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Claudi Baldoli and Andrew Knapp, *Forgotten Blitzes: France and Italy under Allied Air Attack, 1940-1945*. London: Continuum, 2012. x + 296 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$120.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-4411-3109-6; \$34.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-4411-8581-5.

Review by Talbot Imlay, Université de Laval.

In this well-researched study, Andrew Knapp and Claudia Bartoli examine a little-known aspect of the Second World War—the Allied bombing campaigns against France and Italy. The strategic bombing offensives against Germany and Japan have attracted the attention of numerous scholars who are understandably interested in exploring the origins, course, consequences and implications of what amounted to an unprecedented effort to target civilian populations in wartime. But while smaller in scale, the campaigns against France and Italy were far from insignificant. Of the total tonnage of Allied bombs dropped in western Europe during World War II, France and Italy together accounted for 34.3 percent as compared to 51.1 percent for Germany, resulting in almost 120,000 deaths (the figure for Germany is over 600,000).

The structure of the book is basically comparative, and the comparison between France and Italy informs most of its principal points. The authors begin with a discussion of the aims of the bombing campaigns, remarking that the Allies manifested more restraint against France and Italy than against Germany. In the case of France, the British and American air forces both remained committed in principle to precision bombing, focusing on military targets and attempting to limit civilian deaths. The French Atlantic ports were not area bombed during 1942, nor were air raids on the heart of Paris ever seriously considered. Before the entry of German troops in November 1942, the unoccupied southern zone of France was not bombed. The treatment of Italy was somewhat different: while precision bombing remained the norm before September 1943, the fall of Mussolini's regime and the German occupation of much of the country prompted a less restrained approach to bombing on the Allies' part. Overall, this relative restraint helps to explain the differences in casualty levels between France and Italy on the one hand and Germany on the other. That said, the authors insist that the idea of Allied restraint needs to be qualified. Political factors favouring restraint could always be overridden by military priorities; no less importantly, they weighed less heavily in Allied decisions as the war dragged on.

Having discussed the Allied side, the authors devote the bulk of the book to exploring the response of the French and Italians to the bombing. The interwar period was rife with talk of the possibility of air raids in a future war, and the authors thus begin with pre-war preparations to defend vulnerable populations. Both countries established "legal frameworks" (pp. 54-55) for passive defence but, given the immense cost and effort involved, the concrete achievements were extremely limited by the time war came. On the eve of France's defeat in 1940, few French towns could offer shelter from air raids to even 10 percent of their inhabitants. In Italy, in 1939, less than 700 public and private shelters had been built; their combined capacity was 115,000 out of total population of 44 million. Yet if neither country was in a position to defend more than a fraction of its population, the authors argue that the structure of their political regime accorded the French clear advantages. The system of elected mayors and regional councils under prefectural supervision provided the Third Republic with the means to organize passive

defence at the local level. In Italy, by contrast, the centralization of power under the Fascist regime stripped local authorities of power without, however, creating an effective substitute—a central state capable of intervening locally.

This difference in regime structure would play itself out during the war. Making extensive use of local archives, the authors trace the details of the French and Italian responses to the bombing, which allows them to propose several important arguments. The first and foremost argument is that the Vichy state proved better able than its Fascist counterpart to mobilize people and resources to help those directly affected by the bombing. For all its “growing oppressiveness in other areas,” the authors conclude, Vichy “was not a regime that abandoned the French to their fate.” The “attitude of the Fascist regime,” by comparison, “had been one of irresponsibility from the start” (p. 108). Another argument is that this difference had important political consequences. Vichy’s ability to respond with some effectiveness to Allied bombing both reflected and buttressed its legitimacy among the French people. One sign of this legitimacy was the extent of grass-roots mobilization largely independent of the state. The opposite was the case in Italy, where the regime’s ineptness further undermined its rapidly declining popularity. Meanwhile, the monopoly of civil space by the regime largely precluded an independent popular response, since appeals to solidarity were discredited by association with the Fascist party.

All told, this is a valuable and persuasive study. Nevertheless, the reader is left wanting a bit more. Most broadly, more historical context would be helpful. Much of the study centres on a comparison between the capabilities of the Vichy and Fascist states, as well as the vitality of French and Italian civil societies. The authors attribute the comparative weakness of civil society in Italy to the Fascist regime. But this perhaps exaggerates the influence of the regime on Italian society. In any case, more could have been said about the deeper and longer-term political-social structures and dynamics in Italy—and in France. More might also have been said about the very different wartime situations of Vichy France and Fascist Italy. In France the profound shock of defeat and occupation fostered a community of suffering, which Vichy could draw on for legitimacy. The experience of being bombed contributed easily to this sense of community. A similar sense of community does not appear to have existed in Fascist Italy, at least not before the autumn of 1943. Mussolini chose to take Italy into the war in 1940, which made it more difficult for Italians to conceive of themselves as victims. Finally, on a more self-interested note, I would liked to have seen more on the economic aspects of the bombing. A principle purpose of the Allies was to hamper the ability of France and Italy to contribute to the Axis war effort — hence the targeting of companies producing war material. How effective was Allied bombing on this score? How did it influence the calculations of state officials and industrialists regarding their activities? But these are minor quibbles. Knapp and Bartoli have shed new light on an important and neglected aspect of World War II.

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