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Michael J. Mortlock. *The Egyptian Expeditionary Force in World War I: A History of the British-Led Campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Syria.* Jefferson: McFarland, 2010. 312 pp. $38.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-4871-5.

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Michael J. Mortlock provides a complex narrative account of the experience of Allied forces in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria from 1916 to 1918. While much work has been done on the operations in the Middle East, it has fallen largely into two categories: accounts of the Arab forces associated with T. E. Lawrence (see, for example, Robert Graves's *Lawrence and the Arabian Adventure* [1928]) and histories of component units in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF). Mortlock's work complements David Bullock's *Allenby's War: The Palestine-Arabian Campaigns, 1916-1918* (1988), by providing a new comprehensive account of an important, and under-examined, campaign. While Mortlock relies heavily on secondary sources for much of his description of the large-scale strategy of the EEF, he fleshes out his narrative with extensive excerpts from his father's letters, an enlisted member of the EEF, and other accounts by members of the EEF, to shed light onto the day-to-day experience of soldiers attached to the force. The effect of this combination is a work that is by turns extremely broad and intensely personal. Unfortunately, the book often gets bogged down in excessively long quotations, which, while interesting and often colorful, provide little understanding of the larger strategic goals of the EEF and inhibit a tight narrative.

Mortlock begins his account with a description of the formation and composition of the EEF in 1916, giving special attention to the complex and disorganized command structure in Cairo. He explains that this situation was the product of the evacuation of British forces from Gallipoli and the stopgap measures taken to secure the Suez Canal. The author provides a detailed description of the infrastructure developments undertaken to provide clean water and regular supply to British forces posted far out in the desert, and argues that these efforts were essential for the eventual success of the EEF. He begins his operational history with the EEF's initial incursion into Gaza in early 1917, noting the difficulty of moving men and supplies over the rough terrain and the commanders' lack of knowledge of the territory. He explains that while the EEF was initially quite successful at capturing territory, resupply problems stemming from overstretched lines of communication and an elusive enemy forced them to withdraw from much of the territory they had acquired. Mortlock describes the consternation this inopportune withdrawal, however well justified, caused within the British government. He explains that it led to the appointment of a new commander for the EEF and provided a window of time for German-Turkish forces to regroup and fortify, making any subsequent British assaults far more difficult.

The new commander of the EEF, Sir Edmund Allenby, immediately improved the organization and morale of his command by moving his headquarters from Cairo to the front and by working to establish rapport with his subordinates. Mortlock explains that this would prove vital as Allenby carefully prepared for his fall 1917 offensive, building up supplies and rehearsing coordinated bombardments and infantry assaults. He describes the key role cavalry played in the initial assault, overrunning enemy flank positions and drawing Turkish forces away from the site of the main attack. This attack, a coordinated bombardment and ground assault with infantry and armor, achieved near total surprise and quickly captured all the objectives set out for it, putting the Turkish forces into a disorganized retreat.

Mortlock describes how the EEF's offensive led to the fall of both Jerusalem and Jaffa, and provides a comical account of the efforts of Jerusalem city leaders to surrender to the British forces that they encountered, including a pair of sergeants and a private in search of eggs for the mess. He explains that the chaotic nature of the

Turkish retreat prevented the Turks from enacting their planned demolition of many of the historic features of Jerusalem, leaving the city largely intact. Following their successful capture of Jerusalem and Jaffa, the EEF focused on consolidating its position through the creation of stronger supply lines and by driving Turkish forces out of the nearby Judean hills. Mortlock explains that this effort was complicated, and to a degree stymied, by the massive Allied troop realignment in spring 1918, brought on by the buildup of Axis troops on the western front. When Allenby resumed his offensive, it was so successful that the EEF was able to capture Damascus and wipe out all organized Turkish resistance in both Palestine and Syria. Mortlock explains that the operation in Syria culminated almost simultaneously with the Armistice, ending the EEF's campaign in the region, but ushering in a new era for both the British Empire and the development of Arab nationalism.

While Mortlock touches on several interesting issues in his work, he fails to explore them to a meaningful degree. One such issue is the question of why many of the same tactics that proved disastrous on the western front, like coordinated bombardments and infantry assaults, could be so effective in Palestine. He hints at three possible answers to this question: the quality of commander in Allenby, the weakness of the Turkish opposition, and the nature of the territory being fought over, but he fails to provide a conclusive answer. Two others issues that he mentions, but fails to delve into are the important role of traditional cavalry and the role of aerial reconnaissance and bombardment. While these could be understandable given cavalry's rapidly diminishing role in mechanized warfare and the infantile nature of military aviation, he describes key contributions they made. All of these seem to be important components of the campaign that he describes, but he fails to examine the intricacies of their use or explain their significance in the success of overall operations. This lack of analysis leaves large questions about why the EEF succeeded and is not aided by the author's frequent abandonment of a narrative in favor of large quotations that often prove repetitive and are not analyzed or commented upon in any meaningful degree. Because of these oversights in analysis and the lack of discernment in the use of quotation, the book often reads more as a document compendium than a strong narrative history. What this work lacks in discernment though, it begins to make up for in its choice of topic, which is a fascinating and compelling story of military organization, leadership, and strategy. Hopefully this will inspire further work in the field so that some of these questions can be answered.

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