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## The Defeat of Imperial Germany: 1917-1918

David F. Trask

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the allied demands even as it forced the government to bend to the Allies' will. Because a blockade acts against the civilian populace, its maintenance after the Armistice transformed a "just war" against the imperial government into an "unjust" war against civilians, and thereby helped the Germans transfer the target of their negative verdict on the peace treaty from Berlin to Versailles.

These books show a maritime strategy in all its complexity. Offer shows how the British sought a strategy for home security based on a seaborne agricultural alliance, and Howard shows why that was not enough. The two books are fruitful to read together.

GEORGE BAER  
Naval War College

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Paschall, Rod. *The Defeat of Imperial Germany: 1917-1918*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1989. 247pp. \$22.95

This excellent book comprises a collection of battle histories that illustrate various attempts to restore maneuver to the Western front during 1917-1918. The engagements addressed include French general Nivelle's failed offensive of spring 1917; British field-marshal Haig's tragic offensive in Flanders during the summer and fall of 1917; the Italian defeat known as Caporetto in October 1917; the tank battle at Cambrai in November 1917; the extended German offensive of March-

July 1918; and the botched American Meuse-Argonne offensive of September-November 1918. Paschall manifests sympathy for the much maligned leaders of the time and maintains that the circumstances precluded a decision by maneuver. Victory came to Marshal Foch because he recognized the necessity of war by attrition.

Each battle study is of great interest, reflecting the author's ability to synthesize recent scholarship and his original observations. The discussion of tactics is the soul of the book. This emphasis allows Paschall to dispel a goodly amount of the mythology that surrounds 1917-1918, especially in America. Paschall is both a skilled professional soldier and a seasoned professional historian who seeks to enlighten a broad audience about a much neglected conflict. Knowledge of World War I is essential to an understanding of later events, including World War II.

The author's choice of battles is curious however, because none are catastrophic German defeats. The German Army repulsed both Nivelle and Haig in 1917. Italy suffered a sweeping defeat at Caporetto. The British assuredly achieved a startling advance at Cambrai, but Ludendorff soon counterattacked successfully and erased the initial territorial loss. From March to July 1918, Ludendorff conducted five offensives, some of them remarkably successful. He suffered defeat only in the sense that he did not accomplish his main goal, which was to achieve a decision before the

American reinforcement allowed the Allies to turn the tide. As for the American Meuse-Argonne campaign, it in fact resulted in a check to the American Expeditionary Forces until early in November. Paschall is gentle, but explicit in his condemnation of Pershing's tactical ideas which stressed aimed rifle fire.

To this reviewer, the surprise in the book is that it neglects two critical battles of 1918 that were undeniable German defeats of the first magnitude: the battle of Amiens on 8 August (a British victory that reflected their successful adaptation to current conditions and which forced the German government to recognize that it could no longer hope for victory), and the British attack on the fortifications known as the Hindenburg Line on 27-29 September, which produced two clean penetrations. After the latter attack Ludendorff insisted on an immediate armistice, starting a process that soon led to a new German government and bilateral negotiations with President Wilson that culminated in the armistice of 11 November.

Germany lost because it lacked the resources required to accomplish its maximal war aims, and because the Allies ultimately were able to make the best possible use of their superiority in manpower and material. Marshal Foch was the greatest of the captains of World War I because he discerned the means by which to force a decision through attrition. It is required reading for students of the

Great War, but all readers should benefit from this book.

DAVID F. TRASK  
Washington, D.C.

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Cecil, Lamar. *Wilhelm II: Prince and Emperor, 1859-1900*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1989. 463pp. \$39.95

Lamar Cecil of Washington and Lee University is best known for his books *Albert Ballin* and *The German Diplomatic Service*. This volume is the first half of what promises to be a lively biography of the last of the Hohenzollerns. Cecil has combined exhaustive archival research from Austria, West Germany, and England with extensive study of the memoir literature of the Second Reich to produce a highly readable account of Wilhelm II's career to 1900. Cecil's work in The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, in particular has produced fresh material on the Kaiser and his half-German relatives. Unfortunately, the author was denied access to the extensive holdings in the former East Germany pertaining to Prussia and its ruling house.

At the personal level, Cecil argues that Wilhelm in his mid-twenties was already the man he would be as Kaiser: "rankly opinionated, blind to his errors, and utterly self-centered." Fortunately, we are spared the sensationalist (and probably untrue) assertions of scholars such as J. Rohl, I. Hull, and N. Sombart, among others, concerning Wilhelm's supposed "homoerotic"