

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green color with several faint, stylized leaf motifs scattered across it. Each motif consists of a stem with two leaves pointing upwards and to the right.

DAILY LIVES OF CIVILIANS IN WARTIME TWENTIETH- CENTURY EUROPE

Nicholas Atkin

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DAILY LIVES OF

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Wartime Twentieth-
Century Europe

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DAILY LIVES OF

**Civilians in
Wartime Twentieth-
Century Europe**

EDITED BY NICHOLAS ATKIN

The Greenwood Press "Daily Life Through History" Series
Daily Life of Civilians during Wartime
David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, Series Editors



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To Ben

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Series Foreword

Few scenes are as poignant as that of civilian refugees torn from their homes and put to plodding flight along dusty roads, carrying their possessions in crude bundles and makeshift carts. We have all seen the images. Before photography, paintings and crude drawings told the story, but despite the media, the same sense of the awful emerges from these striking portrayals: the pace of the flight is agonizingly slow; the numbers are sobering and usually arrayed in single file along the edges of byways that stretch to the horizon. The men appear hunched and beaten, the women haggard, the children strangely old, and usually the wide-eyed look of fear has been replaced by one of bone-grinding weariness. They likely stagger through country redolent of the odor of smoke and death as heavy guns mutter in the distance. It always seems to be raining on these people, or snowing, and it is either brutally cold or oppressively hot. In the past, clattering hooves would send them skittering away from the path of cavalry; more recently, whirring engines of motorized convoys push them from the road. Aside from becoming casualties, civilians who become refugees experience the most devastating impact of war, for they truly become orphans of the storm, lacking the barest necessities of food and clothing except for what they can carry and eventually what they can steal.

The volumes in this series seek to illuminate that extreme example of the civilian experience in wartime and more, for those on distant home fronts also can make remarkable sacrifices, whether through their labors to support the war effort or by enduring the absence of loved ones far

from home and in great peril. And war can impinge on indigenous populations in eccentric ways. Stories of a medieval world in which a farmer fearful about his crops could prevail on armies to fight elsewhere are possibly exaggerated, the product of nostalgia for a chivalric code that most likely did not hold much sway during a coarse and vicious time. In any period and at any place, the fundamental reality of war is that organized violence is no less brutal for its being structured by strategy and tactics. The advent of total war might have been signaled by the famous *levée en masse* of the French Revolution, but that development was more a culmination of a trend than an innovation away from more pacific times. In short, all wars have assailed and will assail civilians in one way or another to a greater or lesser degree. The Thirty Years' War displaced populations just as the American Revolution saw settlements preyed upon, houses razed, and farms pillaged. Modern codes of conduct adopted by both international consent and embraced by the armies of the civilized world have heightened awareness about the sanctity of civilians and have improved vigilance about violations of that sanctity, but in the end such codes will never guarantee immunity from the rage of battle or the rigors of war.

In this series, accomplished scholars have recruited prescient colleagues to write essays that reveal both the universal civilian experience in wartime and aspects of it made unique by time and place. Readers will discover in these pages the other side of warfare, one that is never placid, even if far removed from the scenes of fighting. As these talented authors show, the shifting expectations of governments markedly transformed the civilian wartime experience from virtual non-involvement in early modern times to the twentieth century's expectation of sacrifice, exertion, and contribution. Finally, as the Western powers have come full circle by asking virtually no sacrifice from civilians at all, they have stumbled upon the peculiar result that diminishing deprivation during a war can increase civilian dissent against it.

Moreover, the geographical and chronological span of these books is broad and encompassing to reveal the unique perspectives of how war affects people whether they are separated by hemispheres or centuries, people who are distinct by way of different cultures yet similar because of their common humanity. As readers will see, days on a home front far from battle usually become a surreal routine of the ordinary existing in tandem with the extraordinary, a situation in which hours of waiting and expectation become blurred against the backdrop of normal tasks and everyday events. That situation is a constant, whether for a village in Asia or Africa, or Europe or the Americas.

Consequently, these books confirm that the human condition always produces the similar as well the singular, a paradox that war tends to amplify. Every war is much like another, but no war is really the same as any other. All places are much alike, but no place is wholly separable from its

matchless identity. The civilian experience in war mirrors these verities. We are certain that readers will find in these books a vivid illumination of those truths.

David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler
General Editors

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Preface

This collection of essays examines the manner in which the wars of the twentieth century have impacted on Europe's civilians. It might be thought that this is well-worn territory. Though the social context of World War Two is beginning to receive the coverage it deserves, the civilian experience of the other conflicts under review here—World War One, the Russian and Spanish Civil Wars, the post-Yugoslav Wars, and the Cold War—has received far less attention. There are several reasons why this might be so: a long-standing reluctance on the part of historians to tackle daily life; the conservative traditions of military history writing; lingering political sensibilities; and an unevenness of primary sources. It is a credit to the following essays that they overcome such drawbacks to rescue people's day-to-day lives from obscurity and to place these experiences at the forefront, always recognizing that there can never be a specific civilian type and that Europe's twentieth-century military campaigns have been lived through in different ways.

The opening chapter assesses the ways in which historians have tackled daily life during wartime and, at the same time, explains how battle has changed over the modern period. Without necessarily subscribing to the belief that the period since the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic upheavals (1792–1815) has witnessed an unstoppable march towards “total war,” it is difficult to deny that the more recent the conflict the more likely it has been to have disrupted the rhythms of daily life.

This was especially true of World War One. Though it was envisaged that this would be of short duration, over by Christmas 1914, it proved an

arduous drawn-out affair that increasingly encroached upon day-to-day life. In a wide-ranging essay, taking in Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany, chapter 2 by François Cochet illustrates how civilians increasingly came to appreciate that they were at war. This was evidenced in material shortages; the mobilization of the home fronts; the spread of government propaganda; increasing state interference into ordinary activities; and the threat of death on an unprecedented scale. Not everywhere was equally affected—much depended on where in Europe one lived and how close people were to the actual fighting—yet it was increasingly hard to escape the privations and dangers of war.

Given Russia's huge geographical size, it might have been thought that civilians had a good chance of escaping the upheavals brought about by the Russian Civil War. Yet, as Sam Johnson shows in chapter 3, this was a fratricidal and ideological struggle that affected a majority of the population. First to suffer were those who lived in the cities, where men, women, and children were engaged in a daily tussle for survival. Thanks to the fluidity of the battle lines, before long the countryside was also affected. The Civil War culminated in famine and the creation of millions of refugees.

The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) was another conflict in which communities were pitted against one another and where, again, dogma impinged on civilian life as the Nationalist and Republican forces endeavored to capture the nation, both in an institutional and ideological sense. In this feverish atmosphere, everyone's loyalties were suspect and frequently called into question, threatening the Republicans' aim of building a new society. As Michael Richards demonstrates, this ambition had to be reconciled with the demands of fighting the military campaign, as losses and devastation began to mount.

Chapter 5 examines the dimensions of World War Two, a conflict that dwarfed all others, including that of 1914–18, and that perhaps genuinely deserves the label "total," always excepting that no conflict can ever be entirely total. Though the magnitude of the fight makes any generalization hazardous, the chapter identifies a series of key factors that influenced the civilian experience, notably displacement, government, adjustment, and comportment.

World War Two, of course, bequeathed a Europe divided between east and west and a new world order dominated by the superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Largely because of the advent of nuclear weapons, the subsequent Cold War never became a "hot war," yet it nonetheless had a tremendous impact on the peoples of Europe. Revisiting several of the historiographical issues and approaches explored throughout this volume, chapter 6 by Frank Tallett examines how the Cold War was experienced on the ground and elaborates some innovative lines of enquiry for future research.

Writers are just beginning to make sense of the irrational and unspeakable acts that took place with the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

Drawing on newspaper accounts, personal letters, documentary film footage, and extensive oral testimonies, chapter 7 in this study, by Maja Povrzanović Frykman, focuses not on refugees but on those civilians in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who, in 1992–95, stayed in their homes, a group of people whom she has termed the “forgotten majority,” and who witnessed death, rape, destruction, and trauma.

The themes of this book are not, for the most part, uplifting ones. Though each of the conflicts under consideration here had its own characteristics and though civilians underwent their own personal experiences, they shared in a wider misery. Cold, hunger, fear, material deprivation, the threat of sexual assault, arbitrary violence, death—these are the common elements that feature in each of the chapters.

The book closes with a glossary of terms, to help the reader better understand some of the concepts, events, and places discussed in the chapters, and a narrative bibliography to guide the user to more resources that will help build a better understanding of the lives of European civilians in wartime in the twentieth century.

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