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Roger Ford *Eden to Armageddon: World War One in the Middle East*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2009 494pp. Illus. Maps. Index Hbk. £30

The fighting against Turkey in World War One is an under-represented area in First World War historical writing, with the obvious exceptions of the heavily over-populated areas of Gallipoli and Lawrence. Even the campaign in Mesopotamia has drawn relatively little modern scholarship despite recent contemporary resonance. (The reissue of one of the few general narratives, AJ Barker's *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-18*" from 1967 was perhaps unfortunately and anachronistically titled "The First Iraq War"). Therefore, the appearance of a wider survey should in principle be welcomed.

In terms of structure, it is divided into five main parts, reflecting the key campaigns fought by the Ottoman Empire from 1914-18. After the introduction there are sections on Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, the Dardanelles, Egypt, Palestine and Syria and finally the aftermath of defeat. This is primarily a military narrative, as the political and diplomatic analysis is somewhat condensed. The chapter on operations in the Caucasus, including Armenia, Anatolia and Persia, is particularly welcome as little exists in English writing.

However, there are considerable problems with this book. The writing style is rather stolid and rarely flies, often sounding like an official history. The sections on the Dardanelles and Egypt in particular incline towards the British side of the account, although this is true elsewhere to a certain extent. It is also very much pitched at the operational level, rarely venturing to that of the battalion. There is also little reference to the particular logistic and support demands of the theatre, and air operations rarely feature.

Yet the greatest difficulty is a complete and total lack of any sources, references or bibliography. There are endnotes, but these are mainly chunks of extracted text which should be in the main body or large blocks of order of battle. Even the captions to the (generally well chosen) illustrations are excessively wordy in places. It is clear that the author has done a lot of background reading and research (the mapping is rather good, often a failing even in modern books) but it is impossible to draw with any certainty which sources have been of most impact or influence. It is therefore difficult to recommend this volume as a general read, or as a basis for further study.

Phil McCarty

Editor adds

À propos the absence of a modern study there was discussion on the coach to Lille about the forthcoming book on Mesopotamia by Simon Moody and Alan Wakefield on which subject they had addressed us at the 2006 Summer Conference. Some of the more impatient members were heard to utter imprecations such as '*I wish they'd get a b**** move on*' or '*Have they got stuck in Salonika?*'. Evidence, though, of a healthy market for a publication by these two esteemed gentlemen.

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