



The Americans in the Great War Vol.1 (of 3) (Illustrations): The Second Battle of the Marne (The Americans in the Great War Series)

Michelin and Cie

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When the United States of America declared war on Germany, it was not known exactly what shape their intervention would take—i.e., if their help would be limited to aiding the Allies financially and industrially and tightening the blockade, or if they would take an active part in the military operations. Opinions on this point were much divided, and if many were in favour of an unrestricted participation in the war, others were for a more moderate programme.

When, at the beginning of April, 1917, President Wilson announced that America's help was to be unrestricted, the army of the United States comprised some 9,000 officers and 200,000 men—a mere “drop in the ocean,” as numbers go in modern warfare.

Marshal Joffre's visit to the United States aroused great enthusiasm; the Conscription Bill was promptly passed, and the American War Minister, Mr. Baker, and Marshal Joffre studied the organization and transportation to France of a powerful expeditionary force.

With wonderful rapidity recruits were raised, regiments formed, and training camps built. French and British instructors co-operated heartily, and, pending the creation of national war factories, France equipped the first American army with her famous 75mm. guns, 155mm. howitzers, machine-guns, etc.

By March, 1918, the American Army had grown to more than 110,000 officers and 1,400,000 men, with sixteen immense training camps, besides special technical schools and up-to-date aviation camps.

When, on March 28, in the name of the American people, General Pershing offered to place the whole of the forces under his command at the disposal of Marshal Foch, who had just been made “Generalissimo of the Allied Armies,” part of the new American army had already landed in France, and several divisions were facing the enemy on the Lorraine front.

Meanwhile, the American Army continued to grow apace. In August, thirty-two divisions of fighting troops, besides the staffs of the non-combatant services—in all, more than 1,300,000 men—had landed in France. In October this number had swelled to 1,700,000, while more than 2,000,000 men were training in American camps.

The German U-boats failed to check America's gigantic effort for the “New Crusade,” and each month 250,000 American soldiers reached France, with their arms, equipment, and baggage. It was estimated that in 1919 the American forces in the field would be numerically equal to the entire German army.

The victorious termination of the war prevented this formidable American army from demonstrating its full strength, but that portion which took part in the fighting gave ample proof of its mettle.

Long before the United States declared war, American Red Cross and aviation volunteers had proved the fine

qualities of the American soldier. The expectations of the Allies were fulfilled; wherever they fought the American expeditionary forces gave a good account of themselves. “We have come to kill and be killed, so let’s go ahead,” declared Generals Pershing and Bliss when, on March 28, they gallantly offered to lead their troops into battle. And it is a fact that their men did “go ahead” with a fine contempt for death.

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