

The AEF and Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918

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practice of recording them as they happened.

This is an informative, readable, and unusual insight into naval aviation's first test under fire. I recommend it to both serious students of aviation history and to those interested in a more personal look at the period. Lawrence Sheely has performed a service in preserving his uncle's thoughts for posterity and, through his own research and commentary, making them accessible to future generations.

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Trask, David F. *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918*. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1993. 236pp. \$29.95

Writing a generation after the conclusion of the Great War, a number of historians, most notably Harry DeWeerd and Edward Coffman, concurred with John J. Pershing that the battlefield performance of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) assured victory for the Allied and Associated Powers. In contrast to such traditional historians, David Trask echoes a growing revisionist trend arguing that America's major contribution to the Allied victory was not in combat operations but the ability to provide the margin in manpower and material that allowed French generalissimo Ferdinand Foch to wage his war of attrition successfully.

Based largely on a selection of representative published sources and authorities, including the seventeen-

volume American documentary collection *United States Army in the World War 1917-1919*, Trask's latest work views the war from the perspective of the highest level of field command—that of Foch for the Allied and Associated Powers, and General Erich Ludendorff for the Central Powers. Not surprisingly, then, Trask focuses on what he terms “grand tactics,” the application of military power by large organizations against enemy forces in the field to fulfill a strategic design. Trask's concern is with the role of inter-Allied theater commanders in operations on the Western Front.

Throughout the text, the author convincingly argues that American military unpreparedness prevented a significant contribution to battlefield success until the planned offensive in 1919. In the interim between the arrival of the 1st Division in the summer of 1917 and the armistice, Pershing's resistance to amalgamating American forces into the Allied armies relegated the AEF to a supporting role in combat operations. Moreover, Pershing's often stormy relationship with the Allied High Command hindered rather than enhanced the ability of the Allies to conduct coalition warfare.

Americans long enamored with glowing reports of the AEF's martial prowess and the leadership of its commanding general will find Trask's account most unsettling. The author cites primary German sources stating that American tactics were uninspired and that although the individual doughboy was as heroic as his counterpart, American leadership was sorely lacking. In short the AEF conducted itself as might be expected of an army that

158 Naval War College Review

had little experience and was thrown into battle prematurely. In Trask's eyes, Pershing was surely a flawed commander, one whose star might have fallen had the war continued into 1919.

It is Foch, rather than Pershing, who emerges as the hero of this volume. Foch realized that attrition and not maneuver would win the war, after Germany expended its last reserves in Ludendorff's abortive spring and summer offensives of 1918. Through a series of counteroffensives and eventually a general offensive, he made the most effective use of his national contingents, including the AEF, despite the difficulties that arose in dealings with what Trask calls the timorous French commander, Henri Petain, the unimaginative Douglas Haig of the British Expeditionary Forces, and the stubborn Pershing.

In the final analysis, Trask puts the performance of the AEF in proper perspective. Its greatest contribution to ultimate victory lay in its presence, which allowed release of veteran Allied divisions from tranquil sectors and gave Foch the superiority in manpower he needed to fight his war of attrition and sustain his coordinated operations in late 1918. It was those offensives, not the AEF acting alone, that broke the back of the German army and the will of the German nation to prosecute the war.

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Gardiner, Robert J. and Greenhill, Basil, eds. *The Advent of Steam: The Merchant Steamship before 1900*. London: Conway Maritime Press, 1993. 190pp. \$50

This is the fifth volume of Conway's ambitious, twelve-volume *History of the Ship* series, and like its predecessors it is worthy of more than a casual glance. The editors look at the early development of steam propulsion in merchantmen from its introduction as a motive force until its supplantation as a form of propulsion power. The publisher has once again brought together an outstanding and well known team of authors, including the Rev. E.C.B. Corlett and Dr. Andrew Lambert, under the leadership of this volume's reputable consultant editor, Dr. Basil Greenhill.

The book is divided into ten chapters, which for the sake of convenience can be separated into two distinct groups. The first, comprising the first five chapters, outlines the evolution of steam in shipping, while the remaining five chapters can be described as providing a technical history of that evolution. The editor's approach is chronological, but there is a fair amount of overlap between the chapters. Each chapter is well written—even the more technical ones are a joy to read—and they all bear the stamp of thorough and devoted research. Readers may be surprised at Greenhill's assertion that the *Savannah* actually made most of its famous double crossing of the Atlantic under sail, not steam power. Another interesting point, raised in the third chapter, is that Robert Fulton's first steamship was never named the *Clermont*.