



A Delicate Affair' on the Western Front: America Learns How to Fight a Modern War in the Woevre Trenches

Terrence J Finnegan

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Could the newly arrived American troops be trusted? They were greenhorns, having seen practically no action. The surprise attack at Seicheprey on April 20 was spearheaded by the elite German stormtroopers (Stosstruppen) supported by aircraft, trench mortars and heavy artillery and was designed as a propaganda coup against the 'weak' newcomers. On the edget of the well-named For de Mort Homme, the Connecticut boys of the 102nd regiment bore the brunt. The Americans fell back in disarray in a hell of hand-to-hand fighting; one US cook killed two Germans with his meat cleaver. 'A delicate affair' is an actual label applied by one US command report after the battle - and it was an affair with significance beyond its outcome, as the first engagement between US and German forces. As anyone who has read Terry Finnegan's unsurpassable *Shooting the front* will know, his research is of another order. Relying entirely on primary sources throughout, Terry uses the battle as a jumping-off point to describe how all battles developed in the war, through intelligence (or lack of it) and minute-by-minute command decisions.

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