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Nick Lloyd, *Hundred Days: The Campaign That Ended World War I*. New York: Basic Books, 2014. Pp. xxxiii, 350. ISBN 978-0-465-07492-1.

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In comparison to the mountain of studies of the battles of 1916–17 on the Western Front, few works focus on the final campaign of 1918 from the French counterattack on the Marne to the final stages of combat; even fewer seek to integrate the perspectives of all the major combatants. Historian Nick Lloyd (King's College London)<sup>1</sup> closes this gap in his ambitious new book *Hundred Days*. He covers all the significant participants, apart from the Belgians, drawing on both the accounts of individual soldiers and the latest research on the political maneuvering and the military tactics and operations that contributed to the victory of the western Allies. The result is a readable, instructive, and compelling narrative of Allied successes and German failures. Lloyd stresses that, while it may be argued that the Germans had lost the war by summer 1918, the Allies had not yet won it at that point. In researching his book, he consulted archives in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, France, and Germany. He also takes full advantage of the recent spate of English-language tactical and operational studies of the US, British, and Dominion (Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand) militaries.<sup>2</sup>

The book consists of an introduction, prologue, fifteen chapters, and an epilogue. Its chronological narrative includes concise treatments of crucial tactical developments, such as signaling and gas warfare, operational factors such as logistics, and political and socioeconomic matters such as German food shortages, influenza, and the state of national morale. These discussions furnish needed background on the various operations without disrupting the narrative flow. Typically, each chapter describes Allied plans and operations, the personal experiences of troops involved in the fighting, and the Germans' reaction to Allied moves. Scattered through the chapters are engaging vignettes about the leading generals and politicians on both sides that succinctly and objectively capture the strengths and flaws of their characters without resorting to tired, two-dimensional sketches.

One of the merits of the book is that, despite its title, it begins in chapter 1, "Decision on the Marne," with the crucial French counterattack, rather than confining itself to the canonical hundred days of the British Expeditionary Force's final campaign. Typically, in British and Dominion accounts, the campaign is said to start with the Battle of Amiens (8 August 1918). The Marne counteroffensive, however, had by then already brought a change of initiative, forcing the Germans to react to Allied moves. Lloyd also highlights the devastating effects on the German Army of the influenza epidemic that rendered so many men unable to fight, a circumstance often underplayed in estimates of Germany's fighting strength.

Chapters 2, "Neglect Nothing," and 3, "Death Will Have a Rich Harvest," review the preparations for and successful conduct of the Amiens offensive that shattered German morale, stressing the highly effective allied deception efforts and the artillery and airpower advantages that ensured victory. Lloyd also introduces here a leitmotif of the book—the German High Command's reluctance to confront the reality of their situation and fall back to better defensive positions. Thus, for example, Gen. Erich Ludendorff, the de facto chief of staff of the German Army, consistently rejected the calls of his staff officers and lower commanders to disengage from the Allies.

1. Lloyd studied under the noted First World War historian John Bourne at the University of Birmingham. He is the author of two previous books: *Loos 1915* (Stroud, UK: Tempus, 2005) and *The Amritsar Massacre: The Untold Story of One Fateful Day* (NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

2. He has taken less account of works coming out of France and Germany, and his bibliography reflects the paucity of books in English on the French and German armies of the First World War (as opposed to the Second).

[Gen. Friedrich Karl “Fritz” von] Lossberg’s advice was sensible and realistic, but was, once again, totally unacceptable to Ludendorff, who—like Hitler a generation later—could only issue desperate exhortations to his men to hold their ground at all costs.... When Lossberg pointed out that only by removing the German Army from contact with the enemy could they buy enough time to regroup and consolidate their forces, Ludendorff shook his head. The Hermann Line would be constructed and it would be held even if the Siegfried position fell. The mood at OHL [*Oberste Heeresleitung*, “Supreme Army Command”] was now becoming progressively worse. The senior staff officers were all upset at Ludendorff’s bitter words against the men and felt he was speaking out of turn and not appreciating the sacrifices being made daily at the front. (113)

The fourth chapter, “Another Black Day,” opens by describing the determination of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the allied commander in chief, to finish off the Germans in 1918 and his plans to accomplish this. Lloyd then elucidates significant differences between the earlier British campaigns and that of the Hundred Days, specifically British commander Sir Douglas Haig’s willingness to follow his subordinates’ advice to postpone offensive operations. This demonstrates the limited authority of Foch, who could not overrule Haig.

Lloyd emphasizes two further points: the exhaustion of all combatants other than the Americans and the Allies’ ability to use their artillery more intelligently, swiftly, and accurately, in part owing to better intelligence. He writes of an attack by the French Tenth Army that

secrecy had been stressed at all levels. Enemy aircraft were not allowed to observe French preparations, and, as was usual by now, all attacking divisions moved up to the front at night. A preliminary bombardment would take out any German batteries, with sufficiently large holes in the barbed wire for the infantry to get through ... and destroy any command post and known machine-gun nests. The French guns would also fire a powerful, but short, “hurricane” bombardment immediately prior to the attack. As was becoming the norm by 1918, the infantry would leave behind their capes and backpacks and make sure they were as mobile as possible.... Specially designated units were tasked with clearing up dug-outs and shelters and mopping up any enemy stragglers that appeared. (74)

Chapters 5, “The Incredible Roar of Massed Guns,” and 6, “The Whole Thing Was Simply Magnificent,” recount the opening moves of the Allied drive toward the main German defensive zone and the ensuing decision of the German High Command to fall back to four positions along the Hindenburg Line. Lloyd astutely observes that this last-ditch measure meant the Germans would have to hold out long enough for the winter season to stop the attacks, but at the cost of abandoning all the ground captured in the spring offensive. This body blow to the Germans’ morale left them with few illusions about the state of their war effort.

Chapter 7, “Enter the Americans”—unlike most British accounts—characterizes the first US offensive at St. Mihiel as a clear victory. Rather than being an offensive into empty air, it proved that American forces could defeat the Germans in army-strength assaults. Lloyd also provides useful background on the state of US troops and the problems caused by Gen. John J. Pershing’s faith in open warfare despite the realities of the front.

The main section of chapter 8, “A Country of Horror and Desolation,” assesses the Allied decision to launch four major offensives against the Hindenburg Line in late September. The first such assault was the US-French Meuse-Argonne offensive, the subject of Lloyd’s ninth chapter, “Return to the Wilderness,” which describes the slow, extremely difficult fighting over some of the most daunting terrain on the Western Front. Lloyd carefully outlines the obstacles to the advance posed by logistic problems and unsuitable tactics. Chapter 10, “Just One Panorama of Hell,” carries the story of the Allied offensive to the crossing of the Canal du Nord by the British First and Third Armies and the Ypres offensive by the French, Belgians, and British. These battles were a testament to Allied advances in harnessing their massive material advantage over the Germans.

Chapter 11, “The Tomb of the German World Empire,” treats the last of the four offensives, the attack by the Fourth British and First French Armies that defeated the Germans at St. Quentin. This involved a daring cross canal assault by a previously unheralded British division. The chapter also discusses the Germans’ replacement of their political leadership. In the book’s last four chapters—12, “The Most Desperate Battle of Our History,” 13, “A Last Struggle of Despair,” 14, “Cowards Die Many Times,” and 15, “Armistice at Com-

piègne”—Lloyd changes to a more political orientation in discussing German and Allied maneuvering during negotiations of the terms for an armistice.

In his epilogue, Lloyd summarizes the difficulties that confronted the Allies in the areas of logistics, manpower, and soldier fatigue during the Hundred Days. He accurately concludes that, though the Germans certainly contributed to their own ultimate defeat with their costly spring offensives, in the last analysis it was the Allies' hard and capable fighting that compelled their enemy to call for terms. However, Lloyd undercuts his argument by claiming that, in retrospect, generals Pershing and Hunter Liggett were correct to call for a further prosecution of the war to achieve total defeat of Germany and the occupation of its home territory, in light of the subsequent events of the Second World War. But this contradicts Lloyd's own portrayal of the Allied situation. A continued offensive after a German request for terms would have devastated the Allies' morale and re-energized their enemy. Considering the resiliency of the German people during both the First and Second World Wars, it is not difficult to imagine the British and French armies breaking down like the Russians in 1917 and the Germans in 1918. Moreover, an occupation of Germany in 1919 would not have forestalled a further, perhaps even more virulent, outbreak of hostilities.

Lloyd is also sometimes imprecise in presenting statistics. For instance, he describes a German report that, of two German armies, only three divisions in one and only one in the other were fit for duty. But we are not told how many divisions were in each army (175). Elsewhere, we learn that British battalions were disbanded because of a shortage of replacements, but not how often or on what scale this occurred (191–92). Nor are we informed of the extent of Allied superiority in aircraft, manpower, guns, ammunition, and tanks, especially in comparison to the resources available in 1915–17. The Allies were able to concentrate and employ vast quantities of matériel in conducting four highly successful army-group assaults within a two-week period in September 1918—something quite impossible earlier in the war. Some consideration of this would have clarified the proportions of the terrible dilemma facing the German High Command as they stubbornly refused to accept the new circumstances of the war in its last weeks and days.

A real strength of Lloyd's book is his handling of the effects of such major tactical matters as gas warfare and signaling on both the operational and personal levels. Airpower, however, is mostly neglected: the impression is given that it was chiefly significant in direct attacks on troops rather than in observation and fire direction. The offensive utility of airpower was already clearly apparent during the later stages of the Somme and Passchendaele offensives, when the Germans could not counter the effects of Allied air superiority.

Despite such criticisms, *Hundred Days* succeeds in its ambition of covering all the major combatants on the Western Front in the final campaign of World War I. Lloyd adroitly combines sweeping historical scope with the perspectives of the men who did the fighting on the ground. All this in a history that taps the latest relevant scholarship without sidetracking the narrative.