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Robert B. Bruce, *A Fraternity of Arms: America and France in the Great War*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003. xx + 380 pp. Tables, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. \$39.95 U.S. (cl.). ISBN 0-7006-1253-X.

Review by Elizabeth Greenhalgh, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

The wars at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have shown that coalition warfare is as important nowadays as it was in the time when Helen's face launched a thousand ships. It is strange, therefore, that the coalition factor that made the 1914-1918 war a worldwide conflict and that was so crucial to victory should have received so little attention. On the Entente side, the writing has been predominantly national. Recent French work stresses the politics of remembrance and the sufferings of the home front. Many British accounts give the reader the impression that, as in 1940, Britain was fighting alone. Equally, most American historians writing about the First World War have concentrated solely on the American experience. The recent work of Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War* (2000), is a case in point. Robert Bowman Bruce's *A Fraternity of Arms: America and France in the Great War* is a welcome departure from that tradition. As he reiterates throughout the book, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) could not have made the contribution it did without French weapons, French training, and French logistical support.

There is no account in English of the Franco-American relationship with which to compare Bruce's work. Two works written in French, however—both published doctoral dissertations, like the present work—have analysed the relationship. Yves-Henri Nouailhat examined the earlier part of the war before the United States joined in; André Kaspi wrote about 1917-1918, the period of belligerency.[1] The Anglo-American relationship, conversely, has received much more attention—probably because of fewer language problems. The published works of David Trask and Kathleen Burk are important here.[2] Bruce's work must be judged, therefore, against the work on the Anglo-American relationship on the one hand, and, on the other hand, against the two French-language works on the Franco-American relationship. It must also be judged against Edward Coffman's 1968 (but still useful) account of America's military experience in World War I, *The War to End All Wars*.

Unlike the works just mentioned, which range much more widely, Bruce's narrative sticks firmly to matters military in a chronological framework. There is a minimum of political, diplomatic, or economic history. He begins with a brief account of the Americans who volunteered between 1914 and 1917, although their country was not at war, to serve on land in the French Foreign Legion and in the air in the Escadrille Lafayette. Next, three chapters examine the events of 1917: the mission of Marshal Joffre to the United States that followed the American declaration of war; the raising, training and equipping of the American Expeditionary Force in which the French played a large role; and the effect of the AEF's arrival in France. These matters are also covered by Kaspi, but in less detail, as he deals with economic and financial relations at the political level, as well as with purely military matters. A chapter on the amalgamation controversy covers the turn of the year from 1917 to 1918, but offers little new

information and suffers from an over-reliance on Joffre's views. Joffre had little influence by this time, particularly after Georges Clemenceau became premier in November 1917. Then, three chapters discuss the 1918 battles: Cantigny and Belleau Wood in May-June; the Marne in July; and the Meuse Argonne fighting in the autumn. The concluding chapter gives not so much a conclusion as an emotional *envoi* with an account of the immediate post-Armistice events and the return home of America's unknown soldier.

Bruce's aim is to delineate the special relationship between the two republics, France and the United States, by showing the 'dominant role' (p. xv) played by the former in arming and training the AEF. The term 'special relationship' is more often used of the English-speaking allies, but Bruce is at pains to show that Anglo-American relations were uniformly poor and that, by the summer of 1918, the British had become 'so fearful and suspicious of the special relationship between the AEF and the French army that they were taking desperate measures ... to disrupt the close military association' (p. 257). Hence the AEF's 'primary military relationship', a phrase Bruce reiterates several times, was with France.

The main problem with this approach is its misty-eyed romanticism of the 'Lafayette, we are here' school. That the foreign legionaries and Escadrille Lafayette airmen should have joined up for romantic reasons or in search of adventure is understandable, and Bruce describes this motivation well. But he also swallows it whole. The book is dedicated to those American volunteers who 'died for France' in the Great War. The French are always happy to serve under an American corps commander, and the allocation of a sector of the front near to Verdun is described as 'perhaps the finest and highest compliment [the French] could pay to the military capabilities of the Americans and their commander, General John J. Pershing' (p. 266). The French commander, General Philippe Pétain, is described as Pershing's 'close friend' (p. 266). The idea that the cold and critical Pétain should count Pershing as a close friend is an index of Bruce's rather naïve views of high-level military relationships. His account of Pétain's uniformly complimentary attitude towards the AEF makes no reference to the French commander's report on the fighting in late September 1918, for example. This reads: 'l'armée américaine s'est montrée incapable d'accomplir la mission qui lui avait été confiée ... cette armée a été comme frappée de paralysie ... Sa situation est mauvaise pour opérer même médiocrement en situation offensive.'³

The same fixation on a happy Franco-American relationship distorts the perception of Anglo-American relations. Bruce emphasises how poor the latter were. This judgement ignores the wider context: the naval rivalry between Britain and the United States (France had already slipped to fourth position behind the United States even before the war had begun); the financial rivalry between markets in London and Washington (France was being kept afloat by British negotiated credits); and the French experience of having to deal with an English-speaking ally for two-and-a-half years before the United States joined the conflict. The last mentioned probably explains Joffre's support for the American stance against amalgamation. He had tried it with the British and finally accepted that they had grown too strong. The same would apply to the even greater numbers of Americans. And the British commander, Sir Douglas Haig, was sufficiently confident of the capabilities of the U.S. II Corps to allocate to it one of the most heavily defended portions of the Hindenburg Line as an objective in September 1918.

One of Bruce's examples purporting to show the 'difficulties' of interacting with the British illustrates the point. Lacking winter coats in the severe cold of 1917-18, the Americans were obliged to purchase British overcoats. The Irish Americans set up a 'great hue and cry' about wearing coats with buttons bearing the British coat of arms, but were pacified with a shipment of U.S. Army buttons (pp. 162-3). The point is not the difficulty of interacting with the British. The point is that the AEF could not supply its men with winter coats. Neither could the French. It was the British who had the wool, the cloth and the ships.

The choice of Lorraine as the area for Pershing to build up his American Army and to begin operations was more prosaic than Bruce implies (p. 109). The logistics of transport and supply demanded a lot of space. There was simply no room behind the British lines to accommodate another army, and certainly no spare port capacity. The Lorraine front had been quiet since 1914, so that the Americans would have the opportunity and the space to train in relative peace. Short of putting the AEF on the Italian border, Lorraine was the only option.

Then there is the matter of munitions. Bruce is perfectly correct to insist that all the American battles were fought with French munitions. The French munitions effort is one of France's unsung achievements. Yet it was British coal that fired their steel furnaces, because the Germans occupied France's northern industrial areas where the French coal and iron resources were located. It was British credits that enabled the French to buy steel in the United States, and British ships that transported it to France. And it was French gold that was shipped to London to support sterling that enabled the British to continue to make dollar purchases. The Anglo-French alliance was too tightly woven by the time the Americans associated themselves in April 1917 to be able to distinguish separate strands. Certainly, the Entente could be at times acrimonious; but the certain prospect of defeat was enough to prevent it unravelling.

Thus Bruce's approach tends to oversimplify matters. Another problem lies in the lack of French sources. Most of the French documents he uses are those in American archive collections. His bibliography cites several of the N series in the French Army archives in Vincennes, but very few documents from that source are cited. This would not matter so much if the marvellous resources of the annexes of the French official history had been consulted. But despite being listed in the bibliography (as *Les Armées Françaises dans la Grand[sic] Guerre!*), I spotted only three references in the notes.

There are also some surprising omissions in the sources used. Bruce did not use the papers of the French High Commissioner in Washington, André Tardieu (in the *Archives nationales*), nor Tardieu's postwar memoir.[4] He did not use the papers of the highly experienced French ambassador in Washington, Jules J. Jusserand (in the *Archives diplomatiques*), nor his postwar memoir.[5] More surprising still, he did not use the extremely informative and frequent reports of Pershing's liaison officer at French HQ, Major Paul H. Clark. Copies are available in both the Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, and in the National Archives and Records Administration. They give a much more reliable insight into what French staff officers were saying about the AEF than the statements made for public consumption.

French attitudes toward the AEF were less positive and more nuanced than Bruce's account would suggest. He interprets Pétain's willingness to place French divisions under American command as evidence of French belief in the competence of American commanders, whereas it might equally be argued that the French believed that without a stiffening of French troops the Americans might achieve very little indeed. Jennifer Keene's recent work on the doughboys, moreover, presents a picture of American troops preferring the Germans to the profiteering French.[6] The descendants of German immigrants to the United States were just as numerous as the Irish-Americans described above. Canadian historian Rob Hanks cites a report that appeared in the *New York Times* on 28 November 1918 (that is, just over two weeks after the Armistice was signed). He concludes that, despite their joint victory, 'Franco-American military relations were clearly in a terrible state by war's end.'[7] Clearly, it depends what evidence is used. The complimentary phrases that Bruce selected from the French postal control records could have been balanced by the more critical comments also to be found there.[8]

Some of Bruce's assertions are odd. In what sense is artillery 'the penultimate weapon of the war' (p. 100)? It is difficult to imagine who '*les bonnes hommes*'[sic] (p. 79) might be. More importantly, Bruce seems to imply (p. 45) that the French used conscription as a wartime measure only. His account of the Doullens conference (p. 193) contains errors. The French had already begun to reduce the number of

battalions in a division as early as 1916; the process was completed in 1918, not begun then. The British transported across the Atlantic well over the 50 percent of the AEF that Bruce claims (p. 319, n. 15)—and, additionally, they provided much of the tonnage for the AEF's supplies once it had arrived in France. And Colonel Filloux would have been very surprised to see his adaptation of the heavy artillery 155mm gun, which was brought in in 1917 and enabled a more rapid rate of fire than the older version, described as '*grand[sic] puissance de filloux*' (p. 336).

The book is attractively produced and properly bound, with a good index. There are also some maps; but since they are printed all together at the back without any reference to them in the text readers do not benefit from them unless they happen across them whilst seeking the notes. The author's avowed 'lifelong passions' (p. xiii) for the French and American armies and the Great War make for a lively style, and the book is very readable. It complements rather than replaces earlier works. It is a shame that, in this reader's estimation, the passionate commitment to the Franco-American fraternity of arms occasionally blinds the author to the complexity of the relationship.

NOTES

[1] Yves-Henri Nouailhat, *La France et les Etats-Unis, août 1914-avril 1917* (PhD thesis, Université de Paris I, 1975); and André Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains 1917-1918* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976).

[2] David Trask, *Captains and Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1918* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972); idem, *The AEF and Coalition War-Making* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); and Kathleen Burk, *Britain, America and the Sineews of War, 1914-1918* (Boston/London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1985).

[3] 'Rapport sur les opérations américaines entre Meuse et Champagne, 26-30 Septembre', cited in Guy Pedroncini, *Pétain: Général en Chef (1917-1918)* (Paris: PUF, 1974): 418. Indeed, Bruce makes very little use of Pedroncini's work on Pétain.

[4] André Tardieu, *France and America: Some Experiences in Cooperation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937). Originally appeared in French in 1927. Tardieu also published *L'Amérique en Armes* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1919).

[5] Jules J. Jusserand, *Le sentiment américain pendant la Guerre* (Paris: Payot, 1931). [6] Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

[7] Robert K. Hanks, "Culture Versus Diplomacy: Clemenceau and Anglo-American Relations During the First World War" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2002): 382. I am grateful to Dr Hanks for allowing me to see a copy of his thesis.

[8] See, for example, the comments cited in Jean Nicot, 'La perception des Alliés par les combattants en 1918 d'après les archives du contrôle postal', *Revue Historique des Armées* (1988/3): 50-53.

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