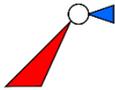


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bncdoc.id	K91
bncdoc.author	Horne, Alistair
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<881/c>	was that this Union, so unnatural to France, should still endure after nearly two years of war and reverses. It was significant that when the International Revolutionary Socialists had held their conference of April 1916 in Switzerland, barely any of the French Socialists voiced support for their resolutions calling for an immediate peace. Almost the sole exception was a young Deputy called Pierre Laval. To the women of France, the war had brought an emancipatory revolution. Never had they been so great a power in the country. At the outbreak of war, to a woman they had rushed off to become nurses, fill the administrative gaps left by the men, work in the munitions factories. The soldiers grumbled on returning home to find their wives turned yellow by picric acid, but they had little redress. Initially, the women were doubtless drawn by the glamour of the nurse's uniform and by a sense of adventure; later, as the French women who had not lost a husband, lover or brother became fewer and fewer, the more frivolous motives became replaced by a formidable dedication. Most of them had become marraines to one or more soldiers, according them benefits ranging merely from encouraging letters to parcels of food and woollies to the highest a woman can offer a man. All of them in their letters exhorted their adopted soldier to 'tenir coûte que coûte' and their influence was mighty. No other section of the French community was boosting the will to war more substantially than the women; and it was certainly no accident that, as a source of inspiration, La Madelon had almost replaced La Marseillaise. Perhaps symbolic of the whole spirit of 1916 was the divine Sarah Bernhardt, one leg amputated, but still stumping the boards with a wooden leg. Here was France herself, mutilated but undaunted. And so, as the fighting at Verdun was reaching a climax of frightfulness, the continuance of both the war and the battle was assured by a firmness on the home fronts of the adversaries that would not be seen again. THE AIR BATTLE There wo n't be any after the war for a fighter pilot. RAOUL LUFBERY, Lafayette Squadron. They are the knighthood of this war, without fear and without reproach; and they recall the legendary days of chivalry, not merely by the daring of their exploits, but by the nobility of their spirit. - DAVID LLOYD-GEORGE, House of Commons, October 29th, 1917 In the eyes of the unhappy infantry, the heavy gunners may have been a breed apart, but beyond them lay one small body of men that seemed to be not even of the same world. Out of
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>the seething hell of the Mort Homme</p> <p>in May, Raymond Jubert gazed up with envy as the vermilion plane of Navarre performed triumphant aerobatics above the French lines to proclaim yet another victory. For these 'happy pilots', he reflected, triumph or defeat 'gains equally the cheers of those who die beyond glory of any sort. They are the only ones who in this war have the life or death of which one dreams.' Compared with the prolonged torment and mutilations of life on the ground, the knowledge that a pilot's expectancy of survival was far poorer even than a machine-gunner's could not detract</p>

from the infantryman's envy; even though death commonly meant being burned alive, **at least it was quick, clean - and witnessed by thousands**. Coupled with envy was a terrible sense of **inferiority**. The planes circling overhead, and the double lines of hovering artillery observation balloons they protected, made the infantrymen feel like **some protectionless rodent under the penetrating gaze of an eagle endowed with Jovian powers of destruction**. To the airmen themselves, unable to hear **the monstrous fracas**, and detachedly observing **the tiny sparks like flashes of a mirror** and **the puffs of smoke bubbling up below them**, it was impossible to grasp **what a sum of human suffering** all that represented. To begin with, the actual battlefield seemed so absurdly small. Even from the low altitudes attainable by First War aircraft, observers could see simultaneously their own long-range guns and the targets being pounded far behind the enemy lines. Night patrols over the front sometimes had in sight the lights both of their own base and of enemy airfields, glowing in the distance as if the soil had been smeared with phosphorus. Flying over the battlefield the reaction of an airman was often one of disgust mingled with a certain arrogance, the contempt of the individualist for the herd; 'What cowardice to accept such a situation without revolt!' exclaimed Observer Bernard Lafont. 'This is the cowardice of the measureless mass.' The aviators had more than one ground for their sense of superiority. While the wretched biffin was receiving five sous a day for his services, on the French side a mere corporal in the airforce received two francs a day, an officer ten francs, as extra flying pay. Each enemy plane shot down brought the victor three days' leave, and a palm-leaf to add to his ribbons. In addition, 'bounty money' was paid from a fund created by Michelins, the tyre manufacturers; Guynemer, the French 'as des as', earned before he died the huge sum of approximately 15,000 francs (which he handed over to a foundation for wounded airmen). Above all,