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More Minerva Than Mars:
The French Women's Rights Campaign
and the First World War

by

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"More Minerva Than Mars:
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During the First World War, French feminists believed that the end of hostilities would bring prompt legislative attention to the rights of women. The foremost feminist newspaper, La Française, proclaimed that women were "almost certain" to win important new rights as soon as the Chamber of Deputies could devote time to them. The leaders of the French Union for Women's Suffrage (UFSF) scorned the cautious "almost": their report to the 1916 congress of the UFSF stated that women would vote at the end of the war.¹

There were good reasons for this optimism. By mid-war there were palpable differences in the role of French women. They had entered the economy in greater numbers and new capacities; they had obtained legal rights previously withheld. Attitudes about appropriate roles of women had apparently shifted, producing a new climate of opinion in which women could anticipate equality. Women were even serving as mayors of some villages and sitting on municipal councils -- a situation scarcely plausible a decade earlier. "In three years," wrote one sympathetic author at the end of the war, "women realized more progress than in fifty years of struggle."² Women were also contributing directly to the war effort; without their labor in the munitions industry, the army could not long have continued to fight. Feminists, therefore, simply could not believe that on the morrow of the victory which women had helped to win, a grateful nation would repulse their claims.³

They were doubly mistaken. Women did not obtain equality after the war, and the actual improvement in their situation during the war was much smaller than it appeared. Instead, the altered roles of French women can be better

understood through the image of a social "double helix" in which male and female strands are seen in changing positions as they coil around their axis, yet maintain an essentially constant relationship even as their positions alter. Thus, this essay will argue that French women did not win great improvements in their position due to the First World War; then it will argue that the war was actually a setback to feminist efforts to break out of the fixed relationships of the social helix.

Feminist aspirations had been clearly articulated in France in the generation before the war. Liberal-republican feminist leagues had been established by Léon Richer and Maria Deraismes at the very beginning of the Third Republic. Their movement remained small (under 1,000 participants) until the turn of the century. Then, stimulated by a series of feminist congresses (in 1896 and especially in 1900), by the creation of a strong feminist daily newspaper (Marguerite Durand's La Fronde, 1897), and by the formation of a reformist coalition of feminine and feminist groups (the National Council of French Women or CNFF, 1901), the women's rights movement grew rapidly. In 1914 it numbered over 25,000 adherents. This movement was essentially a bourgeois, urban, republican, non-Catholic phenomenon. It was estranged from a much larger Catholic women's movement (over 500,000 members in 1914) on its right, a grouping that opposed most feminist reforms; on the feminist left, there was only occasional cooperation with the smaller, but more militant, socialist women's movement which resisted many feminist objectives (such as the vote) as bourgeois palliatives intended to prevent true social revolution.⁴

The position of women under the Third Republic was so dramatically inferior that feminists had a long list of revindications, and two dozen different organizations emphasized different priorities. The resolutions of

the feminist congress at Paris in 1908, or the program of Durand's campaign during the 1910 parliamentary elections, reveal this range: the opening of all schools and careers to women, with equal pay for equal work; the abolition of paternal authority within marriage and the family, in favor of equal rights (e.g., the right to be a guardian); the drastic revision of the Civil Code to end the treatment of adult women as minors and to permit them full civil rights (e.g., to serve on juries); further social legislation to emancipate women (e.g., easier divorce and state aid in child care); the elimination of the double standard in the criminal code and the corresponding abolition of all paternalistic legislation.... This translated into hundreds of specific targets. At the congress of 1908, French feminists agreed that the way to obtain these changes was to concentrate upon winning political rights first, then to use the vote to force attention to their interests. Thus, the years before the war witnessed frequent suffragist activities.⁵

French feminists were confident in 1914. Within a few weeks, they organized a "poll" (sponsored by Le Journal) in which over 500,000 women called for the vote; formed a feminist federation to unite all suffragist groups; and then staged the first mass demonstration in the history of French feminism (the "Condorcet demonstration"), putting over 5,000 marchers into the streets of Paris. The leaders of the UFSF and the CNFF were certain that their policy of calm advocacy and close cooperation with their parliamentary supporters (led by Ferdinand Buisson) would soon succeed. Cecile Brunschwig, the secretary-general of the UFSF, was so confident that she informed the 12,000 members of the union that they would vote in the municipal elections of 1916. The world war prevented this, but feminists felt sure that they were winning more supporters through their war efforts.⁶

The fallacy of that war-time optimism can be seen by examining the

context in which changes seemed to have occurred. Reviewing the participation of women in the war economy, the new rights they won during the war, and the social attitudes that supposedly changed will show that French women had not come far from the feminist campaigns of 1908-1914. Then, looking at the women's suffrage campaign in more detail will illustrate how the war was actually a setback to feminist efforts to achieve their foremost goal.

The most difficult argument to assess about the war and the position of women in France concerns attitudes. A strong case can be stated to show that attitudes about the public role of women changed, that new behavior was socially acceptable. By necessity, women had acquired a freedom of action which was not entirely respectable in the antediluvian world of 1914. Women had to go out unchaperoned, had to work alongside men, had to live alone on their own wages. Thousands of nurses and clerical workers in the masculine world of warfare, business, and government plus tens of thousands of female factory workers had to affect attitudes. Women alone on the streets in 1917 were a common sight; in 1900, the police des moeurs might have detained them. The world in which Hubertine Auclert (the founder of the women's suffrage campaign) had once been denied a hotel room while travelling to visit her family, on the argument that no respectable young woman would seek such lodgings, was gone. A freedom, born of necessity, could even be seen in the clothing that women wore -- shorter, less form-fitting, more practical.

Such obvious changes attracted a lot of comment at the time. Célestin Bouglé (a Sorbonne sociologist), for example, asserted at the end of the war, "a hundred thousand of the surviving barriers to women fell at a single blow."⁷ Such judgments belong in a Pantheon for optimists. It is probably correct that the war adjusted some public attitudes, but one must wonder if this new mood were so far-reaching or long-lasting.⁸ Many of the changes were

temporary, enduring as long as the unusual circumstances that produced them. It is more correct to see the war as only one factor in a longer and slower evolution of attitudes than as a momentous change. Can one imagine that millions of veterans returned from the front, having thrown off their traditional prejudices? Could any society with deeply ingrained feelings about the nature of the family, and of women's position within it, suddenly embrace the concept of the autonomous, emancipated woman? Is it not a more probable human reaction, after so great a tragedy, to seek to revive the status quo ante bellum -- to "return to normalcy" in the language of the 1920s?

To modulate the claim of dramatic new mentalités, one might recall the image of the double helix. Yes, women occupied new positions on the social axis, and public attitudes accepted this as necessary. But did this constitute a fundamental alteration in the relationship between the sexes? If one examines masculine attitudes and the masculine agenda at the end of the war, this seems highly unlikely. Many other issues inundated the woman question on that agenda -- issues that politicians, pressure groups, and journalists considered more urgent. The list was staggering. Economic matters included the reconstruction of the war zone, the resettlement of refugees, the reparations and war-debt problems, the transformation of production to peace-time manufacture, the demobilization and economic reintegration of hundreds of thousands of veterans, wide-spread labor unrest, and the stabilization of supply and prices. Diplomatic matters included the general issues of security against Germany, the negotiation and application of the Versailles Treaty, troubled relations with war-time allies, exceptionally complicated financial diplomacy, and the international politics of anti-Bolshevism.

Some women, such as Louise Bodin (the editor of La Voix des femmes), saw this political agenda as adding up a new basis of anti-feminism. She was not far from the mark. Where did it show traces of the supposed "new attitude" about women? Where did it address the woman question at all? If one probes, it is there; but it resembles a conservative backlash instead of feminist-egalitarian reform. Economic and diplomatic issues were Important Matters, upon which ministers might build their reputation or risk their portfolios. Women's rights were secondary matters which might be examined in calmer times. The Chamber of Deputies did propose women's suffrage, but it did not become law. Instead, the successful masculine agenda expected women to step aside from their war-time roles and let men return to important business. This reaction, of course, incorporated praise for women for their service to the patrie; it then expressed pleasure that victory allowed women to resume their roles in the home. Indeed, the greatest pressure for legislation affecting women derived not from new attitudes but from a desire to enforce such traditional roles. This was expressed in terms of great concern about the "depopulation" of France.⁹ The rebuilding of the economy and of national security demanded motherhood, not emancipation; the woman question was inscribed on the agenda under the heading of natalism, not feminism. Thus, if one were to address Joan Scott's exhortation to develop gender as a category of analysis, it might be interesting to start with Arno Mayer's work on counter-revolution and add the French social agenda as profoundly opposed to the feminist revolution.

If one shifts the focus to the economic and legal victories of French women during the First World War, there are many more reasons to doubt that the war years constituted a climacteric. Much of the progress was illusory, many of the changes evanescent. Women mobilized to serve in an extraordinary

situation found themselves demobilized rapidly in the post war rush back to normalcy. The poilu returned to his job, his war-time replacement to her home. For what did we endure such suffering, veterans might ask, if not for the preservation of the pre-war France? Both economic and legal gains of women fell to such attitudes. To be sure, some important changes endured and others followed the war. This, however, must in part be attributed to gradual trends in France. The steady growth of an educated class of women, for example, would have meant alterations in occupations and attitudes, war or no. At the very least, the war could not have produced change without the simultaneous existence of such trends. Furthermore, attributing to the war an altered position of women slights the work of the pre-war feminist movement.

The medical profession provides a good illustration of this situation for middle class women. It is hardly surprising to read that female physicians obtained wider acceptance during four years of fighting when casualty rates averaged over 1,000 per diem. The important fact is not that the French public accepted doctoresses as replacements, that women received appointments at new levels; it would have been stunning had they not. Rather it is the gradual education of women in medicine during the previous forty years and the efforts of feminists to open the profession to them. The trend that saw 357 female medical students enrolled at Paris in 1912 is more important than the emergency use of women doctors, many of whom were deprived of their positions after the armistice. A woman (Dr. Long-Landry) had already become the head of a clinic in 1911; that others followed her during the war only to be demoted afterwards hardly marks a turning point in women's rights.

The situation of working class women was equally deceptive. Before the war, the state railways employed 6,000 women (85% of them as barrier guards); by 1918, 57,000 worked for the railroads. Similarly, the Paris Metro went

from 124 women workers to 3,037. The Ministry of Posts had been the second largest source of state jobs for women (18,000 in 1911) yet still had to replace over 20,000 men who were drafted. The Ministry of Education, which already employed 71,000 women (96% of them in primary education), had to open 30,000 positions (chiefly in secondary education) due to conscription. Banks, businesses, and government alike desperately needed women to replace men on clerical and secretarial staffs. The greatest need, of course, occurred in the munitions factories, where women workers numbered 15,000 by 1915 and increased to 684,000 in 1917.¹⁰

Such illustrations are deceptive because they convey misleading impressions about the extent and nature of what was changing. This is partly a function of inadequate data -- the government did not conduct the quinquennial census scheduled for 1916. But it is chiefly a result of misreading the evidence that does exist. First of all, many women sought jobs less as a matter of patriotism or feminism than of simple survival. Any woman who had been dependent solely on the wages of a working man was immediately in trouble if that man was drafted. The government provided the wives of mobilized men with a daily allotment of one franc, twenty-five centimes; dependent mothers, sisters, or lovers received nothing. Secondly, if one views the situation of women as the war unfolded -- not from the end of the war -- the story of working women is very different. The beginning of the war caused a broad range of business closings and curtailments. For 1914-1915, the chief effect of the war was to drive women out of work. Female unemployment reached enormous proportions -- 61% of those in textiles and 67% in the garment industries were put out of work.¹¹

The employment of French women during World War II must therefore first be understood as a process of redistribution of the labor force, based as much

on the need of women to survive as on governmental policy. According to Clemenceau's secretary, half a million women entered the industrial work force during the war. That total, however, is far less than the number of women who found work in munitions alone. What was happening was the arrival of women from other sectors of the economy, women left unemployed, and women in straitened circumstances. The war took women from domestic services or traditionally feminized segments of the economy, such as textiles, and put them in war-time jobs as male replacements. Viewed in one way, the war enabled working class women to find new kinds of work and acquire new skills, just as it permitted middle class women to capitalize on their previous training. But viewed differently, these women found jobs that would disappear after the war or be reclaimed by veterans, often at the price of losing jobs they could not recover.¹²

French women, whether they came from other occupations or newly entered the labor force, did not retain their war-time jobs. According to census data (See Table) there were 8.6 million women in the population active in 1921, compared to only 7.7 million in 1911. The number of working women declined, however, reaching 7.8 million by 1926 -- meaning that women actually constituted a smaller percentage of the national labor force in 1926 than they had in 1911. Furthermore, when one considers only industrial occupations, the number of women employed in 1921 was already lower than it had been in 1906! By 1926, women accounted for only 28.6% of industrial workers, whereas they had held 34.4% of the jobs in 1906. The sharp decline occurred despite the fact that 1.4 million men had died during the war.

Post-war governments and employers obviously made a tremendous effort to hire demobilized soldiers and to demobilize working women. Justice for veterans completely overshadowed justice for women in public policy. Veterans

WOMEN IN THE WORK FORCE, 1906-1926

Census Year	French Work Force (in millions)			Agricultural Work Force			Industrial Work Force			Women in the Work Force (1)		
	Total	Women	% W	Total	Women	% W	Total	Women	% W	Total	% Ind	% Agric
1906	20.7	7.7	37.2%	8.8	3.3	37.5%	6.1	2.1	34.4%	7.7	27.3%	42.9%
1911	20.9	7.7	36.8%	8.6	3.2	37.2%		(2)		7.7		41.6%
1916	(3)											
1921	21.7	8.6	39.6%	9.0	4.0	44.4%	6.3	2.0	31.7%	8.6	23.3%	46.5%
1926	21.4	7.8	36.4%	8.1	3.4	42.0%	7.0	2.0	28.6%	7.8	28.6%	43.6%

(1) Percentages of women in the work force total 100% with the addition of women in fishing and services.

(2) The 1911 census combined industrial work force figures with services.

(3) There was no census in 1916.

SOURCE: Computed from data in J.-C. Toutain, La Population de la France de 1700 à 1959 (Paris, 1963), Tables 58 and 59, pp. 162-163.

organizations soon grew to immense proportions (the associations of mutilés alone numbered 345,000 in 1926), equally dwarfing women's rights leagues (the UFSF reached 100,000 in 1928). And the Chamber of Deputies elected in 1919 held so many veterans that it was labeled "the horizon blue chamber" after the colors of army uniforms. The government acknowledged the problem of displacing women workers by paying a bonus to those who lost their jobs to returning soldiers. One may be permitted to wonder if this bonus was more intended to aid the stricken or to encourage women to return to the home. For it was to the household that most demobilized women went. The textile industry had accounted for 85% of the pre-war industrial employment of women; but employment there declined by 13% (for women) between 1906 and 1921; 17% between 1906 and 1926. Nor did women return to domestic service; feminine employment there declined from 781,000 (1906) to 698,000 (1921), then fell further to 688,000 (1926). Only in the agricultural sector did the effect of the war endure for a decade. There, women constituted a much larger share of workers in 1921 than in 1911 and still did so in 1926. This reflected the number of war deaths among the peasantry and hardly represented a great turning point in the economic history of French women.¹³

Similar doubts appear when one examines the legal and political rights that French women obtained during the war. It is true that the extraordinary wartime circumstances resulted in a few cases of women performing the functions of mayors and adjunct-mayors or sitting in municipal councils.¹⁴ Special wartime agencies, such as the Comités d'action agricole established in each rural commune in 1916, made provisions for women's suffrage. Women also obtained release in 1915 from some provisions of the Civil Code, permitting them to exercise rights previously limited to men. After July 3, 1915, for example, mothers could exercise the paternal authority defined by the code.

In March 1917, the Senate finally gave women the right to become legal guardians, accepting a bill that had passed the chamber several years before the war. French feminists had worked for this right for over twenty years, and they were understandably pleased with their victory¹⁵

A closer look shows how meager were these legal victories. The few instances where women held political office were in desperate circumstances, usually rural communes denuded of educated males. In most cases, the commune turned to the local institutrice to study and to sign documents. Her powers were strictly limited and her career expectancy clearly understood. In cases where women sat on municipal councils, they did so explicitly as non-voting members. The right to vote for agricultural comités, restricted to begin with, ended with the war. The law of 1915 providing paternal authority to women was also valid only for the duration of hostilities, only in urgent cases, and only with individual judicial approval. It was necessary for the orderly continuation of business and was adopted as such, not as a feminist landmark. And it was no improvement over the same temporary rights that the Government of National Defense had granted women in December 1870. As a detailed legal thesis demonstrated in 1919, the war government had only extended the rights of women during "the non-presence" of the men in whom those rights actually reposed. The return of the army meant the disappearance of such rights.¹⁶

French women certainly won some permanent rights during World War I. The only major right to survive, however, was that of guardianship. That was important, but it scarcely made the years 1914-1918 a period of feminist legislative triumph to overshadow the pre-war years. The liberal republicans of the 1880's, for example, reinstated divorce in France and expanded educational opportunities for women. The post-Dreyfus radicals (hardly the

best friends of the women's movement) managed more significant feminist reforms in a few months of 1907 than all of the war governments combined: the Married Women's Earnings Law (the loi Schmahl) and the right of working women to vote for and serve as trades disputes arbitrators (the conseils des prud'hommes). Thus, viewing war-time legislation in a longer context greatly diminishes its importance.

Of course, it is also necessary to consider women's legislation after the war, on the argument that it had prompted subsequent change. What legislation did the chambre horizon bleu produce to alter the position of women in France? One tremendously important law of July 1920. It forbade the mere advocacy of abortion or birth control. Yes, French politicians had learned from the war -- learned that a Neo-Malthusian menace cost France more sons than the Germans did. Depopulation begat pronatalism. Hence, any form of encouragement to abort a birth, even in private, was cause for a fine of 100 to 3,000 francs plus imprisonment for six months to three years; if the crime were circulating birth control information, the punishment might reach 5,000 francs. The living symbol of this policy toward women was Dr. Madeleine Pelletier, the most revolutionary pre-war feminist. She died while incarcerated in a mental asylum because a judge ruled that she was unfit to stand trial for performing abortions.

The First World War was also a setback to the feminist campaign to alter the relations of the sexes. This becomes clear if one examines the effect of the war on the women's suffrage campaign. There are many reasons for this assertion. The war truncated a political movement that had apparently reached its take-off stage in 1914 but could not recover so well in 1919. The hiatus of suffrage activities during the sacred union marked the passing of a generation in French feminism; the post-war campaign found a large number of

leaders, organizations, and periodicals missing. Much of the disbanded movement could not be reconstituted in time to participate in the debate of 1919-1922. Those individuals who returned to suffragism often did so with less single-mindedness, as their war-time interests now took more of their time. Some social problems affecting suffragism, notably depopulation, were exacerbated by the war, demanding a more vigorous feminist response but simultaneously driving away potential support. The success of the Russian revolution of 1917 also weakened French suffragism. Communism siphoned off some activists from the suffragist left, fragmented the women's movement anew, and led to a "Red Scare" against the advocates of any egalitarian reform. And, as already noted, the war buried women's rights under a host of other problems to which politicians accorded primacy, such as economic recovery and the diplomacy of French security. Such problems created a national mood in which the foremost desire seemed to be a return to the halcyon days of a lost belle époque rather than the further transformation of French society. In response, many feminists became more conservative, both in what they asked and how they did so. Ironically, French suffragists were simultaneously over-confident, believing that the government would reward them for their contributions during the war. All of this added up to a suffrage campaign weaker in 1919-1922 than it had been in 1908-1914.

When 5,000 suffragists had assembled in the Tuileries Gardens and marched to the left bank in July 1914, their goal seemed in sight. Women's suffrage had been inscribed on the agenda of the Chamber of Deputies for the first time and suffragists held pledges of support from nearly 49% of all deputies. Brunschwicg was not alone in believing that women would vote in the elections of 1916. Then the war truncated the suffrage campaign at its apogee. Within days of the Condorcet demonstration, French suffragists whole-heartedly

supported their government in its war effort. The movement had always been deeply republican and committed to cooperation with its friends in parliament. When Premier Viviani (a lifetime feminist) called on feminists to rally to the war effort, they did not hesitate. Nor did the socialist women's movement which followed the lead of the SFIO; when Jules Guesde entered the sacred union, so did the Groupe des femmes socialistes. With no apparent hesitation, the women's movement abandoned its pacifism and its efforts to win the vote. Periodicals disappeared, congresses were cancelled, lectures and demonstrations no longer scheduled. Instead, feminists sought ways to participate in the war -- through the Red Cross, through organizations to aid refugees, through the recruitment of women to replace men called to the colors. "We will claim our rights," they proclaimed, "when the triumph of Right is assured."¹⁷ Only late in the war did suffragism reappear in France. And much of the movement was missing. Many of the small organizations and their leaders were lost, never to regroup as effective bodies. The death of both Hubertine Auclert and Eliska Vincent removed the two oldest militants from activism. Jeanne Oddo-Deflou survived the war, but her society did not: she lost most of her family and her income during the hostilities; poor and demoralized, she retired to a maison de retraite. The collapse of the small shares on which she lived reduced Mme. Remember to penury; she survived by selling flowers on the streets. Arria Ly, totally disillusioned, left France for permanent exile. Nelly Roussel became seriously ill in 1918, dying in 1922 without again devoting her full energies to feminism. And the war-time suspension of activity meant that no young leaders took over the activities of these women.¹⁸

Along with leaders and organizations, the war took a terrible toll of feminist publications. The costs of paper and manual labor increased

dramatically, forcing some publications to fold and others to curtail sharply their size or frequency. Such problems forced the largest feminist newspaper, La Française, from weekly to monthly publication in 1919, at which rate it was difficult to be the Journal officiel of feminism. Smaller publications were hurt more. L'Action féministe cut its format by half. La Voix des femmes continued to appear only when Louise Bodin's husband absorbed its losses. Mme. Remondet slowly lost Le Féminisme intégral: it appeared irregularly during the war and became a quarterly in 1917, suffering until "exorbitant costs" forced her to convert it to a short-lived pamphlet series. Pelletier had not published La Suffragiste during the war but tried to revive it in 1919. It soon folded. She later explained to Arria Ly: "printers are extravagantly expensive; they want 600 francs for what I formerly paid fifty. Impossible!" The same crisis afflicted the Parisian daily press, of course; even Le Radical shrank to a two-page paper in 1919. This also hurt the suffragist cause. Old supporters almost disappeared: L'Action lost 95% of its circulation between March 1912 and November 1917; La Petite république, 87%. And smaller newspapers found that they could easily cut out items submitted by feminist societies.¹⁹

Other parts of the suffrage movement, particularly provincial organizations, suffered from their patriotic disbandment and were only slowly reestablished. Local commissariats of the police and several prefectures surveyed feminist efforts to rebuild provincial suffragism in 1918; several reported to the Sûreté générale, as the prefect of the Loire did, that a few militants were trying but having no success. While the larger chapters of the UFSF had continued to meet during the war, smaller groups disappeared completely. Some of these groups were still not active in 1920, when the union claimed a dozen fewer branches than in 1914.²⁰

The war also impeded suffragist activity by drawing away supporters to non-suffrage enterprises. Individuals who had ceased their campaign in 1914 chose not to abandon the interests that had taken their time in 1914-1917; social feminism thus consumed more of the efforts by suffragists in 1918 than it had in 1914. The UFSF, for example, never returned to its statutory concentration solely upon the vote. Pacifists who had chosen patriotism in 1914 now felt conscience-bound to give some of their time to the League of Nations. Marguerite de Witt-Schlumberger (the president of the UFSF), for example, presided over a Union feminine pour la Société des Nations.²¹

The most important instance of this diffusion of suffragist activity was their response to the question of depopulation. Conservative opponents of women's suffrage found the birth rate to be a forceful argument against any change in the position of women: more than ever, women owed France motherhood. "France has more need of children than electors," ran a typical article of 1919 -- "The fate of France, its existence, depends on the family."²² The suffragist response to this situation combined a sincere agreement that patriotic women must be mothers and a feminist argument that women could still contribute more to France if enfranchised. Whatever their perspective, all feminists had to devote more attention to such issues after the war.

Among the many French national concerns of 1918-1919 that obscured feminism, one had an especially strong impact on the women's movement: the repercussions of the Russian revolution. The response to Bolshevism enlarged the disagreements between bourgeois feminists and socialist women, driving each group away from conciliation. Furthermore, many militant suffragists defected to communism during the revolutionary enthusiasm of 1917-1921: the feminist left lost Pelletier, Séverine, Roussel, Caroline Kauffmann, Marianne

Rauze, Hélène Brion, and Anne Léal for varying periods. Pelletier was so enraptured that she undertook a trip to Russia to contemplate permanent residence there. The rump organization of Solidarité left Paris for Montreuil where it became a non-feminist association of proletarian women. French revolutionary socialism, and later French communism, did not receive this influx of former suffragists by adopting their program. Communist women felt, as Louise Saumoneau had taught, that political emancipation within bourgeois society was "a sham".²³ Republic socialists such as Maria Vérone attacked Bolshevism as a threat to both their suffragism and their republicanism, but this was insufficient to spare feminism another ill-effect of the Russian revolution, the ensuing wave of anti-communism. Fearful conservatives had little difficulty in connecting the feminist threat to the family and to traditional French society with an international communist conspiracy, especially when so many prominent feminists became communists. Hence, police surveillance increased and governmental cooperation decreased.²⁴

The reaction of the authorities was no small difficulty for French suffragists. For years, the hostility of the government had meant police harassment and the occasional use of force, as Auclert had found in the Civil Code protest of 1904. But the Condorcet demonstration of 1914 had convinced French feminists that attitudes had shifted. Premier Viviani had supported that demonstration and his government had facilitated it; feminists even found the police courteous. Their patriotic participation in the war effort redoubled the conviction of these women that they could rely upon the cooperation of the government. It was a considerable shock, therefore, to discover in 1919 that they were again considered subversives. When suffragists sought to resume public efforts to win the vote, the government blocked many of their meetings and almost all projected demonstrations. By

decrees of 1914, France had been governed under a state of siege under which civil liberties were sharply curtailed. As the armistice did not lead to the immediate rescinding of these restrictions, suffragists were at the mercy of the government for their campaign. Neither the cabinet, nor the prefects, nor the police were in a merciful mood. Their greatest anxieties concerned labor agitation, pacifism, and bolshevism rather than feminism per se, but they found sufficient correlation between feminist organizations and these activities to justify the continued curtailment of women's demonstrations.²⁵

One final, and ironic, result of the war must be noted. While it may seem contradictory in view of the preceding evidence, French suffragists left the war with an astonishing over-confidence. They perceived many of the problems discussed here, but they underestimated them. The women who were optimistic in 1914 believed as an article of faith in 1919 that they would participate in the next elections. When peace came, the UFSF even participated in discussions about dissolving the International Woman's Suffrage Alliance because it was no longer needed. Some suffragists were so confident that they devoted their time to teaching women about the political process rather than lobbying for enfranchisement. Could French politicians possibly refuse? Valentine Thomson asked this of the readers of La Vie féminine in 1919. "For my part, I cannot believe it," she answered.²⁶ This over-confidence produced a post-war suffrage campaign that was notably weaker than the pre-war effort. Even when restrictions eased, suffragists staged no demonstrations comparable to those of 1914 -- no poll of 500,000; no march of 5,000.

French suffragists might have profited from a reading of the history of the women's movement in the United States; Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony had similarly suspended their suffrage campaign during the Civil War

and formed a National Woman's Loyal League in support of the union. The victors acknowledged the contributions of women by refusing to include them in the constitutional amendment that enfranchised emancipated male slaves. This lesson went unnoted in 1919; French suffragists understandably chose a comparison to the post-war adoption of women's suffrage in Britain and America. And when the Chamber of Deputies actually voted in favor of women's suffrage, feminists were positive that they were right. But they were not. The French Senate easily blocked women's suffrage throughout the inter-war years. Rather than gaining strength due to the First World War, French suffragism had suffered a severe setback.

When women's suffrage in France was proclaimed by Charles de Gaulle in 1944, the myth that modern wars emancipated women received another boost. They have not. It has been the constant theme of this essay to insist upon seeing the liberation of French women over la longue durée. The First World War was certainly an important episode in that evolution. But that war was not a climacteric for women, the gift of Mars. The ancient argument of attributing change tam Marte quam Minerva must be inverted: changes over la longue durée owe more to the accumulated wisdom of Minerva and the hard work of those who applied it.

NOTES

*This essay draws on reseach previously published in different forms: Steven C. Hause, "Women Who Rallied to the Tricolor: the Effects of World War I on the French Women's Suffrage Movement," Proceedings of the Western Society for French History 6 (1979): 371-81; Steven C. Hause (with Anne R. Kenney), Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), esp. 191-211. The author wishes to thank the Department of History, the Center for International Studies, and the Office of Research Administration at the University of Missouri-St. Louis for their financial assistance in this research.

1. La Française, March 16, 1918; UFSF Bulletin, 1914-1916, 53. See also the pamphlet by Paul d'Estournelles de Constant, Les Femmes pendant et après la guerre (Paris: Delagrave, 1917).

2. Léon Abensour, Histoire générale du féminisme. Des origines à nos jours [1921] (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1979), 310. See also Emile Faguet, "Féminisme d'aujourd'hui," La Vie féminine, February 26, 1916.

3. For information on the war-time roles of French women, see: Léon Abensour, Les Vaillantes. Heroïnes, martyrs, et rempalcantes (Paris: Chapelot, 1917), 68; Jane Misme, "La Guerre et le rôle des femmes," Revue de Paris 23 (1916): 68. For an example of a women performing municipal function, see the police générale reports for Hérault, F⁷ 13266, Archives nationales.

4. For the liberal feminist leagues, see Patrick K. Bidelman, Pariahs Stand Up! The Founding of the Liberal Feminist Movement in France, 1858-1889 (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood, 1982); Maite Albistur and Daniel Armogathe, Histoire du féminisme français, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions des femmes, 1977), 519-30; Richard J. Evans, The Feminists. Women's Emancipation Movements in

Europe, America and Australasia, 1840-1920 (London: Croom Helm, 1977); Claire G. Moses, "The Evolution of Feminist Thought in France, 1829-1889" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1978), 254-89; Hause (with Kenney), Women's Suffrage and Social Politics, 28-70. For the composition and nature of the movement, see Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, "The Limits of Suffragist Behavior: Legalism and Militancy in France, 1876-1922," American Historical Review 86 (1981): 781-806. For the socialist women's movement see the numerous works of Charles Sowerwine and Marilyn J. Boxer, esp.: Sowerwine, Sisters or Citizens? Women and Socialism in France Since 1876 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Boxer, "Socialism Faces Feminism in France, 1879-1913," (Ph.D. diss., University of California-Riverside, 1975). For the Catholic women's movement, see: Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, "The Development of the Catholic Women's Suffrage Movement in France, 1896-1922," Catholic Historical Review 67 (1981): 11-30; and the forthcoming dissertation by Odille Sarti of Indiana University, tentatively entitled "La Ligue patriotique des francaises: A Feminine Response to the Secularization of French Society (1901-1933)".

5. For a fuller list of feminist aspirations, see Albistur and Armogathe, Histoire du féminisme français, 2:525-28. For the program of the 1908 congress: Jeanne Oddo-Deflou, ed., Congrès national des droits civils et du suffrage des femmes. Tenu...les 26-28 juin 1908. Compte rendu.... (Paris: Quelqu'un, 1908). For Durand's program: Sue H. Goliber, "The Life and Times of Marguerite Durand: A Study in French Feminism," (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1975). For an overview of the woman question: Karen Offen, "Aspects of the Woman Question During the Third Republic," Third Republic/Troisième République 3-4 (197): 1-19.

6. For the campaign of 1914, see Hause (with Kenney), Women's Suffrage

and Social Politics, 169-90.

7. Celestin Bougle, De la Sociologie à l'action sociale. Pacifisme, féminisme, cooperation (Paris: P.U.F., 1923). See also: Andre Leclere, Le Vote des femmes en France. Les Causes de l'attitude particulière de notre pays (Paris: Riviere, 1929); Maurice Bardèche, Histoire des femmes 2 vols. (Paris: Stock, 1968).

8. For other expressions of this doubt, see: Theodore Zeldin, France, 1848-1945, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973-1977), 1:348; James F. McMillan, Housewife or Harlot: The Place of Women in French Society, 1870-1940 (New York: St. Martin's, 1981), part two; for more detail on this argument, see McMillan's dissertation, "The Effects of the First World War on the Social Condition of Women in France," (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1977).

9. For the importance of the depopulation question in French women's history, see the forthcoming article by Karen Offen in the American Historical Review (June 1984). For an overview of the depopulation question, see: Joseph P. Spengler, France Faces Depopulation (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1938). For contemporary feminist reactions to the situation, see: Louise Bodin, "Echos. L'Anti-féminisme," L'Humanité, May 19, 1919; Marguerite de Witt-Schlumberger, "France. Rapport du mois," Jus Suffragii (French edition), July 1919, p. 78; "Action parlementaire," UFSF Bulletin 1920-1921, 46-47; Le Féminisme intégral, 10:5. See also the discussion in Yvonne Delatour, "Les Effets de la guerre sur la situation de la française d'après la presse féminine, 1914-1918," (Diplôme d'études supérieures, University of Paris, 1965), 168-69.

10. For detailed discussion of the opening of new jobs to women and for occupational data during the war, see McMillan, "The Effects of the First

World War on the Social Condition of French Women," ch. 7; Delatour, "Les Effets de la guerre sur la situation de la française d'après la presse féminine". Pre-war data presented here drawn from the survey by Senator Gervais, published in Le Matin, January 9, 1911 and reprinted in Ferdinand Buisson, Le Vote des femmes (Paris: Dunot-Pinat, 1911). Conscription and female replacement data from Alain Decaux, Histoire des françaises, 2 vols. (Paris: Perrin, 1972), 2:983. Munitions data from Léon Abensour, Le Problème féministe: Un Cas d'aspiration collective vers l'égalité (Paris: Radot, 1927).

11. Arthur Fontaine, French Industry During the War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 43-45, 406.

12. Abensour, Le Problème féministe, 137. For further development of the thesis that the war chiefly redistributed women within the labor force, see McMillan, "The Effects of the First World War on the Social Condition of Women in France".

13. Data from J.-C. Toutain, La Population de la France de 1700 à 1959 (Paris: Institut de science économique appliquée, 1963), esp. tables 73 and 83. For veterans, see Antoine Prost, Les Anciens combattants, 1914-1939 (Paris: Gallimard, 1977). For the demobilization of women, see: Thérèse Casewitz, "Demobilization of Women in France," Jus Suffragii, January 1920. Similar conclusions about the conditions of French women during the war can be reached by studying their wages: both the government and private industry exploited women by paying them less than the men that they replaced. See "Enquête sur le travail et le salaire des ouvrières," Le Féminisme intégral, July 1916. In some cases (e.g., the Paris Metro) women received the same wages but not the fringe benefits (e.g., paid days off) as men. See Abensour, Les Vaillantes, 43-45. Albert Thomas did rule in 1917 that women munitions

workers should receive the same pay as men; see "Progrès égalitaires chez nos alliés et chez nous," Les Travailleuses, March 1917.

14. The Flandin Report (on women's suffrage) to the Chamber of Deputies provided a survey of women in such roles: Journal officiel de la république française, Chambre des députés, documents, October 18, 1918 (5095), esp. 44-45. For a discussion of such activities, see: Marie d'Espie de la Hire, La Femme française, son activité pendant la guerre (Paris: Tallandier, 1917); Misme, "La Guerre et le role des femmes"; and the regular coverage in La Française.

15. The texts of these laws can be found in J. B. Duvergier, et al., eds., Collection complète des lois, decrets, ordonnances, réglemens, avis du Conseil d'état (Paris: Sirey, annual), new ser., 16:38 (February 2, 1916); 15:310-11 (July 3, 1915); 17:120-23 (March 20, 1917). For efforts to obtain the law of guardianship, see: "Revue de l'action des françaises après trois ans de guerre," La Française, July 14, 1917; for more detail, see the Dossier Amélioration, Bouglé Collection, Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris [BHVP].

16. See André Isore's thesis, La Guerre et la condition privée de la femme (Paris: Boccard, 1919), esp. 481-92. Compare the texts of the decrees of temporary rights in Duvergier, Collection complète des lois, 70:480 (December 14, 1870) and new ser., 15:310-11 (July 3, 1915).

17. Le Droit des femmes, June 15, 1915.

18. See the depressing survey by Madeleine Pelletier in her letter to Arria Ly, June 6, 1921, Bouglé collection, BHVP.

19. Louise Bodin to Nelly Roussel, March 11, 1920, and Madeleine Pelletier to Arria Ly, June 6, 1921, Bouglé Collection, BHVP; Dossier Madame Remember, Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand [BMD]; Pelletier, "Le Féminisme et la

guerre," La Suffragiste, June 1919; Dossier Tirage des journaux, F712843,
Archives nationales.