

**Panel 7F. The Last Quarter Hour: France's Contribution to the Allied Victory in 1918**

Abstract of Elizabeth Greenhalgh, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy: **“The Contribution of Marshal Ferdinand Foch to Victory in 1918.”**

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Just as France's contribution to the Allied victory is ignored or disparaged, Foch's role in 1918 is also much misunderstood. The value of unified command itself or of Foch's exercise of that command is disparaged. This paper argues that the French general played an important part in the allied victory. After a consideration of the selection of Foch for command in March 1918, I analyse the relationships he established in both the French national context (the Foch-Clemenceau-Pétain trio) and in the Allied context (Foch and the Haig-Pershing-Pétain trio). I examine his strategic vision, his command methods and, finally, his role in the Armistice negotiations. Despite all the external pressures, the leadership qualities that Foch displayed led in the end to the clearing at Rethondes. The bitter postwar quarrel with Clemenceau should not detract from the achievements of March to November 1918.

This examination of Foch's contribution to the Allied victory in 1918 concludes that he was uniquely qualified, both by temperament and by experience, to deal with the exhausted and/or inexperienced armies that were falling back during the repeated German Spring offensives. He had the self-confidence and 'can-do' attitude that are so important at such times. He also had the emotional and nervous energy to do the job—qualities that were especially important between July and November as the Allies counter-attacked. He had sufficient tact and wisdom to deal with frequently difficult Allied commanders. Finally, he knew when to call a halt and it was Foch who accepted the German signatures on the Armistice document.

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