

# France and the Great War on Its Centenary

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MARTHA HANNA and JOHN HORNE

As France embarked on the centenary of the Great War in 2014, the last *poilu* had already passed away. Lazare Ponticelli, an Italian immigrant who fought in both the French and Italian armies, was buried with full state honors in 2010. Aside from those with a childhood memory of the conflict, the living links had gone and the war was a purely historical episode. Yet the sense of popular engagement with it was if anything greater and more varied than it had been on the fiftieth anniversary. Then Charles de Gaulle had emphasized the epic battles and the tenacity of the French. Although the president of the new Fifth Republic had fought in the Great War, he had a somewhat unusual profile, having been captured at Verdun in 1916 and spending the rest of the war in a German camp. His was perhaps not the typical veteran's view. In fact, de Gaulle's real concern in the mid-1960s was French recovery from two more recent conflicts in which he had played a pivotal role: World War II and Algeria. Each had been traumatic for the French in a sense quite different from World War I. Not surprisingly, he insisted on the unity and victory of the nation in the Great War.<sup>1</sup>

For the French, the war has not lost this meaning, to which the current president referred in introducing the centenary program. François Hollande declared that the commemorations were to be dedicated to the "unity of the nation" and the "common destiny of the French."<sup>2</sup> Yet he also gave equal weight

1. De Gaulle, "Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Élysée, 2 août 1964," in *Discours et messages*, 4:238–39; De Gaulle, "Allocution prononcée à Douaumont pour le cinquantième anniversaire de la bataille de Verdun, le 10 mai 1966," in *Discours et messages*, 5:34–39; and De Gaulle, "Allocution prononcée aux Invalides, le 10 novembre 1968," in *Discours et messages*, 5:350–54. All three speeches emphasized unity, resilience, and victory. Only the second (Verdun) added the new spirit of Franco-German cooperation and the peaceful destiny of contemporary (western) Europe.

2. 14–18: Mission du Centenaire, 2014: *Centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale*, 5.

to reconciliation with former enemies, a process still getting under way in 1964. In the 1950s Verdun had resumed the symbolic function that it had first taken on in the interwar years as a Franco-German “site of memory” and potential reconciliation.<sup>3</sup> In 1963 de Gaulle signed the Franco-German treaty, which consolidated France and West Germany as the twin pillars of the European project in its first generation. His successor, François Mitterrand, confirmed the symbolism of Verdun in 1984 when he stood hand in hand with the West German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, as both men contemplated the endless white crosses of the French dead at Douaumont, on the Verdun battlefield.

It is perhaps not surprising that after a century the themes of reconciliation and the war dead should have become as important as national unity. From the end of the conflict the French measured the cost of victory in death and broken families: with over 1.3 million military dead, they suffered proportionately higher losses than any other country except Serbia. For them, World War I has come to express the general tragedy of war more readily than World War II, because while victory was achieved in 1918, the war’s political agenda now seems remote whereas the war dead remain omnipresent. The opposite is the case with World War II. The French military dead were fewer than in the Great War.<sup>4</sup> But the political—and moral—agenda of the conflict and the divisions it caused still shape contemporary France, not least through belated recognition of the French role in the Holocaust.<sup>5</sup> So in relation to the Great War, Hollande could also stress the cost of all war: “The commemoration is dedicated to peace. . . . During four years, the allies and enemies of yesteryear—henceforth reconciled—will come from the five continents to remember together, with us, their dead and their missing.”<sup>6</sup>

The official choreography of 2014 bore out this broadened interpretation. On August 3 the French and German presidents marked the centenary of the outbreak of hostilities between their two countries in a ceremony at Hartmannswillerkopf, Alsace, where they laid the foundation stone of a Franco-German “Historial” (half display, half memorial) on the site of the battlefield of late 1915, much of which has been conserved and where there is already a French monument dating from 1932—they were inscribing Franco-German reconciliation in stone. By contrast, a purely French ceremony marked the anniversary of the First Battle of the Marne (September 12) at which the prime minister, Manuel

3. Prost, “Verdun.”

4. Lagrou, “Les guerres, les morts et le deuil.”

5. Still the best guide to the legacy of World War II for the French is Rouso, *Vichy Syndrome*.

6. 14–18: Mission du Centenaire, 2014: *Centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale*, 5.

Valls, eulogized the “audacity” of a French army that, in the midst of retreat, had found the “genius” necessary to halt the German invasion.<sup>7</sup>

November 11 was different again. An official holiday since 1922, it stands as the epitome of the national commemoration of the war. Precisely because World War I confirmed the nation-state as the dominant form of political identity and authority in Europe (with the collapse of the dynastic land empires in the east), the cemeteries and main ceremonies have tended to remain as they were conceived immediately after the conflict—expressions of the nation. The figure of the “unknown soldier,” invented in Paris and London in November 1920, and the ritual of November 11 became the very symbols of national sacrifice in France as in Britain.<sup>8</sup> Yet on November 11, 2014, President Hollande inaugurated what has become the most dramatic and widely praised new monument to be built on the western front, the architect Philippe Prost’s elliptical ring, set horizontally onto the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in the Pas-de-Calais, already the site of a major ossuary and basilica. This monument is anything but national. Inside it consists of a sequence of metal panels that list in alphabetical order, and with no reference to nationality, the nearly six hundred thousand soldiers who died on this part of the front. Prost wished to “emphasize the brotherhood that now exists between the people who did battle in World War I.”<sup>9</sup>

Officially, therefore, the French centenary has confirmed the soldier as the main (though not the sole) focus of commemoration, the suffering everyman who, for whatever causes or motives, endured the war and the other conflicts of the twentieth century. But the centenary has also shown how widespread the attachment to the soldiers’ memory is and how in France it links both families and localities to the history of the war. Antoine Prost, historian and president of the scientific council of the Mission Nationale du Centenaire, predicted that commemoration of the war would be “rooted in innumerable family memories and be borne along by multiple actors.” Rather than a question of national or international politics, it would be seen as “the memory of the greatest test that France had ever faced,” one whose heart was to be found “in the lives of men and women during the war.”<sup>10</sup>

So it has turned out to be. The sheer diversity of the resultant activities has been remarkable. The profile depends on whether one measures the public

7. Flandrin, “Valls appelle à l’audace.”

8. Amos, *Funerals, Politics, and Memory*, 216–19; on the British case, see Gregory, *Silence of Memory*.

9. Quoted in Moore, “Notre Dame de Lorette International Memorial Review.”

10. Quoted in 14–18: Mission du Centenaire, 2014: *Centenaire de la Première Guerre Mondiale*, 9. For popular receptiveness to the war since 1945, see Offenstadt, 14–18 *aujourd’hui*. Nicolas Offenstadt also maintains an online “observatory” of the centenary: [www.univ-paris1.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/lobservatoire-du-centenaire](http://www.univ-paris1.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/lobservatoire-du-centenaire).

sphere (lectures, exhibitions, tourism, radio and television programs), academic conferences, or scientific publications. Nonetheless, the overall lines seem clear. Of the literally hundreds of projects that gained the seal of approval of the Mission Nationale du Centenaire, the official body established to oversee the centenary, the bulk have been local and departmental, reflecting the deep traces left by the war.<sup>11</sup> Museums, libraries, and archives have played a key role in linking scholars and the wider public.

One of the most striking manifestations of this link has been the public appeal for family records of the Great War made by Europeana, a digital library supported by the European Union, in a series of “road shows” around Europe. In the French case, these were officially part of the centenary and resulted in a host of new documents that will be classified and made accessible in digital form by the Bibliothèque Nationale.<sup>12</sup> The public passion for the individual experience of the Great War, and hence for the couples and families caught up in it, has long been evident in France, with many such documents published, some attracting a wide readership.<sup>13</sup> The cornucopia harvested by Europeana proves that as the first mass event of the twentieth century, especially in literate societies like France, the Great War left a source base whose full dimensions we are only now grasping. These traces of everyman, and everywoman, allow historians to write new histories in new ways.

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As far as the scholarly history of the war is concerned, the roots and implications of this development go back at least half a century. In 1968, the last year of the fiftieth anniversary, Pierre Renouvin published a remarkable article in the *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*.<sup>14</sup> Doyen of French historians of the war since the 1920s and the figure who presided over the establishment of the Bibliothèque-Musée de la Guerre, now the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (BDIC), Renouvin more than anyone shaped a master narrative of the war from the French perspective. Pioneering the study of “international relations” in France as something broader than conventional diplomatic history, he wrote a series of political studies on the origins, course, and

11. See 14–18: Mission du Centenaire, 2014: *Centenaire de la Première Guerre Mondiale* and the mission's website at [centenaire.org/fr](http://centenaire.org/fr).

12. See the website Europeana 1914–1918 at [www.europeana1914-1918.eu/fr](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/fr).

13. Reflected in English by two works: Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine*, an account of the life of one couple separated by combat on the front and based on their correspondence; and Barthas, *Poilu*. The French edition of *Poilu*, edited by Remy Cazals and published as *Les carnets de guerre de Louis Barthas*, sold 54,600 copies in France.

14. Renouvin, “L'opinion publique.” It had been a paper at the conference “L'année 1917” the previous year.

outcome of the conflict that culminated in his work *La crise européenne et la Première Guerre mondiale*, first published in 1934, just as the postwar order based on the victory was crumbling, and revised and reissued over the next forty years.<sup>15</sup> It epitomizes that “first generation” of World War I historiography identified by Antoine Prost and Jay Winter as the military and political history of a conflict that dominated present time down to 1939.<sup>16</sup>

Such an approach still dominated academic historiography in the 1960s. But in his article Renouvin reviewed the sources that had become available as the fifty-year closure of state archives ended for the Great War. He identified a host of documents (from the surveillance of private correspondence to prefects’ reports on public opinion) that henceforth made it possible to write a history of popular feelings during the troubled year 1917 and the war more generally. Still prioritizing political history, he noted that since governments in France and many other states overcame the challenge of “war weariness,” such a study would not prove essential “for the history of the war itself”—that is, for its military outcome.<sup>17</sup> But he conceded that it opened up a new field, the “social psychology” of the war.

Renouvin did not only capture the distinction between the causal narratives of high political history and something else that he still sought to define; he literally embodied it. For he was a veteran of the Great War who had lost an arm in General Robert Nivelle’s failed offensive on the Chemin des Dames in 1917 and who showed his sensitivity to the “social psychology” of the war by the role he played in the BDIC in the 1920s, when he organized its catalog to highlight materials on the experience of soldiers and civilians and on the cultural aspects of the conflict—from the soldiers’ press to the war’s rich iconography.<sup>18</sup> He was, in short, an *ancien combattant* like six million others who believed that theirs was the defining experience of a generation.

Naturally, such a belief had been expressed in an outpouring of soldiers’ published memoirs, diaries, and novels that started with the war itself and that one of their number, the Franco-American literary critic Jean Norton Cru, sought to list and evaluate for their fidelity to what he understood that experience to be.<sup>19</sup> But academic historians had never addressed the soldiers’ experience. This was left in the 1960s to the veterans who sought to transmit the

15. Renouvin, *La crise européenne*. Reissued in six editions, the last in 1973, the year of Renouvin’s death, it was never translated into English.

16. Winter and Prost, *Great War in History*.

17. Renouvin, “L’opinion publique,” 23: “Les mouvements de l’opinion publique . . . ne sont pas, pour l’histoire de la guerre elle-même . . . un élément d’explication essentiel.”

18. Tesnière, “Documenter la guerre.”

19. Cru, *Témoins*. The book has sparked controversy. For a defense of its status as a critical study, see Rousseau, *Le procès des témoins de la Grande Guerre*. For allegedly uncritical use of it by current historians,

message of their war to future generations and to protest against any glorification of the conflict. Notable among them were the *agrégés* André Ducasse, Jacques Meyer, and Gabriel Perreux, who found a popular readership for their books on daily life during the war.<sup>20</sup> In 1967 an association of veterans (presided over by Maurice Genevoix, the main surviving veteran novelist of the conflict) opened a museum, the Mémorial de Verdun, which stood at Fleury-sous-Douaumont on the sacred soil of the farthest point reached by the Germans during the battle of 1916. Refurbished for the centenary of Verdun in 2016, it remains perhaps the last collective statement made by the veterans.<sup>21</sup>

Much of the popular response to the half centenary reflected this interest in the daily life of soldiers and civilians. There was of course the inevitable concern with the major battles and also, echoing de Gaulle's speeches, with the leaders who had "saved" France (Joseph Joffre in 1914? Philippe Pétain in 1917? Ferdinand Foch and Georges Clemenceau in 1918?). But departmental archives, including those of the Vosges, Ardennes, and Pas-de-Calais, as well as several far removed from the line of fire, invited the public to think about how local communities experienced and were transformed by the war. An exhibition in Arras on "occupation, liberation, and resistance" commemorated the experiences of both world wars (1964 was also the twentieth anniversary of the Liberation), anticipating a field that has only recently attracted serious scholarship.<sup>22</sup>

Yet neither a public appetite for such topics nor even access to the archives that allowed them to be addressed was sufficient. After all, as Renouvin pointed out, the press, diaries, and correspondence had long been available. It required above all a different approach by a younger generation of historians, whose formative experience had been World War II and the postwar years and who were open to the prevailing paradigm of social history, including the *Annales* School, at least in its insistence on deep structural factors if not on the *longue durée*.

The point was borne out by the most controversial episode of the *poilus'* war, the mutinies occasioned by Nivelle's disastrous offensive that erupted in

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see Prochasson, *14–18: Retours d'expérience*, 241–72. Smith provides an illuminating study of the soldiers' testimony as literary construct in *Embattled Self*.

20. All veterans, Ducasse, Meyer, and Perreux wrote a "social psychological" history of the war, *Vie et mort des Français*, with a preface by Maurice Genevoix. Meyer and Perreux later published histories in the popular "La vie quotidienne" series: Meyer, *La vie quotidienne des soldats pendant la Grande Guerre*; Perreux, *La vie quotidienne des civils en France pendant la Grande Guerre*.

21. Genevoix wrote a sequence of autobiographical novels, *Ceux de 14*, the first of which, *Sous Verdun*, was translated into English during the war as *Neath Verdun, August–October 1914*. There is no study of the memorial, but see the museum's website and newsletter at [www.memorial-verdun.fr](http://www.memorial-verdun.fr).

22. See the pioneering works of Becker, "Les souffrances des civils occupés," and *Les cicatrices rouges*, 14–18, plus Nivet, *La France occupée*. More recent departmental studies are Connolly, "Encountering Germans," and Salson, *L'Aisne occupée*.

late spring and summer 1917. For just what those protests consisted of and signified was vital for answering larger questions about the war. Minimized in much of the soldiers' autobiographical literature, they stood nonetheless for the Left as a symbol of the soldiers' revolt against incompetent military leadership or even the war itself.<sup>23</sup> When Guy Pedroncini's *Les mutineries de 1917*, the first scholarly study of the French soldiers, was published in 1967, therefore, its impact was the greater for the author's special access to the military archives. Establishing the geography, dimensions, and chronology of the incidents, Pedroncini likened them to an apolitical strike by some forty thousand men who had been involved in Nivelle's offensive and who now refused not so much to fight the war as to fight it on the basis of discredited tactics. He rebutted the more lurid contemporary myth that the revolt was fanned by pacifist propaganda, threatening a breakdown of the war effort. Pétain, who had grasped the significance of the movement and knew how to restore morale by limited repression and attending to the *poilus'* many practical grievances, emerged as the key person. Pedroncini went on to write Pétain's biography, rehabilitating him by contrast with his divisive role in World War II.<sup>24</sup>

Three other studies in the following decade bore the influence of Renouvin and the epistemological change that he had identified at the end of the half century. Jean-Jacques Becker published a thesis (supervised by Renouvin) on public opinion in 1914 that punctured the later myth of a French population insouciantly consigning the belle époque to oblivion as it embarked enthusiastically on war. On the contrary, that moment of undoubted unity was shot through with somber resolve and a belief that the crisis was a struggle for national survival, making the unity all the more impressive.<sup>25</sup> The thesis published by Antoine Prost (and dedicated to Renouvin) took the most distinctive of the interest groups mentioned in Renouvin's article, the *anciens combattants*. He studied their massive presence and evolution in postwar France, when, with three million members, they formed the largest civic movement in the country. He concluded not only that they were far from being prisoners of the Right or

23. For a classic left-wing statement from the *poilus'* perspective, see Galtier-Boissière, *Le crapouillot*, which defended the soldiers for refusing to take part in the renewal of pointless offensives that made light of their real sacrifices for the nation.

24. Isorni, the revisionist lawyer who defended Pétain's role in World War II, used his role in World War I in support of this campaign in *Pétain a sauvé la France*. Pétain's own secret report on the mutinies, which showed that he was less affected by the pacifist myth than other generals (though not completely exempt from its influence), was published in 1966, appearing in English as "A Crisis of Morale in the French Nation at War," in Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 67–128. Pedroncini's subsequent studies of Pétain all stopped short at the crucial period of Vichy France. See also Pedroncini, *Pétain, général en chef*.

25. Becker, 1914: *Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre*. Becker's thesis bore the telling subtitle *Contribution à l'étude de l'opinion publique, printemps-été 1914*.

the Left but also that, with their prevailing “patriotic pacifism,” they opened a window into interwar French opinion at large.<sup>26</sup> The final work, prefaced by Renouvin, was Marc Ferro’s history of World War I. This sought to combine the politico-military narrative and the social psychology of experience that Renouvin himself had kept distinct. It translated Renouvin’s article into what such a history of the war might look like.<sup>27</sup>

It is not surprising that the study of World War I in the 1970s and 1980s—stamped with the hallmark of social history even if alternative approaches were still practiced—should have focused on the “other front,” to cite a key collection of essays on the interior.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Patrick Fridenson’s *1914–1918: L’autre front* was published by the social history journal *Le mouvement social*, which promoted a historiography that centered on class, the labor movement, and industrial unrest. The question behind much of this scholarship was of course that of revolution. It included the fate of French syndicalism and socialism with their revolutionary orientation during the war; responses to events in Russia, that new lodestone of revolution in 1917; and the question of how, and how much, the war radicalized labor in France as elsewhere.

These questions haunted a generation for some of whom communism was not yet a “past illusion,” even if others were disenchanted, while the afterglow of May 1968 brought the Left to power under Mitterrand in 1981 for the first time in the Fifth Republic.<sup>29</sup> The war had sown the seeds of the socialist schism and birth of the French Communist Party in 1920, a subject already tackled by Annie Kriegel (sister of Jean-Jacques Becker) in the early 1960s. She concluded that the primacy of peace over revolution curbed the radical Left during the conflict, so that the schism was a product more of postwar illusion and disillusion than of the war.<sup>30</sup>

The labor history of the war focused on a wartime working class generated by the industrial mobilization and reconstituted both geographically as a result of the invasion and socially from new sources (women, immigrants). The

26. Prost, *Les anciens combattants et la société française*. For a documented summary of the argument in English, see Prost, *In the Wake of War*.

27. Ferro’s research was on Russia, not France, during the war. His book *La Grande Guerre* has remained a best seller, especially the English translation *The Great War, 1914–1918*.

28. Fridenson, *1914–1918: L’autre front*; revised edition in English, *French Home Front, 1914–1918*. The term *home front* was first used in Britain in 1917 but did not become commonplace until World War II, when with aerial bombardment the civilian population indeed constituted a new front. The terms used in France during World War I were, in officialese, *the interior* and, in popular parlance, *the rear* (as the opposite to, and complement of, the fighting front).

29. Furet, *Le passé d’une illusion*, translated as *The Passing of an Illusion*.

30. Kriegel, *Aux origines du communisme français*. Sister and brother collaborated in a book on labor and socialist reactions to the outbreak of war: Becker and Kriegel, *1914: La guerre et le mouvement ouvrier français*. The history of wartime socialism and communism has been renewed recently by Chambarlhac and Ducoulombier, *Les socialistes français et la Grande Guerre*, and Ducoulombier, *Camarades!*

“dilution” of the labor process faced skilled workers (especially in engineering) with the challenge of the semiskilled worker and visions of the assembly line of the future. Fed by rampant inflation and powered by acute labor shortages, local trade union militancy sprang up in the chief munitions centers and then the railways. From 1917 to 1920 it fueled the biggest strike waves in French history to that point.<sup>31</sup> Anglophone historians contributed to the study of this new working class, its radicalism, and also a countervailing labor reformism.<sup>32</sup> A highly interventionist wartime state engaged in three-way corporatist politics with the main trade union body, the Confédération Générale du Travail, and parallel employer organizations, thereby managing labor unrest through bargaining and the concession of reforms—at least while the war lasted.<sup>33</sup>

Jean-Louis Robert supplied the culminating study of the complex relationship between patriotism and revolution in the case of the Paris working class. Pointing to the multiple milieus in which identities of both class and nation were forged by workers (trade unionism, war factories, the state) and to the stimulus of industrial militancy, as well as to its limits, he concluded that a rising hope for a revolution in the sense of a social transformation that would address the ills and inequalities of wartime was indeed apparent among many Paris workers, but that victory and the solidity of the state, which (as noted) intervened in social affairs, frustrated in France what their opposite precipitated in Russia.<sup>34</sup> One might add that the peasantry, still half the French population and more than half of the infantry, had by and large become a mainstay of the social and political order of the Third Republic, whereas it contributed significantly to the Russian revolution. Like other social groups (the *classes moyennes*, the *bourgeoisie*), the peasantry failed to attract the attention of the social historians. However, the prefects and other agents of the state were acutely aware of how these groups limited wartime disaffection in 1917–18, something underlined by the continued work on public opinion.<sup>35</sup>

31. On all these issues, see Fridenson, *French Home Front*.

32. On women workers, see Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*; on labor radicalism, Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*; on labor reformism, Horne, *Labour at War*.

33. See the overall argument of Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*. Comparable arguments on the nature of the French state and its relationship to the economy have been developed by Rosanvallon; see esp. *L'Etat en France*. Anglophone authors have written the main studies of the political figures behind the French war economy, notably Godfrey, *Capitalism at War*, on Etienne Clémentel, the minister of commerce; Fine, “Albert Thomas,” on the crucial minister of armaments from 1914 to 1917; and Carls on Thomas’s successor, *Louis Loucheur*. As yet there is no full study of Thomas despite (or because of) the 447 boxes of his papers in the Archives Nationales (94 AP), though not all of these concern the war years. For a key industrialist and political spokesman for business, see Jeanneney, *François de Wendel en République*.

34. Robert, “Ouvriers et mouvement ouvrier parisiens,” published in a much shorter version as *Les ouvriers, la patrie et la révolution*. See esp. “Conclusion générale,” 407–13.

35. See in particular Becker, *Les Français dans la Grande Guerre*, translated as *The Great War and the French People*; and Flood’s study of the Isère, *France, 1914–1918*.

Equally shaped by social history and “second wave” feminism, and influenced by Anglophone work, research in these same decades saw women written back into the history of the war. In addition to women’s waged work, already referred to, scholars contested an earlier belief that war service contributed to women’s “emancipation,” especially since in France (unlike other countries) it did not lead to the vote. They suggested instead that the war reinforced gendered distinctions and hierarchies owing to the moral supremacy accorded men in combat, the exploitative nature of much women’s work during the war, and an emphasis on motherhood.<sup>36</sup> Yet even those most pessimistic about the capacity of the war to modify the gender order recognized that the experience did change women, albeit that men (especially veterans) monopolized the retrospective discourse.<sup>37</sup> Other historians emphasized how the war enhanced women’s agency, especially in volunteer roles such as nursing, philanthropy, and various forms of war service. Moreover, even the concern with maternity (and its compatibility or otherwise with waged work) enlarged a professional sphere for women as educationalists and social workers—a paradox increasingly apparent between the wars.<sup>38</sup> In an influential study Mary Louise Roberts concluded that the war reinforced both notions of masculinity and contrasting views of femininity. Gender emerged above all as more conflicted and more likely than before the war to express broader social and political tensions.<sup>39</sup>

The seventy-fifth anniversary of World War I passed without comment. The French had other things on their mind in the bicentenary of the Revolution and the year that ended communism, opening the way to the reunification of Europe. Yet in retrospect 1989 marks a turning point in the “regime of historicity” (or the sense of historical time) that was to shape the historiography of the war and much else.<sup>40</sup> The decline of Marxist certainties and the erosion of the social paradigm, with a turn toward subjective meaning (most evident in a growing fascination with language), had been apparent in the 1980s. Jean-Louis

36. Famously formulated as the “double helix,” the argument that wartime changes reinforced the gendered status quo was made by an influential book arising from a Harvard conference in which the French case figured prominently: Higonnet et al., *Behind the Lines*, esp. Margaret Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet, “The Double Helix,” 31–47.

37. Outstanding in the “pessimistic” camp, in part because it was ahead of its time, is McMillan’s seminal study *Housewife or Harlot*, which is mainly about World War I. McMillan confirmed his view in “The Great War and Gender Relations,” in Braybon, *Evidence, History, and the Great War*, 135–53. Equally authoritative in the same camp is Thébaud, *La femme au temps de la guerre de 14*, 285–300, and her excellent summary (extending beyond the French case) “The Great War and the Triumph of Sexual Division.”

38. See Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, which includes nursing, and Grayzel, *Gender, Motherhood, and Politics*. For an important overview, see Capedevila et al., *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre*.

39. Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 213–17.

40. For the concept of “historicity,” see Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité*.

Robert had referred in his study of Paris workers to a wartime moral vocabulary that turned on the figures of the *embusqué* (or shirker), the hoarder, and the war profiteer. The best social history had always prized subjectivity as one of its themes and part of its evidence. Yet its main categories, such as class and industrialization, addressed durable structures and longer-term processes. They were less adapted to a “total” war—social historians tending to neglect the military.<sup>41</sup> They also failed to formulate the vital question of whether the wartime moral economy of “sacrifice” was related to, or different from, the social relations of peacetime, a matter taken up only more recently.<sup>42</sup>

However, in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s it became clear that a basic paradigm shift had taken place, pointing toward a cultural history of the war. While it was not confined to France, historians working in and on France played a key role in bringing it about and making it an international phenomenon. Central to this was the end of a “present time” that had begun in 1945. Now World War II was the midpoint of a “short twentieth century” that began with World War I, posing the question of what it was about that conflict, its violence, and its unresolved outcomes that led to the even greater violence of its successor.<sup>43</sup> Neither political and military narratives nor social history seemed able to account for this, whereas Renouvin’s “social psychology”—the experience of those who lived through the conflict—offered an explanatory key.

Representations, language, and memory became more than symptoms of explanations that lay elsewhere. As subjective experience, individual and collective, they became explanations in their own right, for which larger structures provided the context. Analysis turned on reconstructing meaning, expressed in social codes, values, beliefs, emotions, representations, acts. This in turn revealed the wealth of contemporary understandings of the war, including myths, that could no longer (at least not easily) be dismissed as propaganda.<sup>44</sup> It also used the mass of sources in which such experiences could be traced. Studies of art, literature, intellectuals, the popular press (including that of the trenches), and religion plunged historians into the world of the war.<sup>45</sup> Winter’s seminal

41. For proof that a social history of conscription and the army was entirely possible (just as it had been for the *anciens combattants* studied by Antoine Prost), see Maurin, *Armée, guerre, société*.

42. Robert, “Image of the Profiteer”; Ridet, *Les embusqués*; Bouloc, *Les profiteurs de guerre*.

43. The case was famously put by Hobsbawm in *Age of Extremes*, translated into French in 1999 as *L’âge des extrêmes* with sales of over eighty thousand.

44. On the deconstruction of “propaganda” as a retrospective explanation in the 1920s of all that seemed incomprehensible—and reprehensible—about the war, see Horne, “‘Propagande’ et ‘vérité’ dans la Grande Guerre.” The subject was taken up in Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*, translated as *1914: Les atrocités allemandes*.

45. Audoin-Rouzeau published his doctoral thesis (under Jean-Jacques Becker) as *14–18: Les combattants des tranchées*, translated as *Men at War, 1914–1918*. Annette Becker, having begun by studying war memorials, published *La guerre et la foi*, translated as *War and Faith*. Two North American scholars explored

book, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, took the very languages of war (visual and verbal) as its subject, arguing that in coping with death millions of people drew on tradition as much as on modernism.<sup>46</sup>

Conceptually, ideas such as “war cultures”—or the beliefs and representations that expressed the engagement of the French (and other peoples) in the war—and “mobilization” and “self-mobilization,” the cultural and political processes by which that engagement was structured, framed the new approach.<sup>47</sup> Institutionally, it found expression in a museum. Whereas the memorial at Verdun had conveyed the last message of the *anciens combattants* as a self-evident truth (pride at their sacrifice in an appalling if unavoidable war), the Historial de la Grande Guerre, the first major museum on the western front in a generation, founded in 1992 on the Somme, was the exact opposite. European in orientation (it showed the British, French, and German empires at war) and animated by a group of academic historians, it treated World War I as an enigma to be explored and explained anew.<sup>48</sup>

Historians in the first decade of the 2000s enlarged on the range of topics already indicated, including a renewal of local and regional studies (which had never entirely ceased) focusing on processes of mobilization and the role of the local in an intensely national experience.<sup>49</sup> Deconstructing interwar myths (such as that of propaganda), which had so powerfully shaped perceptions of the conflict, continued. A new generation that came of age after the caesura of 1989 in Europe and a wider world where mobility and transnational perspectives were taken for granted produced a host of new studies. Many of these confirmed that (contrary to what they often wrote after the war) the *poilus* enjoyed close if complex relations with the world of the “interior” and especially with the intimacy of home life.<sup>50</sup>

Of course, as Winter and Prost observed, the “three generations” of World War I historiography—political, social, and cultural—have never been neatly sequential. They have overlapped, each approach evolving as the dominant

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artists and intellectuals: Silver, *Esprit de Corps*; Hanna, *Mobilization of Intellect*. See also Prochasson, *Les intellectuels, le socialisme et la guerre*, and Prochasson and Rasmussen, *Au nom de la patrie*.

46. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, translated as *Entre deuil et mémoire*.

47. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14–18: Retrouver la guerre*, translated as *14–18: Understanding the Great War*; Horne, *State, Society, and Mobilization*.

48. See [www.historial.org](http://www.historial.org); for the history of the museum, see Winter, “War Museums.”

49. A good example that shows how the local can become comparative and global is Purseigle, *Mobilisation, sacrifice et citoyenneté*. See also Bourlet, Lagadec, and Le Gall, *Petites patries dans la Grande Guerre*. For an older study, see Jacobzone, *En Anjou, loin du front*.

50. An exhaustive list is not possible, but significant works are Cronier, *Permissionnaires dans la Grande Guerre*; Pignot, *Allons, enfants de la Patrie*, on children’s engagement in their fathers’ war; Gilles, *Lectures de poilus*, on the role played by the press and literature in linking the soldiers to civil society; and Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre*.

paradigm of the field shifted because each continued to address different issues such as (respectively) power and authority, economic and social structures, and experience and representations. They have varied in strength and speed, as new themes became mainstream while older ones, eddying on the margin, tried to edge back in. If cultural history exerted its pull during the decade before the centenary, it by no means monopolized World War I historiography in France.

Thus while the political history of the war had been in the “slow stream” for some time, and studies of the wartime state had been neglected since Renouvin’s pioneering study of 1925, this was partly rectified by Fabienne Bock’s important book on the resilience of the French parliamentary system under the stress of the war.<sup>51</sup> French military history may have seen fewer breakthrough works and in-depth studies than the British military history of the conflict. Yet Anglophone historians have contributed significantly to the French case, notably Elizabeth Greenhalgh’s trilogy, which stands as the most sustained recent study of the French army. French military historians have begun to renew the subject with work on battles and trench warfare.<sup>52</sup> Michel Goya’s *La chair et l’acier* (2004) remains a masterly statement of the nature of industrialized warfare overall.<sup>53</sup>

As for diplomatic history and the origins and responsibilities for the war, these have troubled the French less than their neighbors across the Rhine. While Christopher Clark’s magisterial study, *The Sleepwalkers*, was translated into French, it did not have the seismic impact that it did in Germany, where over two hundred thousand copies sold in the first year. This was in spite of the departure from orthodoxy whereby it assigned French and Russian leaders a major role in provoking war by dint of their refusal to let Austria-Hungary (backed by Germany) eliminate Serbia. It was as if the legacy of Renouvin’s diplomatic history, with its qualified endorsement of French resistance to German aggression, still held sway.<sup>54</sup> This relative indifference to outside views had long been shown by the failure in the 1970s to translate one of the few critical works on French prewar armaments policy, by the German historian Gerd Krumeich, though it did appear in English. By the same token, Krumeich’s nuanced

51. Renouvin, *Les formes du gouvernement de guerre*, translated as *The Forms of War Government in France*; Bock, *Un parlementarisme de guerre*.

52. Greenhalgh, *French Army and the First World War*, and her earlier works, *Foch in Command* and *Victory through Coalition*. See also Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*; Philpott, *Bloody Victory*, which integrates the French and British experiences of the biggest battle of the war; and Jankowski, *Verdun*, which looks at both sides, French and German. An important French battle study is Baldin and Saint-Fuscien, *Charleroi*, while Lafon uses a key component of the soldier’s life to explore the nature of trench warfare in *La camaraderie au front*.

53. Goya, *La chair et l’acier*.

54. Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, translated as *Les sonambules*; Renouvin, *Les origines immédiates de la guerre*.

rebuttal of Clark for his neglect of Germany's role in the July crisis, and his qualified endorsement of Renouvin's position, was translated into French in the centenary year.<sup>55</sup> The French, in fact, have been more interested in the legacy than the origins of the war. This has proved fertile for studies of the transition to peace and for the omnipresent traces of the conflict in interwar France, in memorials, collective mourning, artistic and intellectual reactions, and the *anciens combattants* already referred to.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, a cultural approach has much to offer the vital matter of how the French (like others) imagined war as such before 1914—and in ways that allowed the “sleepwalkers” to act as if their eyes were wide open.<sup>57</sup>

All this shows the vitality of French World War I studies at the centenary. Yet the scholarship reflects the major questions that such an overwhelming episode still poses for the French, questions that have by no means been resolved. This is especially clear in the way that the *poilu* emerged definitively during the two decades before the centenary as the key figure not just in the popular “memory” of the war but also in debates over its deeper meaning. Nor is this surprising, for he stands at the intersection of national unity and the tragedy of war—two themes of the centenary, as we have seen. He also stands where the military outcome encounters the “social psychology” of individuals, those two dimensions of Renouvin's own stance toward the conflict, as historian and veteran. For victory (as defeat) turned on the efforts of the soldiers as well as the generals and politicians.

In fact, the *poilu* had always occupied this place. In a telling study Nicolas Offenstadt showed how those executed during the war attracted powerful campaigns of rehabilitation in the interwar years, especially in the most unjust cases.<sup>58</sup> The soldier reemerged as the ultimate victim in the 1990s with a

55. Krumeich, *Armaments and Politics*; Krumeich, *Le feu aux poudres*.

56. For the conversion to peace and coming to terms with the war, conceptual approaches have been explored in Horne, “Démobilisations culturelles après la Grande Guerre”; Horne, “Demobilizing the Mind”; Audoin-Rouzeau and Prochasson, *Sortir de la Grande Guerre*; and Cabanes and Piketty, *Retour à l'intime*. For examples of how cultural history has opened up the memory and legacy of the war, see Becker, *Les monuments aux morts*, and Sherman, *Construction of Memory*, both on war memorials; Becker, *Maurice Halbwachs*, on the figure who invented the idea of “collective memory”; Audoin-Rouzeau, *Cinq deuils de guerre*, on mourning; Siegel, *Moral Disarmament of France*, and Barry, *Disarmament of Hatred*, on processes of “cultural demobilization”; and Becker, *Voir la Grande Guerre*, on visual culture. For a more political interpretation of the veterans' movement than that of Prost, see Millington, *From Victory to Fascism*. Finally, on the renewal of the political and diplomatic history of the postwar period, see Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power*.

57. An early work on these issues was Centre Régional de Documentation Pédagogique de Rouen, 1914: *Les psychoses de guerre?*; for a recent exception, see Cosson, *Préparer la Grande Guerre*. Casting light retrospectively on this theme by studying 1914–15 as a “turning point” is Horne, *Vers la guerre totale?*

58. Offenstadt, *Les fusillés de la Grande Guerre*. Bach provides the detailed evidence on how the military justice system operated in *Fusillés pour l'exemple 1914–1915* and *Justice militaire, 1915–1916*.

movement to pardon the “fusillés pour l'exemple.” The official view now embraces them in the suffering of all the soldiers, though unlike in Britain the campaign has not yet been successful.

The experience and motivation of the soldier raise questions of whether men fought willingly or under duress, whether contemporaries felt that the stakes justified the sacrifice, and what kind of institution they felt the army of a “nation in arms” (which the French had invented in the Revolution) to be. In short, the social order, the legitimacy of the state, and the agency of the individual all intersected in the soldiers' experience of a kind of war that no one had anticipated, and of which the mutinies remained a touchstone. Historians who underlined the imperatives of warfare in a now-remote period portrayed the *poilus* as men who, while developing their own culture of survival, internalized much of the broader war culture and above all the need to defend the *patrie*. Leonard V. Smith undertook the most detailed study to date of a single unit across the war: the Fifth Infantry Division. He concluded that the mutineers were more political than Pedroncini allowed and also that they extended beyond those who had fought in the Nivelle offensive. The mutinies were indeed a major crisis of military morale, but one largely resolved not by Pétain but by the men themselves. In agreeing to return to the front once key demands had been met, they were (in Smith's view) recognizing the sovereignty of the state that resided in them as citizens. Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien added a military discipline that relied on a degree of consent by the men and on the hard-won authority of the officers, though Nicolas Mariot viewed this relationship more skeptically.<sup>59</sup>

For it is also hard to deny the coercive aspects of the army, the strong social hierarchies on which it rested (which meant that “intellectual” junior officers did not necessarily share the outlook of “their” men), and the rhetorical radicalism and popular anger that the mutineers vented as a social movement. These elements underpin a more radical interpretation by André Loez while also posing the crucial question of what the bulk of soldiers who did not revolt felt about those who did. By grasping the scale of the disturbances, not just behind the front but in trains back to Paris and by men on leave, Loez stresses a more fundamental “refusal” of the war while agreeing that the influence of socialist and pacifist opinion was small.<sup>60</sup> There seems no doubt that something broke in the army at large after the Nivelle offensive. That the mutinies gave voice (and action) to a “refusal” that had been there since the bloodletting of 1914–15 (the

59. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*; Saint-Fuscien, *A vos ordres?* For a contrasting view of junior officers (often from an “intellectual” background) and their differences from the soldiers, see Mariot, *Tous unis dans la tranchée?*

60. Loez, 14–18: *Les refus de la guerre*, esp. 539–64.

highest numbers of French casualties were at the start) is less evident. The point is that they were an episode that then gave way to the rising morale and fighting spirit manifested by the French army, as Bruno Cabanes showed, during the last year of the conflict (including Smith's Fifth Division).<sup>61</sup> It may be that the breakdown in 1917 was (among other things) cognitive—the moment when the language and imagery of war inherited from 1914 no longer had any purchase on the experience of the battlefield and the soldiers' hopes of survival.<sup>62</sup>

The debate is vital, the issues are substantial, and none of the answers are entirely satisfactory. The questions, moreover, also apply to the crisis of civilian morale in 1917, which continues to be treated in a separate category owing to the diminished interest in the social movements of the "interior." One way to overcome simplistic distinctions between *constraint* and *consent* is to seek another term (dialectical or not) that encompasses both. Sheer "endurance" is the focus of a new collaborative study that emphasizes how shifting and paradoxical the boundaries of support and refusal often were, whereas the capacity to "remobilize" for what Clemenceau termed "the final quarter of an hour" and endure until victory became the comparative test for all the societies at war.<sup>63</sup> One result of the scope and diversity in Great War studies since 1989 has been a relative dearth of works able to synthesize the new approaches and resolve such interpretative issues.<sup>64</sup> The centenary with its own crop of conferences, few of which have yet been published, will add to the perspectives on offer. The debate can only intensify, and the answer to Renouvin's conundrum—how the "social psychology" of the French at war enabled the "military outcome" to favor them and their allies rather than their opponents—remains to be formulated. Perhaps this will happen only when the cultural and the social aspects have contributed their full weight to the causal narratives of the war.

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The foregoing discussion of the historiography over the last half century has shaped the choice of articles for this special issue of *French Historical Studies* on

61. Cabanes, *La victoire endeillée*, 23–95; Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, 236–43.

62. Horne, "Entre expérience et mémoire."

63. Beaupré, Jones, and Rasmussen, *Dans la guerre*; Horne, "Remobilizing for 'Total War'"; Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*. For a study that places the issue in binary terms, see Cochet, *Survivre au front*.

64. The most recent (in chronological order) are Duroselle, *La Grande Guerre des Français*, which eschews a "universal" history in favor of recounting "the anguish, suffering [and] tenacity" of the French people (11); Smith, Audoin-Rouzeau, and Becker, *France and the Great War*, which combines traditional approaches with "a huge and mostly new historiographical literature" (xv); Becker and Krumeich, *La Grande Guerre*, which is written thematically in a comparative mode; and Beaupré, 1914: *Les Grandes Guerres*, a history of France informed by cultural approaches that embraces both world wars and the interwar period.

the centenary of the Great War. Alex Bostrom's analysis of how the French government, army, and armaments industry coordinated their efforts first to forestall defeat and then, by 1916, to develop a strategy that would make victory possible underlines the point that "traditional" ways of analyzing the Great War can still tell us a great deal.<sup>65</sup> The emblematic figure of the war remains the *poilu*, the "poor bloody infantryman" who bore the brunt of the fighting and the casualties. Yet as Bostrom's article reminds us, and the data he amasses reveal, this was increasingly an artillery war. Victory would belong to the nation (or nations) that successfully coordinated its industrial capabilities to make possible an operational strategy predicated on the massive production of munitions and an ever greater reliance on heavy artillery. Ill-equipped to wage an artillery war in 1914 and woefully short of munitions, France had to make significant strides in the manufacture of munitions and artillery if it wanted any hope of winning. Bostrom demonstrates how important 1916 was—but not for the reasons customarily cited.

It was, of course, the year of Verdun and the Somme, battles in which the lethal effects of industrial warfare were tragically evident, but it was also—and this is the crux of Bostrom's argument—the year in which France successfully coordinated its industrial production to accommodate its new operational strategy. This did not guarantee a quick and easy victory in 1917, as the Chemin des Dames made all too evident. But by the fall of 1917 qualitative and quantitative improvements in munitions and artillery production—including the manufacture of poison gas shells (euphemistically referred to as "specials")—were instrumental in securing French victories on the western front. Many factors contributed to the Allied victory in 1918, including the demoralization of German frontline troops, but Bostrom's careful archival study demonstrates that critical advances in the production and deployment of high-quality munitions and heavy artillery were vital. He also exposes the myth that the French by mid-1917 were somehow exhausted, able only to wait "for the Americans to arrive." France found within itself the capacity to fight the war in a different way after the crisis of morale triggered by the Nivelle offensive and also the economic and industrial modernity necessary to sustain such an effort.

If Bostrom's article reminds us that we need to look beyond the front lines to understand the evolution of military tactics after 1916, Andrew Orr makes clear that the French army was compelled by circumstance to be innovative in other ways as well. It has long been established that the munitions industry,

65. Work on the economic and industrial dimension has been sparse since the marginalization of the social history of the war from the 1990s. However, see the important exception of Porte, *La mobilisation industrielle*.

faced with the dramatic expansion in production goals that Bostrom's article so clearly articulates, came to rely on the mobilization of French women and colonial men. Janet Watson's important study of the mobilization of women in wartime Britain has demonstrated that the British Army increasingly recruited women to serve in uniformed and nonuniformed support roles, thus freeing up men for frontline service.<sup>66</sup> Orr reveals that something similar, but not identical, happened in the French army, where the wartime employment of civilian women ultimately led to "a significant and permanent expansion of women's roles and opportunities within the French Army" in the interwar years. At first blush, the trajectory of female employment in the army seems predictable enough: the French army initially resisted hiring women, even as civilians, and then relented (albeit reluctantly) in 1916, when every able-bodied man was needed in a combat role. Women were, in the eyes of many officers ordered to hire them, unreliable, unprofessional, and (all too often) outright immoral. Small wonder, then, that the army rushed to fire all women still on the payroll at the end of the war.

However, access to archival materials not previously available allows Orr to tell a story about women, work, and military identity in the 1920s that prompts us to modify further, if not completely overturn, our understanding of the interwar years as a reassertion of masculinity and male predominance. While many officers were quick to deride their female employees, it proved impossible, inefficient, and fiscally irresponsible to fire all women. Indeed, women hired during and after the war were invaluable in a postwar army depleted by wartime losses and revision of the military service law. Unlike conscripts, whose term of service in the early 1920s was reduced to a mere eighteen months (and by 1927 to one year), women could—and did—serve in a unit for many years. One woman was thus worth at the very least one and a half conscript men! Women's continued employment in the army was by no means an unalloyed victory for gender equality: they were paid less than civilian men, and their eligibility for employment in the army derived, at least in the early 1920s, primarily from their status as war widows. As Orr demonstrates, however, ultimately it was women's second-class status that qualified them for employment in the civilian ranks of the French army: unlike conscripts, who gained the right to vote in 1927 in acknowledgment of the sacrifice of their wartime forebears, women could not vote and thus did not risk corrupting the military with disruptive radical ideas. Orr adds to the arguments of the historians of women already cited to show that the gender order of interwar France was more complex—and conflicted—than a simple misogynist backlash.

66. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, chap. 1.

Dónal Hassett's article takes us even farther into the peripheral regions of the French war, and with illuminating effect. If it has been customary to pay more attention to the infantry than to the artillery, to combatant men than to civilian women, and to the suffering of adults over that of children, colonial history makes it abundantly clear that understanding the Great War as a "total war" requires both going beyond Europe and reintegrating the French and British empires into metropolitan history.<sup>67</sup> While Anglophone scholars have played a notable role in opening up the colonial history of the Third Republic, there has been a marked tendency to keep this distinct from the history of France itself. The exceptions are studies such as those of Marc Michel and Richard Fogarty on the colonial contribution to the war effort, most notably the recruitment of half a million soldiers for combat, many of them on the western front.<sup>68</sup>

Hassett takes a different approach by showing how the conflict, which rewrote the relationship of war victims (military and civilian) to the nation in terms of obligations and rights rather than charity, did so very differently in the case of children, depending on whether the "sacrifice" was incurred in France or the colonies.<sup>69</sup> Starting from the decision of the National Assembly in 1917 to provide financial and moral assistance to all those whose fathers had been killed or disabled in the war—not as a form of means-tested welfare but as a matter of right—Hassett demonstrates that the universalism underpinning the law as it was applied to French children played out unevenly in the colonies. In some parts of the empire, the principle of universal eligibility and the administrative infrastructure to guarantee the law's implementation prevailed, but in many colonies, including those of sub-Saharan Africa, which had contributed a significant number of men to the French forces, only children who were deemed financially needy qualified for the assistance that in France was given to all *pupilles de la nation*.

The discrepancies that thus emerged—a consequence of financial calculation, racialist ideology, and different colonial cultures—marked an "associationist turn" in French imperial administration after 1919 that undermined the universalist spirit of the original law. Insisting that indigenous fathers were not as central to the well-being of their children as were the indispensable *pères de famille* of France, insinuating that volunteers from the colonies—unlike conscripts at home—had been motivated more by greed than by patriotism, and

67. Gerwarth and Manela, *Empires at War*, esp. 1–16. For the French Empire, see Frévaux, *Les colonies dans la Grande Guerre*.

68. Michel, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre*; Michel, "Colonisation et défense nationale"; Fogarty, *Race and War in France*. See also the remarkable study by Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*.

69. For the question as it pertained to France, see Faron, *Les enfants du deuil*.

persuading themselves that the nuclear family was an imposition of European custom on indigenous societies more accustomed to thinking of child rearing as a communal responsibility, colonial administrators could easily justify (to themselves, at least) their denial of support to indigenous war orphans. The consequences more generally of this differential and utilitarian attitude to the empire would only become more pronounced with the economic pressures of the interwar years. Eventually it would contribute to the inability of successive French regimes to chart a peaceful path to decolonization after comparable issues around military service emerged during World War II.<sup>70</sup>

Physically confined to the edges of the French imperial nation-state and consigned to the periphery of the French collective imagination, the *pupilles de l'empire* could at least lay claim to one badge of honor: having defended and died for France, their fathers had accepted the legitimacy of the nation's war effort. But what of those in France who had come to reject the war, its legitimacy, and the sacrifices it compelled? Who from 1916 on called for an immediate end to the bloodletting, preferring a negotiated peace to unconditional victory? Were those who defined themselves as pacifists even more marginal in the French collective imagination than the unfortunate orphans of the most distant colonies? Curiously, while much attention has been paid (as we have seen) to the mutinies, concluding in the end that the influence of overt pacifism was marginal if not quite nonexistent, and also to the fluctuations of civilian as well as military morale in 1917 (the subject of Renouvin's 1968 article), the history of pacifism during the war has suffered from the more general neglect of the political history of the conflict. Despite publication of the output of the main socialist and labor antiwar bodies, the study of antiwar sentiment has been more vital for the interwar period than for the war itself.<sup>71</sup>

It is this gap that Norman Ingram addresses in his close and careful reading of the first wartime congress of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, held in Paris in November 1916. Ingram brings to light the impassioned debates and internal divisions of men and women who tried to reconcile in a time of war their patriotism and their pacifism. Although most who participated in the congress believed that a lasting peace first had to be built on the definitive defeat of Prussian militarism, a minority called for immediate negotiations to end the

70. See, in this regard, Thomas, *French Empire between the Wars*, and Thomas, *French Empire at War*.

71. On wartime labor pacifism, see Sowerwine and Sowerwine-Mareschal, *Le mouvement ouvrier français contre la guerre*, seven volumes of facsimile documents. Ingram has written an influential study of the different forms taken by the influential French pacifist movement between the wars in *Politics of Dissent*. Studies that have begun to redress the imbalance for the war include Guieu, *Le rameau et la glaive*, and Hadad, *1914–1919: Ceux qui protestaient*.

war, whatever the territorial cost to France. Their unequivocal repudiation of a war that had by the end of 1916 cost a million French lives was not widely shared even within the ranks of those who called themselves pacifists, but the cumulative effects of war, and the as yet uncertain prospects for victory, made the minority's repugnance understandable enough. What they could not have known—and what Bostrom's article makes evident—is that by late 1916 the transformation of the nation's industrial infrastructure to accommodate new military tactics made victory on France's terms more likely than ever. But if the minority's repudiation of war fell on stony ground during the Great War, its arguments found more fertile soil in the interwar years when the human cost of that success became apparent along with the realization that what had been won in 1918 was anything but definitive.

The articles in this special issue thus prompt us to reconsider what, and who, should be central to our understanding of the experience and impact of the Great War for France. Military history still has much to tell us about the conflict and its ultimate outcome, and there is more to be explored—and decided—about the nature of the soldiers' war, including the long-neglected other fronts on which the French fought, at the Dardanelles, in Macedonia, in Italy, and in Russia in 1919. But without begrudging the *poilu* his heroic stature and the trenches of the western front their iconic place in our conception of the war, the French success in organizing an industrial effort and waging a war ever more dependent on heavy artillery, aircraft, and tanks is ripe for reevaluation in its economic, social, and above all political dimensions. France not only showed that it could sustain a war for democracy without entirely sacrificing democracy but also demonstrated (rather against the perceptions of the French themselves) that it was after all a major industrialized power. The failure to build on both those successes in the interwar period only makes this central dimension of the war more important—and more challenging—for longer-term interpretations of twentieth-century French history.

Women and children, once all but invisible in the collective and scholarly understanding of the war, are no longer peripheral to how we view the conflict and its aftermath. This has become apparent in the restoration of the *poilus'* story to that of the families and civilian lives from which they came. It has been especially important to the reopening of the crucial subject of “occupied France,” flagged but not pursued in the 1960s. For the two million occupied French, many of them forcibly “repatriated” via Switzerland to an alien homeland on the far side of the front, were predominantly women and children. Yet this issue of *French Historical Studies* also suggests that in postwar France and throughout the empire, questions of gender and generation shed new light on an experience whose legacy, in November 1918, was only beginning.

MARTHA HANNA is professor of history at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is author of *The Mobilization of Intellect: French Scholars and Writers during the Great War* (1996) and *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War* (2006), which won the J. Russell Major Prize from the American Historical Association in 2007.

JOHN HORNE is emeritus fellow and former professor of modern European history at Trinity College Dublin and is currently Oliver Smithies Visiting Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford. He is a member of the Royal Irish Academy and serves on the executive of the International Research Centre at the Historial de la Grande Guerre, Péronne. He has published widely on the history of modern France and the Great War.

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