to the bombing of the city. In late March, a description of the Fifth and Thirteenth arrondissements noted that “despite some appearance of calm,” the bombardments by airplanes had taken their toll, and “the enemy’s use of toxic gas shells in future was feared.” In particular, refugees and those who had already “suffered from the war” had “a bad morale.” In contrast, “the truly Parisian population did not cease to regard the events [raids] with confidence, preoccupying themselves above all with assuring the tranquility of the children.” More details of the later raids in June 1918 insist on the “calmness” and “good morale” of Parisians and even maintain that “it was necessary to note as an excellent fact that the false rumors [about the attacks] were actually much worse than the reality.” Occasionally, the mood was said to be “a little modified” by a raid, or the police took notice of people “putting their most precious objects in shelters,” but generally they stated that “calm” and “tranquility” prevailed. The annual report for the prefect of police in 1918 noted that when “the perils of aerial aggressions intensified over Paris,” they caused not only “deprivation” and “fear” but also “a calm, a patience, an ardor for work.” Recording the performance of the police during the year, the report also acknowledged that one of the side effects of precautions against air raids, the “diminution of light in public ways,” had led to increased “nocturnal attacks.” The report explained: “After nightfall, some individuals waited in deserted and dark streets for passersby, preferably women, in order to throw themselves upon them and rob them.” The police response was to increase their rounds and exercise greater watchfulness. Overall, those undertaking surveillance of the city’s population conveyed the impression that attacks were met with resoluteness, notwithstanding anecdotal evidence of flight from the city following some of the worst attacks and of damage inflicted by inhabitants upon each other.

If Parisians were portrayed as stoic in these secret government accounts, they were described as no less so in public ones. The renewed attacks on Paris after long years of other war-related hardships also received a good deal of media attention, and the raids of 1918 were more extensive than prior ones, with ninety-three bombs dropped on the city on the night of January 30–31 alone. Publicly,

80 “Rapport de physionomie de la Ville de Paris,” 4me District, March 29, 1918, Archives de la Préfecture de Police (A.P.P.) Ba 1614.
81 “Rapport de physionomie de la Ville de Paris,” 6me District, June 17, 1918, A.P.P. Ba 1614. For descriptions of good morale and calm, see Rapport, 1re District, June 14 and 27, 1918, 4me District, July 22, 1918, and 5me District, June 14, 1918, A.P.P. Ba 1614.
82 “Rapport sur physionomie de la Ville de Paris,” 9eme District, June 17, 1918, and 10me District, June 28, 1918, A.P.P. Ba 1614.
84 Reports from Paris, especially of districts that included train stations, noted crowds trying to leave the city following some of the more deadly attacks. See A.P.P. Ba 1614. Exact numbers of how many left and where they went are not indicated in these accounts. See n. 51 above for information concerning the organized evacuation of some children from Paris during the summer of 1918.
the statistics concerning the dead and injured were prominently displayed, such as initial reports that the raid of March 8–9 had left eleven dead, forty-six wounded, and six missing; yet Parisians were said to have responded with typical sangfroid. One of the deadliest attacks on the city occurred only a few nights later, on March 11, when large German planes (Gothas) killed one hundred people and wounded seventy-nine. The front page of *Le Matin* on March 13, 1918, displayed under the heading “The Nights of War in Paris” a photo of “a cellar during the visit of the Gothas” featuring several women, a small child, and a sleeping baby. The paper commented that the bombing had one “principal goal, to cause terror, to provoke morale to give way” and noted that the victims “of this German barbarity were almost entirely women and children.” While reporting that the number of shelters was as yet insufficient—it said that more than 2,700 were available but more were needed—it also urged the population to follow the example of soldiers and take shelter immediately upon hearing the alert: “One can say that it’s a patriotic duty for all not to expose themselves needlessly, whether from curiosity or bravado. When our poilus at the front are bombed and their duty does not oblige them to face death, they take shelter. Do not hope to be more courageous than our brave soldiers for whom danger is so familiar. Remember at this moment that all human life is precious for the national defense and should not be sacrificed without reason.”

Among the victims of the raid of March 11 were sixty-six people who were killed by a panicking crowd at the entrance of a refuge in the Bolivar Metro station. Press accounts stressed the innocence of these victims, but not until March 15 did the censor allow more details of the “catastrophe” to be published, clearly indicating that the deaths, while counted in the toll from the raids, were not due to injuries caused by the bombs themselves. As if to calm fears, newspapers reported that Parisians had “a greater chance of being crushed by an auto than killed by a Gotha” and that taking shelter further diminished the odds. The news media sought to reassure the population by printing a police communiqué that warned the public “to be on guard against inexact and alarmist information. . . . The number of victims was very exactly indicated in the official communiqués” that followed each raid. What inhabitants could also tell during the raids was that the number of bombs dropped on the city and suburbs had increased in 1918; twenty-eight bombs fell in Paris and seventy-four in the suburbs on the night of March 8–9 with another thirty-nine hitting the city only a few days later.

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86 See reports in *Le Matin*, March 9, 1918; and follow-up reports in *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Matin*, and *Le Figaro*, March 10, 1918, where the toll is given as nine dead and thirty-nine wounded.
88 The station was not publicly named in any of the press accounts.
89 “Après le raid,” *Le Figaro*, March 15, 1918.
91 “Après le raid,” *Le Figaro*, March 15, 1918.
Later that month, another deadly attack on the city occurred on Good Friday, March 29, 1918, when one of Big Bertha’s shells hit the church of Saint-Gervais. Seventy-two women ranging in age from eighty-one to eleven were killed along with nineteen men, while another thirty-six women and thirty men were injured. Among the dead, eleven were under the age of eighteen. Not only was the death toll relatively high but in addition the desecration of a church and the high percentage of women killed on a holy day made responses to this attack very emotional. Describing the Parisian reaction, Le Matin recorded the promenade on the sunny, beautiful Easter Monday following the bombing of numerous people who walked past the church “contemplating in all its horror this latest manifestation of German kultur and reviving their hate at the sight of this temple where kneeling women and children perished.” Reaction to the attack was widespread. Religious leaders in France and elsewhere condemned it in very strong language, and outraged international commentary was reproduced in the French press, such as that of the New York Sun describing the bombing of Paris as evidence of the German empire’s “sadism.”

Shells from Big Bertha hit the nursery of the Maternité rather swiftly upon the heels of the Good Friday attacks, although those that fell here and elsewhere on April 11 produced many fewer casualties (five dead and twenty-three injured). Among the dead were a student midwife and a newborn. Images of the wreckage showed overturned cribs amid broken glass, and, as the news media made clear, there was “blood on the cradles . . . blood on the white beds.” Most newspapers linked the two attacks; the front page of L’Humanité noted that the bombing on Good Friday had caused “a painful emotion,” but “yesterday, it was not a church that was hit but something more sacred still, a crèche where mamas give the breast to babies a few days old. . . . A shell arrived to sow death in the same room where each day little children come into the world.” Le Matin was even more explicit, describing “victims of the barbarians: women giving birth and newborns” and suggesting that such an act distinguished the true warrior from the savage:

93 See the photo of the damaged church and discussion in Poirier, Bombardements de Paris, 225–230. Photo is opposite 225.
94 “Le bombardement quotidien,” Le Matin, April 2, 1918.
96 For the names and number of the dead and injured, see “Paris bombardé: Les victimes d’hier,” Le Matin, April 12, 1918.
97 See the photo reproduced from L’Illustration in Poirier, Bombardements de Paris, 209, and Poirier’s discussion on 236. For the quote, see “Un obus a atteint une crèche,” Le Matin, April 12, 1918.
98 “Une crèche atteinte par un obus,” L’Humanité, April 12, 1918. See also the report in “Paris bombardé,” Le Figaro, April 12, 1918; and the discussion in Roseman, “The Great War and Modern Motherhood.”
“After having massacred kneeling women and children in a church, nothing was left to the glory of their Kultur but the killing of women giving birth in their beds and of poor little beings painfully trying to open their eyes to the light. Their shells, after the church, could not hit a more sacred place, one more protected by the most elementary laws of humanity. Teutonic savagery . . . manifested itself yesterday in all its ferocity.”99

While this may have been among the most disturbing attacks on the city, it was far from the last, as the next night another twenty-seven people were killed and seventy-two injured during an air raid.100 More aerial attacks followed during the summer; planes dropped forty-five bombs on Paris on June 6–7 and another twenty on June 27–28, killing seven and injuring eighteen.101 Published accounts of raids in the provinces, especially of key coastal areas, also highlighted the damage done to women and children and to families with the renewed attacks of 1918. Le Petit Calasien, in reporting details of raids near Boulogne-sur-Mer in June 1918 that killed four children, four women, and three men, described how “an entire family of eight found an atrocious end” when a cellar in which they had been taking shelter was hit.102

There was little that the French could do to protect the civilian population. Shelters and warnings made something of a difference, at least in terms of morale, but neither defensive artillery nor retaliation could make noncombatants “safe.” One issue that emerged powerfully in nearly all the press accounts was that of reprisals. From the first moment of reporting the late January raid of 1916, Le Matin’s front page asked for immediate reprisals, because “Germans will never understand a single argument except brutal force.” Reprisals “are the cry of the entire population.”103 Le Petit Bleu asked for “prompt and energetic reprisals”: even if it was “not in our character to go to kill women, children, . . . inoffensive and unarmed beings,” the deaths of Parisians must be avenged.104 In Le Matin, Senator Louis Barthou offered a front-page perspective on reprisals a few days after these January raids. He urged that such counterattacks proceed with caution, coupled with reforms to make the French air force an effective instrument of both offense and defense. Here Barthou also elaborated on the aims of the Germans in waging aerial warfare—to sow terror and frighten the population—but he argued that their plan backfired: “In place of submission, they provoke revolt, hatred, the thirst for vengeance and the need for reprisals. They give to civilians the souls of soldiers.”105

99 “Un obus a atteint une crèche,” Le Matin, April 12, 1918.
100 See coverage of this, including criticism of the lack of warning, in “Le raid d’avions sur Paris,” L’Humanité, April 14, 1918; and also “Après le canon, les gothas,” Le Matin, April 14, 1918.
101 Poirier, Bombardements de Paris, 310.
102 Quoted in “La guerre aérienne: Raids d’avions allemands sur la région de Boulogne-sur-Mer,” Le Figaro, June 14, 1918.
*Le Petit Parisien* launched its own inquiry into what it deemed the question of the hour: what about reprisals? It solicited and published opinions from a variety of sources. Both Maurice Donnay and Henri Lavedan of the Académie Française urged reprisals without hesitation or restriction. Jean Richepin, also of the Académie, elaborated, “One does not discuss things with assassins, one suppresses them.” Since Germany had conducted a war contrary to the rules of honor, France was not obliged to restrain itself. For the most part, respondents supported reprisals, mentioning the need to revenge the attacks on innocents. The only woman interviewed spoke of how “frightful and far from our mentality” it would be to attack women and children, yet she said that if it were the only way to preserve such innocent French lives, she would support it. Some disagreement emerged among workers’ representatives. M. Bérard, secretary of the Union Nationale des Chambres Syndicales du Commerce et de l’Industrie, declared himself “without pity for such savages.” In contrast, M. Vignaud, secretary of the Syndicat des Tailleurs et Couturières, said that reprisals would be unjust and that it was “inhuman to cause innocent beings to suffer.” Even as accusations of attacks and counterattacks mounted, *Le Figaro*’s front page summed up the argument from the French perspective: “The Germans hope to rouse in our hearts one knows not what abject sentiment of cowardice. Their psychology always miscalculates. Do they take Paris for a little city of the Rhine?” Instead, the Germans should beware of encouraging more attacks upon themselves.

The return of air raids in 1918 prompted renewed public calls for reprisals, along with secret discussions about retaliatory attacks with enough “power” to cause the Germans to “abandon” all new endeavors against Paris. Appeals for reprisals can also be found among the accounts of the status of the Parisian population; residents of the Fourth and Twelfth arrondissements reportedly wanted German cities bombed in retaliation for attacks on the city and its surroundings. In addition, the inability to strike with substantive raids against key German targets was fodder for discussion among the British and French authorities well after the German offensive had been repulsed and the extent of raids diminished. In mid-August 1918, Winston Churchill wrote to Louis Loucheur, the minister of armaments, in reference to long-distance bombing plans that hinged upon the availability of a new type of engine. He urged that the distribution of this engine be worked out between the British and French quickly, for “this is the moment to attack the enemy, to carry the war into his own country, to make him feel in his own towns and in his own person something of the havoc he has wrought in

109 “Rapport sur physionomie de la Ville de Paris,” 3me District, June 19, 1918, A.P.P. Ba 1614. See also similar sentiments in Rapport, 6me District, July 16, 1918, A. P. P. Ba 1614.
France and Belgium. This is the moment, just before the winter begins, to affect his morale and to harry his hungry and dis-spirited cities without pause or stay.”

Such sentiments had no effect on the final outcome of the war. The last deadly raid on Paris occurred on September 15–16 at a point when it was clear that an Allied victory was at hand. Nonetheless, in this last-ditch effort, German planes dropped twenty-four bombs in the city and sixty in the suburbs. Five men, one woman, and one child were killed, and thirty people, including twelve women and four children, were injured. One thing made clear by this final tally was that civilians were no longer a protected category. Since reprisals had not worked, there remained no option but increasingly to view women and children—civilians—as the equivalent of soldiers.

That a significant shift had occurred in how warfare was to be conducted against civilians can be seen clearly in the often-quoted postwar memoirs of General Erich von Ludendorff, who claimed that the long-range artillery bombardment of Paris during the spring of 1918 “made a great impression on Paris and on all France. Part of the population left the capital and so increased the alarm caused by our successes. . . . The same effect was intended to be produced by the great activity displayed by our airmen.” Here, Ludendorff concedes the German aim of “impressing” the population and increasing its “alarm”—of attacking so-called home-front morale. Yet Ludendorff also presumes to take credit for preventing the wholesale destruction of Paris (and London) by vetoing the use of “a particularly effective incendiary bomb, expressly designed for attacks on the two capitals, of which sufficient supplies were ready in August.” By that point, “the great amount of damage that they were expected to cause would no longer have affected the course of the war” and might have provoked reprisals against Germany. Although much of what he writes is open to question, it was significant for the postwar period that Ludendorff acknowledged that if German leaders had felt that these airborne weapons could have affected the war’s outcome, they would have deployed them, regardless of the immense loss of civilian life.

RESPONDING TO THE RAIDS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF CIVILIAN MORALE

Both press accounts and government records indicated that attacks on civilians underscored the contrasting nature of the enemy and of the French population now resisting its behavior in an effort to preserve “civilization” itself. Since it

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110 Winston S. Churchill to (Louis) Loucheur [minister of armaments], August 18, 1918, A.S.H. 6 N 54.
111 Poirier, Bombardements de Paris, 310.
112 Erich von Ludendorff, Ludendorff’s Own Story: August 1914–November 1918 (New York and London, 1919), 2:237. For instance, interwar French pacifists like Victor Méric would cite Ludendorff’s vision of winning the war, not through battle, but through air raids. See Victor Méric, La guerre aux civils (Paris, 1932), 25. See also the discussion of Ludendorff’s notion of warfare in Hull, Absolute Destruction.
113 Ludendorff, Ludendorff’s Own Story, 2:351.
114 Ibid., 2:352.
had endured enemy fire and enemy bombs, this was a population that was newly militarized and thus one whose morale needed to be preserved. Along with the attention to civilian morale came related ideas that bravery itself could take on altered meanings. This can be seen in contemporary responses to the raids such as this one appearing in Le Petit Parisien in March 1915: “It’s not a trait of bravery to go dropping bombs on sleeping civilians, to profit from darkness, like a vulgar bandit, in order to . . . assassinate women and children in their houses. The laws of war up until now have condemned similar acts, and the laws of honor proscribed them straight out.”115 Such a break with the laws of war established by the international community challenged some of the complicated linkages between military service, heroism, and the meaning of citizenship, but it also shored up the image of Germany as a rogue state. Germany’s understanding of bravery was that of “bandits” and “assassins” exhibiting counterfeit and dishonorable forms of masculinity. This criticism was underlined by the notion that “women and children” were the targets, even though some of the civilian casualties had been noncombatant men. Although, as the preceding section has made clear, attacks on Paris and other areas away from the battle zones killed men as well as “women and children,” this latter phrase signaled civilian innocence, and the focus of media attention remained on young or female victims.

Given these new mechanisms for waging war, how were civilians to respond? Again, contemporary reactions to the raids reveal the evolution of a consensus on the appropriate “heroic” French behavior expected now of women as well as men and of citizens of all ages, in contrast to that of the “cowardly” Germans. As air warfare developed, the air raid was seen as itself producing a new kind of non-gender-specific civic virtue: stoic heroism under fire. One of the earliest celebrated civilian victims of the attacks on Paris was thirteen-year-old Denise Cartier, who was injured on September 27, 1914, when a bomb shattered her leg, which then had to be amputated below her knee. Her age, gender, and stoicism—she told the agent who rescued her, “above all, do not tell Mama that it’s serious”—made this “innocent fillette” a “hero.”116

Images in the popular media throughout the war emphasized the innocence of those under attack from the air by depicting women and children as the quintessential victims. A drawing by Georges Redon titled simply L’alerte appeared on the front page of Le Petit Parisien on February 2, 1916, immediately following the zeppelin raids of late January. Here a woman carrying an infant wrapped in a blanket peers anxiously out the window, while in the background a small child lifts his or her head from the bedclothes and in the foreground a slightly larger child gingerly begins to get dressed. The faces of this defenseless family are ethereal, and the scene evokes a haunting sense of domesticity under threat. Below the drawing, this caption appears: “Sow, sow hate, even the smallest ones will not forget.”117

The lack of traditional courage and the literally sterile masculinity exhibited

116 Thiéry, Paris bombardé, 3, 9 (quote).
Civilians under Fire in First World War France

by the Germans—who would attack defenseless civilians—was asserted in other French responses. In 1915, the songwriter Jean Bastia tried to gain the censor’s approval for a new song, “Zeppelinades,” later resubmitted as “Nuit de Mars.” During the first attempt to gain approval for the song, the censor marked its second verse with a large red X objecting to particular phrases. Bastia’s controversial lyrics described a zeppelin over Paris as a “fat phallus raping the virginity of the stars.” Furthermore, this phallic zeppelin (standing in for German masculinity) is a “demon” capable only of dropping “sterile seed” that “far from creating new sons only serves to depopulate the world.”

While other lines in the song spoke mockingly of the zeppelin’s power and of the cowardice of its attacks, the second verse both sexualizes and emasculates those who would wage war in this manner. Bastia, however, did not take the censorship of his song quietly; he wrote a letter to the prefect of police defending his lines in April 1915. He claimed that the censor thought only of the “pornographic sense” of the word “phallus” without “comprehending the character” of the word in this poetic context, one that would “not scandalize those that knew this sense.” Bastia lost his argument with the censors, but his imagery nonetheless provides an example of one powerful way in which the air raid would come to be represented—as the act of cowards (infertile rapists) rather than true warriors.

Rather than effeminizing the French men who could no longer defend their own women and children from attack, such interpretations called into question the masculinity of the German attackers. As we saw earlier, the actions of the German military had already yielded the epithet “sadist.” It was their deviant maleness—that of eunuchs, sterile, cowardly men—that especially marked the German airmen. Far from challenging normative gender roles and the gender system itself, the status quo was maintained because aerial bombardment was seen to violate the code of chivalric warfare that separated out “real” men (combatants) from civilians, symbolized by women and children. One can see this in the hand-to-hand combat with bayonets that was still enshrined in military training and that became a staple of combatants’ versions of the war, as well as in the sense that civilians, especially women and children, should be a protected category.


119 Letter, Jean Bastia to préfet de police, April 6, 1915, A.P.P. Ba 697.

120 “L’aéroplane sanglant,” words by Plebus and Senja, music by Codini, A.P.P. Ba 697.

121 See the discussion of this in Joanna Bourke, An Intimate History of Killing: Face-
Adolphe Augé’s 1918 poem “Les Gotha sur Paris,” dedicated to the city and performed at the Théâtre aux Armées, similarly evoked the barbarity of German air attacks that “rained death on the child and the woman.” Although, it continued, “nothing could disarm . . . a city of elegance and charm . . . eternal sanctuary of spirit and taste.” Such planes have come and will come again because “to kill, to burn, these are what the Boche adores.” Most significantly, Augé asserts that the Gotha have come to remind Parisians “that it’s always war that they wage without pity, without cessation, without mercy” and that the only response of “the French Soul” can be “to conduct ourselves—stoically—jusqu’au bout!”

Georges Bouret’s 1918 poem “Paris bombardé” was dedicated to “Parisians beneath the bombs” but addressed to the Kaiser, who was denounced as a “cruel and sinister bandit,” a “proud potentate,” and an “accomplice of Satan” who “respected nothing” and whose attacks on the city would count among his crimes. These crimes included launching “triumphant shells / carriers of strange messages / that transformed cradles, nests of small infants / into coffins where angels sleep.” “Insensible to remorse,” his engines even “persecuted the dead and profaned the cemetery.” Nonetheless, Paris “would suffer jusqu’au bout, sublime and strong in its distress.”

As new military tactics continued, commentators, and particularly feminists, singled out another aspect of this form of warfare. If the men who dropped bombs on innocent targets became “less than men,” then the women who carried on despite these threats proved themselves as heroic as men. Thus women could be among those quietly transformed by this experience of war. Describing the responses of Parisian women to air raids in February 1918, Alice Berthet suggested in La Française that women who found themselves thus at risk could now more easily say “jusqu’au bout!” without feeling that they only risked the lives of others. It was now “our lives” that “we exposed when demanding that the war continue.” Therefore women “had the right to be a little proud” since they had now showed themselves “to be the dignified emulators of ‘those at the front.’”

Along with emphasizing the horrors inflicted upon civilians by an enemy without scruples, the more general news media underscored the growing equivalency between soldiers and civilians. As an article in Le Figaro several days after the deadly raid of March 11, 1918, put it:

Little by little, male and female Parisians are coming to have the state of soul of the poilus. After all, in wartime, why is it children twenty years of age who are killed for

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123 Georges Bouret, “Paris bombardé” (Macon, 1918).
women and for the elderly? Because the former is weak and the other impotent. But if it’s
the turn of civilians to risk death for the patrie, isn’t it a happy occasion to prove that they
know the moment to hold on, like the young and the strong? . . . [Now] they “make war”
[font la guerre] and, in listening to the sounds of the evening, they feel themselves proud
no longer to be embusqués.128

Now men and women alike are seen as proving that they can “make war” by
bravely risking death for the nation. Most telling is the equation of all civilians
(prior to the raids) with the most derogatory term for those seen as shirking
military duty, embusqué. With the devastating and deadly raids on the city, no
one could be a shirker any longer.

When it came time to write the postwar histories of the raids and bombardments
of the First World War, a more streamlined version of this multifaceted story
appeared. Postwar narratives of the raids on Paris made specific and repeated
references to the violations of the Hague Conventions in the bombing of the
capital. As one 1919 French commentator dryly put it, pointing out that most of
the damage sustained in wartime raids was by civilians, “Aerial warfare increased
the risks run by noncombatants.” This realization shaped postwar discussions of
air warfare but was also self-evident during the war itself.126 Attacks on Paris
dominated these accounts, and the morale of civilians was never in question. The
ability to be “calm, firm, and resolute” that the prefect of Meuse found among
some citizens in 1917 became the quality found in nearly all of them in postwar
accounts. As early as 1921, an entire illustrated history, Paris bombardé, had
appeared to reveal the full details, which could not be publicized during the war
for fear of alerting the Germans to their success or failure, and to denounce “the
boche barbarism,” “the sinister exploits of the pirates of the air.”127

News media at the time emphasized the significance of specific types of victims
of the raid. The mid-March raids of 1918 hit a hospital, killing six and injuring
seven. Recognizing the heroism of the medical personnel under fire, Le Figaro
reported that the government awarded the Croix de la Légion d’Honneur to an
intern who died while attending the sick and the Croix de Guerre avec Palme to
two nurses who “heroically fell in the accomplishment of their duty” when bombs
hit the hospital. Other nurses wounded in the bombing received medals as well.128

If the government reacted to specific kinds of civilian deaths by awarding
medals to doctors and nurses who were killed on duty during the Paris raids, it
also responded to what were regarded as other particularly innocent victims. Re-
ports from Argenteuil noted that two bombs fell during the attack of March 8–
9, 1918, producing four victims, including an eleven-year-old boy, “le jeune Ri-
card,” who was killed instantly, his nineteen-year-old sister, Gabrielle, whose two
legs were crushed, and their thirty-eight-year-old mother.129 A telegram on March

127 Thiéry, Paris bombardé, 2.
9 from the local prefect informed the minister of the interior that Mlle Gabrielle Ricard had died that morning in the hospital at Argenteuil and that he “had gone to the village that morning to salute the two victims in the name of the Government.”

The deaths of this brother and sister in Argenteuil on the outskirts of Paris became a forum for public reaction and solidarity in the face of the air raid. A further telegram from the prefect to the government on March 13 described the funeral held that morning in “the midst of a considerable crowd” for the “Ricard children killed by a bomb from an enemy airplane.” At the cemetery of Argenteuil, “moving words were pronounced” by the mayor and justice of the peace, along with representatives of the prefect, the president and minister of war, the military, and “a small comrade of young René Ricard.” Clearly, the loss of two more French lives in March 1918 should not necessarily have merited representation from the national and local governments at the funeral. What was being honored here was the loss of innocence. The deaths of these young, defenseless noncombatants, killed in their home by enemy fire, were acknowledged as mattering to the nation as much as the loss of any soldier—perhaps, at this point in the war, as symbolically mattering more.

Throughout the raids, the government at both the local and national levels had sought to do something to acknowledge the loss of civilians. As Le Figaro reported on its front page on March 13, 1918, the office of the Conseil Municipal decided at a meeting on March 12 “to aid stricken families by according them a perpetual allotment in suburban cemeteries for the burial of the victims.” In addition, a “military delegation would follow the funeral of each victim” and “the coffins would be covered with the tricolor flag.” These last two details—the participation of the military and the draping of the casket in the national flag—suggest the elevation of these civilian deaths into something akin to combatant ones.

Enemy-inflicted noncombatant deaths received some public attention during the war and immediately afterward. Yet the legacy of the air raid in relation to memory and commemoration, to the basic wartime issue of mourir pour la patrie (dying for the nation), also deserves further mention. When legislators after the

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130 Telegram, March 9, 1918, in Dossier March 8–9, 1918, Raid on Paris, A.S.H. 6 N 101.
132 “Le 21e Raid sur Paris: Pour les victimes,” Le Figaro, March 13, 1918. It had previously been reported that the council would offer aid to the families as well; see “Après le raid sur Paris,” L’Humanité, March 10, 1918.
133 In the comprehensive study of constructions of French identity directed by Pierre Nora, Les lieux de mémoire (Paris, 1986), there is a separate essay in volume 2 (La Nation) titled “Mourir pour la patrie [to die for the fatherland],” which traces the shift from the concept of Christian sacrifice to that of sacrifice for the nation. However, the analysis stops short of figuring out what to do with civilians, especially women, who “died for the nation” or even of acknowledging that they existed.
war came to debate the repatriation of corpses, particularly of those who died in the war zone or occupied zones, several deputies inserted an amendment concerning “civilians, victims of bombs or war accidents” and declaring that such civilians should be considered “mort pour la France.” This resulted from another amendment proposed during debates in February 1920 by several deputies who noted that “bombardments by cannon and airplane in Paris and elsewhere had created numerous victims. It thus seemed logical to include them in the proposed measure.”

In France, as elsewhere among the participant nations in the First World War, the primary focus of “the construction of memory,” as historian Daniel Sherman puts it, was on the lives of lost combatants. We know a great deal about the debates surrounding the building of war memorials, about the iconography of these monuments, and about some of their meanings for postwar societies. However, even in a definitive account of the commemorative practices after World War I, we find little discussion of war-related noncombatant deaths. Sherman reminds us, for instance, of soldiers’ disparagement of civilian hardships such as “aerial bombardment” and insists that the experiences of the soldier and civilian remained divided in memory as in fact.

Some of the civilian victims of the war’s raids did receive public recognition. After the zeppelin raid on Paris in January 1916, Le Petit Parisien launched an appeal for funds to erect a monument “to the victims of the zeppelins.” Claiming to be responding to “public sentiment,” the front page of the paper announced that it wanted to erect a plaque “Aux Parisiens: Innocentes Victimes des Bombardements Aériens” in order that no one would forget “the barbarous acts of our enemies.” While acknowledging that, compared to the “thousands of brave soldiers fallen on the fields of battle,” the number killed in air raids was minute, it insisted that “their fate appeared more cruel, because all moral laws, all human sentiments ought to have shielded them from the murderous bomb of the zeppelin.” Thus the memory of these “assassinations” had to be preserved lest future generations confuse them with “the ordinary facts of war.” Le Petit Parisien would offer this monument to the city of Paris, to be erected, it hoped, in a “popular quarter” where “the enemy had sowed sorrow,” thus leaving a legacy to remind

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134 See “Rapport par M. Alexandre Israel,” Chamber of Deputies, April 28, 1920, recording conversations with MM. Deguise and Rollin, AN F2 2124.
135 See Proposition de loi no. 48, Annexe, 16, AN F2 2124.
137 Sherman, The Construction of Memory, 45, 49. Even this definitive and excellent study does not offer any details on the commemoration of war-induced noncombatant deaths. See also the comparative approach to postwar memory in Jay Winter, Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning (Cambridge, 1995); and in other works on French war memorials and commemoration such as Annette Becker, Les monuments aux morts: Mémoire de la Grande Guerre (Paris, 1990); andPhilippe Rivé et al., eds., Monuments de mémoire: Les monuments aux morts de la Grande Guerre (Paris, 1991), which focus on monuments to combatants.
those to come of “the duty of memory and of hate.”\textsuperscript{138} Far from the creation of any vivid legacy, what becomes obvious is how quickly memories of civilian victims of the raids faded both in the interwar period and in the history of the war ever since.

CONCLUSION

The notion that civilians should and could be made safe from new military technology was a short-lived innovation of the late nineteenth century. Prewar ideas about regulating warfare had sought to protect and establish new kinds of spaces to be made safe from attack, “open cities” inhabited by civilians and serving no military purpose. Yet emerging forms of warfare led to the militarization of civilian life across France during the First World War. Like recent work by Benjamin Ziemann, this essay has sought to demonstrate that the gap between “home” and “war” front was narrower than some historians have perceived it to be. It turned out that defining a civilian was not much easier than defining an “open city,” and neither category guaranteed safety in this (or any) war.

Demonstrating that a militarization of civilian life occurred does not necessarily support the idea that the “brutalization” of society, as hypothesized by George Mosse and supported most recently by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, had also arrived.\textsuperscript{139} If this were the case, why would such a traumatized nation care about the relatively small numbers of civilians killed by enemy fire? A variety of public voices—in government and the media—distinguished between casualties based on age and gender; they emphasized and mourned the loss of innocence and of individuals. Even in the war’s final year, after millions of losses on both sides, the deaths of young René and Gabrielle Ricard, killed at home in the raids of the Great War, were seen and felt as deeply meaningful.

A full understanding of the experience of civilians under fire requires that we take seriously the gendered consequences of the bombing of noncombatants throughout the war. We must also consider how the meanings of masculinity and femininity were deployed culturally in efforts to comprehend these offenses against the literal home front. The portrayal of German pilots as cowards—as “infertile rapists,” in the words of Jean Bastia’s song—suggests an attack on the traditional notion of valor in wartime and belies the celebrated heroism of the war’s pilots or “aces.” The emphasis on both the “new” potential bravery of women and on “women and children” as victims of atrocious attacks reflected efforts by media and the government to minimize the unsettling upheavals of a kind of warfare that turned all civilian spaces into potential military targets.


\textsuperscript{139} See Mosse, \textit{Fallen Soldiers}; Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, \textit{14–18 retrouver la guerre}. 
We therefore must also pay attention to the meaning of place. Attacks on Paris were of profound importance for symbolic as well as strategic reasons. The government itself fled south in 1914 when fears that the city would come under siege as it had in the Franco-Prussian War seemed justifiably real. The resentment articulated by the inhabitants of Nancy in 1916—their feeling that attacks on provincial towns that went unreported did not “count”—illustrates the precariousness of the government policy of censoring factual information about such incidents while seeking to rouse indignation with limited media coverage of damage done to specific kinds of victims. In some sense, the innocent female child Denise Cartier became interchangeable with the innocent, heroic, feminized city of Paris, which stood in for France itself. In theory, every attack on civilians was reckoned against Germany and became part of a long ledger of recorded “crimes,” even if calls for reprisals undermined some of the moral high ground that could be claimed by the victims of the “unprovoked” acts of “bandits.” However, assaults on Paris mattered more than those on Nancy, and the awareness of this, as with the effects on morale of all such enemy actions, had to be carefully managed.

Important legacies and lessons for the next war were created by the advent of a type of warfare that put all at risk. During the Great War, local officials made it clear to the central government that aerial warfare affected morale but that fear and resentment could be managed by the provision of remedies such as shelters, compensation, adequate warning systems, and effective propaganda. The loss of mothers and children in their homes also seems to have caused increased anger against the enemy rather than the desire to give up. One of the looming questions about the first modern air war was why aerial bombardment continued to be promoted as a means of waging total war if the damage was insufficient to defeat the population by destroying its morale. As one of the postwar histories of the bombing of Paris suggested, if the German aim was to “spread terror among the population and obtain their demoralization,” it ultimately failed. Instead, the effect of the raids was to make it impossible to forget “the barbarity and ferocity of Germany” and its efforts to kill “inoffensive victims, children, women, the elderly massacred in their beds, in the intimacy of their families.” Yet these same accounts concluded that the lessons of the past required nations to prepare for wars using these new techniques. Despite the failure of air warfare to shatter civilian morale during the First World War, memories of its forceful impact and the fears of its further potential for destruction that emerged in the interwar era had an effect in 1938, 1939, and, indeed, in 1940.

That the consequences of raids during the First World War have been downplayed by historians contrasts vividly with their centrality to the narratives of the

140 Poirier, Bombardements de Paris, 21.
142 Poirier, Bombardements de Paris, 262.
Second World War. Images of bomb craters, shelters, and people climbing through rubble define the civilian experience of that war. In contrast, the civilians of the Great War have come to be seen as either the sensationalized victims of German atrocities or as heartlessly remote, while the true sufferers are the hapless, immobilized, and traumatized trench soldiers. Bombing raids on civilians during World War I were so novel that they did not fit neatly into the atrocity stories that emerged during this war, despite the best efforts of some contemporaries to make them do so. Simply put, they fail to astound us numerically, and the numbers of military dead are so overwhelming that the story of early air warfare against civilians has been lost.

What can hundreds of dead civilians matter in light of the millions of dead soldiers? At the very least, the bombings of civilians must be taken into consideration in order to appreciate the full extent of the damage—material, psychological, and cultural—that was sustained during the First World War. Some of the cultural work that allowed populations to respond effectively to the raids of later wars, especially in Europe, also began here. These bombings were crucial precedents for the more systematic attacks against civilians in subsequent wars. Despite the best efforts of some postwar activists and politicians, the assumption that militaries would target civilian areas became a standard feature of European war plans, and death from the air has been a common element of war since 1914.\(^{144}\) The idealism of the Hague Conventions in attempting to protect civilians was thus one of the many casualties of the Great War.

\(^{144}\) There were various attempts in the interwar period to curtail the use of air power in wartime, notably under the auspices of the League of Nations. For internal French discussion of some of these measures see Dossier “Limitation des Armements,” in A.S.H. 6 N 5.