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Unlike other conflicts in American history, the operational and tactical combat of American forces in World War I has received little in-depth analysis. Library shelves groan under the weight of books about the Army of the Potomac, the Army of Northern Virginia, Sherman's March to the Sea, and individual campaigns such as Gettysburg and Antietam. A few stacks down we find the World War II section with an array of books about almost every aspect of American combat and many studies about Normandy, the Bulge, and the units that fought these campaigns. Somewhere between these huge collections is the smaller section on the United States Army in World War I. As the conflict's centennial approaches, more and more scholars are reevaluating the popular image of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in combat. Recent studies, most notably Robert H. Ferrell's *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne* (2004), Robert B. Bruce's *A Fraternity of Arms* (2003), and an article by Timothy Nenninger have chipped away at the popular illusion of an army of Sergeant Yorks, led by General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, repaying the Marquise de Lafayette by saving the French from the hated Hun.[1] What is emerging is a more complete account of an enthusiastic force of poorly equipped, poorly trained, and poorly led draftees fighting a tired, but experienced, German force in the last days of the war. The result was an inordinately high, and probably unnecessary, rate of casualties among the American forces.

Mark Grotelueschen's *The AEF Way of War* is part of this increasingly impressive array of scholarship on the Great War of 1914-1918. His purpose is to examine how the AEF fought by investigating the details of doctrine, methods, and changes during the conduct of operations. In order to understand his topic, he poses a number of questions concerning the relationship between prewar Army doctrine, AEF operational doctrine, and the troops in contact. He argues that American military leaders, specifically General Pershing, "resisted making the intellectual adjustments necessary to effect the kind of fundamental doctrinal changes demanded," and when they did modify official doctrine, they did it "belatedly, slowly, and incompletely" (p. 10). He concludes, among other things, that the changes that did take place (and
...there were many), resulted from subordinate leaders making these adjustments in spite of the guidance of both official doctrine and senior leadership.

Grotelueschen has scoured a broad array of archives and libraries to support his critical analysis of AEF performance. Certainly any student interested in American combat performance during this conflict would find this book's bibliography an excellent place to start. Working under historian Brian Linn's guidance while preparing his dissertation, the foundation for this book, the author visited most of the archives relevant to America's participation in the Great War and consulted with most experts on the topic. Throughout the manuscript his evidence is solid, and he sets a standard by the extraordinary use of primary sources at all levels of command.

In seeking to describe and evaluate the AEF's formal and informal training doctrine, the author has set an ambitious goal, one that he only partially fulfills. Grotelueschen supports his conclusions by evaluating four divisions (1st, 2nd, 26th, and 77th) that saw action in the war. Two of these, the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions, represent the best that the United States Army sent into the war. Throughout the conflict they received the best training and equipment, the most replacements, and the pick of the best officers. Their importance as the chosen American units is confirmed by the author devoting 45 percent of the book to just these two divisions (versus 28 percent to the other two). This disparity is partially accounted for by the limited combat seen by the 26th, a National Guard Division, and the 77th, a unit full of draftees. These two divisions received limited support and reinforcements and few experienced officers. It is obvious that the 1st and 2nd Divisions did much better than the 26th and 77th in battle. Both, ultimately, learned to ignore the "open order" tactics required by General Pershing and his staff and emphasized artillery fire to destroy enemy strong points. Yet, the learning pace for all divisions was glacial, and there was no organized structure for exchanging lessons learned among the divisions. To use only these four units as a sampling of the adaptation style of the twenty-nine divisions that saw combat is a bit of a stretch.

On the other hand, Grotelueschen does an excellent job of describing the problems that soldiers in this conflict had to face. There is no doubt that the American soldier fought with incredible bravery. However, this book adds to the evidence that these soldiers went to war with archaic doctrine that only evolved slowly over the conflict. Few had any substantial training, and often the training was confusing and not related to the war they would fight. These soldiers were poorly led and poorly equipped. Their commanders and staffs had little understanding of how to fight this kind of war. Add a touch of arrogance and illusions of fighting "open warfare" and the consequences were devastating. In only 200 days, the one million American soldiers engaged (there were two million American soldiers in France at the end of the war) suffered an astounding 26 percent casualty rate (53,400 killed, 204,000 wounded) against a German army that was only a shadow of the force that marched to the Marne in 1914. The lessons in this book are many, and historians of the period and every serving military officer should read it.

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