

Stefan Schmidt analyzes the relationships between political and military factors in French planning. He emphasizes the degree to which French planning was moulded and constrained by the imperative of assuring British support and their uncertainty about doing so. Schmidt also makes clear how anxiety to ensure simultaneous pressure from east and west played into French commitment to *offensive à outrance*.

Jan Kusber probes how the structural weaknesses of the czarist state undermined military capacity while at once impelling the feckless monarch to his fatal decision for war. No comparisons are drawn but it is evident that the Russian regime was significantly weaker in these regards than the German and even than the Austro-Hungarian. Kusber shows that planning integration between Russia and her French ally was only marginally superior to that between the two Germanic empires.

Hans Rudolf Fuhrer and Michael Olsansky cover 'Switzerland's Role in the Schlieffen and Moltke Plans' – essentially nil.

Hew Strachan dissects how and why Britain came to be so ill-prepared for a war her leaders foresaw with reasonable clarity. He clearly illuminates the process of forming the army's general staff, and how it differed from the Prussian *Generalstab* not merely in function but in fundamental concept.

A final chapter by Luc de Vos retells the dismal story of Belgian defence planning.

A five-page glossary of military terms contains much of value even to those with a good general command of German.

It is not made clear at any point in what way Germany's military plans were fundamentally more aggressive than those of the other three major participants.

In all, this book is well justified by its strengths, but its flaws must be borne in mind.

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Jonathan Krause, *Early Trench Tactics in the French Army: The Second Battle of Artois, May-June 1915*. Farnham: Ashgate Studies in First World War History, 2013. 180pp. ISBN: 978-1-4094-5500-4. Hardback. £65.00.

One of the most important recent developments in the historiography of the First World War has been the, at least partial, rehabilitation of the French army. Albeit on a smaller scale, work is taking place that parallels that being undertaken on the

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British army of the same period. Although some important work by French scholars such as Michel Goya remains unfortunately untranslated into English, books and articles produced by a group of Anglophone scholars has been at the forefront of this process: Michael Neiberg, William Philpott, Elizabeth Greenhalgh and Robert Doughty among them. The author of the book under review, Jonathan Krause, was a doctoral student of Professor Philpott's, and this is pleasing evidence that the cause of revisionist history of the French army of 1914-18 is being taken up by a new generation of scholars.

Dr Krause's book attempts to revise the generally unfavourable views about the French army in early 1915 put forward by earlier writers. One of Krause's main targets is Douglas Porch, and it is indicative of the lack of attention paid to the subject by serious scholars that his writings were published as long ago as 1988. Oddly, in the footnote Krause fails to give the full details of Porch's chapter, instead citing the collection in which it appears. Whether this was his decision, or forced upon him by Ashgate's house style, it strikes me as a poor one. Krause identifies Porch's 'dogged assumption of German superiority in all things tactical', and quotes Porch's view that '[French] military thinking hardly rose above the rather forced optimism of popular clichés like "*On les aura*"' (pp. 3-4).

It must be said straightaway that *Early Trench Tactics in the French Army* is largely successful in debunking this unflattering picture. Krause makes a compelling case for the French army innovating tactically and gaining some limited success: the remarkable achievement of the French Tenth Army on Vimy Ridge on 9 May 1915 is a case in point. He does not lose sight of the bigger picture, placing what the French army was doing during Second Artois in the context of the German response to the pressure of battle. As the British also discovered after Neuve Chapelle, tactical innovation was a dynamic two-way street in 1915. Learning lessons from one offensive and applying them to the next one was the right thing to do, but the defenders were going through a similar process, and the Germans kept their noses in front as they developed the elements of defence-in-depth. The BEF's near-miss at Neuve Chapelle led to over-confidence and the disaster of Aubers Ridge. For the French, the heady near-success of Vimy Ridge was succeeded by disappointment during subsequent operations on 16-18 June. Krause speculates that 'blinded by the success of 9 May', the French simply failed to adapt their methods. The consequence was the slaughter of French soldiers using two-month old tactics that, in the face of German defensive innovations, were already obsolete. On the Western Front in 1915, two months was a long time in doctrinal terms.

At the core of the book are case studies of two divisions: an average formation, 34th Infantry, and an elite division, the 77th Infantry. The former is judged to be 'ineffective', while the 77th Division, which included battalions of the elite *chasseurs à*

ped, was the opposite (p. 85). These case studies contain a great deal of detail, and are not the easiest of reads. Readers should not be deterred by them, and should persevere. Those who do so will be rewarded with some useful insights into different battle cultures (although Krause does not use this term, preferring the clunkier term 'methodologies'). The roles of the artillery and engineers loom large in the case studies. The comparison of the two divisions gives clear evidence of the importance of the personalities of the individual commanders. The 77th Division was commanded by the charismatic and effective General Ernest Barbot, who stamped his personality on the formation and was killed during Second Artois. His eventual successor, General Pillot, was also a highly effective commander, and the 77th Division undoubtedly benefited from the strong leadership of these two men. By contrast, the 34th Division's commander was General Paul de Lobit, and his performance during this battle indicated a weak man lacking in confidence. His superior, the commander of XVII Corps, General J.B. Dumas, at times virtually commanded the Division by remote control. As Krause comments, under Dumas' tutelage Lobit's performance improved. The Western Front has a reputation for minimising the influence of the individual, but the evidence presented here suggests that, even under the immensely difficult circumstances of Second Artois, strong and weak leadership did have an impact on the combat performance of formations.

Overall, Krause does a good job of refuting the negative picture of the French army in spring 1915. He makes a persuasive case that this was an organisation that learned from its experiences, and some of its tactics have a distinctly modern feel. His comments on Ferdinand Foch support the refurbishing of the latter's reputation, and, not the least of Krause's achievements is that he places scholarship on the French army in the still-neglected year of 1915 before an audience that is unable or disinclined to read French. Although a slim and expensive volume, *Early Trench Tactics in the French Army* is a very welcome contribution to the military history of the First World War.

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Tim Gale, *The French Army's Tank Force and Armoured Warfare in the Great War: the Artillerie Spéciale*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 263pp. ISBN: 978-1-4094-6661-1. Hardback. £85.50.

The French Army's Tank Force and Armoured Warfare in the Great War, despite being a book about France, could probably only have been written in Britain. There are two reasons for this. The first reflects the current state of French First World War historiography. Decisively influenced by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker and 'the Péronne school', academic research has focused – to excellent effect – on

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