



## Hundred Days: The Campaign That Ended World War I

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In the late summer of 1918, after four long years of senseless, stagnant fighting, the Western Front erupted. The bitter four-month struggle that ensued-known as the Hundred Days Campaign-saw some of the bloodiest and most ferocious combat of the Great War, as the Allies grimly worked to break the stalemate in the west and end the conflict that had decimated Europe.

In *Hundred Days*, acclaimed military historian Nick Lloyd leads readers into the endgame of World War I, showing how the timely arrival of American men and materiel-as well as the bravery of French, British, and Commonwealth soldiers-helped to turn the tide on the Western Front. Many of these battle-hardened troops had endured years of terror in the trenches, clinging to their resolve through poison-gas attacks and fruitless assaults across no man's land. Finally, in July 1918, they and their American allies did the impossible: they returned movement to the western theater. Using surprise attacks, innovative artillery tactics, and swarms of tanks and aircraft, they pushed the Germans out of their trenches and forced them back to their final bastion: the Hindenburg Line, a formidable network of dugouts, barbed wire, and pillboxes. After a massive assault, the Allies broke through, racing toward the Rhine and forcing Kaiser Wilhelm II to sue for peace.

An epic tale ranging from the ravaged fields of Flanders to the revolutionary streets of Berlin, *Hundred Days* recalls the bravery and sacrifice that finally silenced the guns of Europe.

## **Hundred Days: The Campaign That Ended World War I Details**

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### **Jill Meyer says**

"Did anyone really care whether Alsace-Lorraine was French or German?" Using those words, British history professor Nick Lloyd summed up German thoughts at the end of the "Great War" as the German government considered surrendering to the Allied forces in Fall, 1918, in his new book, "Hundred Days".

August 1914 - young men from Britain to Austro-Hungary marched gaily off to war. They'd be home by Christmas, these fearless young men told themselves - and each other. But as the years went by with battles gaining literally inches and men living - and dying - in hideous trenches in France and Belgium, by summer of 1918, the war was finally creaking to an end. The American entry into the war in 1917 on the Allied side had given the French, British, and Dominion troops an added boost to those armies who had been fighting for three years, often to a standoff with the Germans on the Western Front, in a war of attrition.

Nick LLoyd, a senior lecturer of Defense Studies, at Kings College, London, lost a great-uncle at the French village of Gouzeaucourt, just six weeks or so before the Armistice. Lloyd has written an amazingly readable book about those last hundred days of WW1. He looks at the war from British, German, French, and American sides and examines both the military battles at the Front and the political battles behind the scenes. He includes maps at the front of the book which detail the battles fought and military lines that had to be crossed by the advancing Allies and defended by the Germans.

One of the most interesting parts of the book deals with the political situation in Germany as the war caused the collapse of the Kaiser's government. Lloyd looks at the cries of "betrayal by the Communists/Bolsheviks/Jews/Defeatists" that lasted well into the 1920's and '30's. Nick LLoyd has done a wonderful job looking at a smallish slice of time in a much larger conflict. Great book for WW1 history readers.

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### **Arthur Rohloff says**

Well written and organized account of the final battles of WW I. Does a great job analyzing the various dynamics at work, balanced with personal stories of the soldiers.

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### **Steve says**

Picked "Hundred Days" up as it's the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War I. My maternal grandfather was wounded, October 23rd 1918, in one of the last pushes against the Germans in the Meuse-Argonne. His unit Company D, of the 115th US Infantry, 29th Division, made the assault on the Bois de Grande Montagne and Bois de Etraye after having liberated Molleville Farm and Richine Hill a week before, north of Verdun. Not only does this book reveal all the other activities, military and political, of the Allies but the increasing tension behind the German High Command and their rapidly devolving political situation throughout the country.

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### **Christopher says**

I always feel that WWI gets the shaft compared to WWII, even though they are equally important for explaining the world in which we presently reside. Even so, after thoroughly exploring the main narratives in college I mostly focus on the 'forgotten' fronts these days. Italy vs Austria-Hungary, the Balkans, the Middle East, East Africa, you name it.

But one thing that always bothered me was that while the Western Front is covered to extremity, particularly the very start of the war and the slaughterhouse battles of the Somme and Verdun (a battlefield which I have personally visited and is quite moving in its terrible and still-scarred grandeur), is how the last and arguably most important stages of the war, the combined Allied offensives after the failure of the German gamble in Spring of 1918, gets overlooked. Even Keegan's comprehensive war history blows through the 100 Days Offensive as if it was nothing but an epilogue, and not the culmination, of the war in Europe.

The Allies had perfected the hard lessons they had learned after years of failure. Much of the German command was delusional about the extent of the danger they were in and had to be convinced by a few more kicks open of their defensive lines. The last minute nature of the armistice led to confusion and deaths right up to and even past the time of the end of the war. Foch handled three humongous armies and their varying commanders with great skill in what the western front always needed: a completely coordinated multi-stage operation.

Lack of understanding this period had great dangers too. Many Germans invented a pernicious mythology that exonerated the collapse of the army with dire future implications. Up to today, American historians often claim full credit for turning the tide, while British ones pretend America had nothing to do with the end game. Both are wrong as US troops were often (though only initially) woefully unprepared for the realities of combat in 1918, while also their numbers, potential, and eventual victories did indeed enable the 100 Days Offensive to go forward and win victory.

This was a book that had to be written.

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### **Peter Evison says**

Thoroughly researched and written throughout with the words from those who were there at all levels and all sides, a dispassionate record of the end of this terrible conflict. Stops at 11 Nov 1918, ie doesn't cover Versailles or the details of the armistice.

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### **Nick Lloyd says**

This is a well-written and broad history of the end of WWI on the Western Front. What surprised me most in reading this book was the fact that, after enormous battles like Verdun and the Somme, and four years of what was at the time the bloodiest conflict in human history, the war did not end with some climactic battle a

la Waterloo. Instead, the German Army was simply worn down by the starvation and disease inflicted by the blockade, Bolshevik uprisings back home and mutiny within the ranks, and the collapse of morale that came with the realization that America had entered the war fresh, with a seemingly endless supply of men and materiel to draw from. This lack of a "marching through Berlin" moment affected the post-war German psyche, and created the conditions for the rise of Hitler and the Second World War. To a simple Corporal on the front lines in 1918, it looked like the same army that had been fighting since 1914; occupying French territory and, despite losses, generally still holding off every Allied attack. Because the generals realized Germany was beaten but the populace did not, narratives of a "stab in the back" by leaders, intellectuals, and Jews began to take hold. It should be noted that, in the Second World War, the Allied Powers made sure the people of Germany were fully aware of what had taken place.

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### **trevor fowler says**

#### **Well written, not too academic.**

I found the book too short, I wanted more detail. What was there was very good but in a history of the type you need more detail and I felt a bit cheated when I came to end. A book that's halfway between a text book and light reading.

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### **Les says**

As the author says, when looking at the First World War, we tend to focus on the futile battle and the slaughter. Perhaps not surprising given its scale. However, this means that we can overlook the relatively short period in which a conflict that seemed destined to be endless (at least to those at the time) was brought to a conclusion in a fairly short period (albeit with further, significant, loss of life.) Nick Lloyd tells the story in a clear and workmanlike manner. He doesn't bring colour to the story in the way that some other authors can (I'd have liked more on the proceedings in the railway carriage in Compeigne for example.) However, if you have ever wondered how the bloody mess of four years came to an end, what you have here is a lucid account of the last "100 days."

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### **Jack says**

The Hundred Days is an incredible account of the final throes of WWI. Usually I find lots of books on Verdun, the Somme, Ypres and the initial Wilderness campaigns but I have neglected the end of the war. I found this book an excellent detailed discussion of how the French, British, and US armies successfully broke the deadlock of trench warfare and restored the campaigns of maneuver. The German Army could not hold against the massed firepower thrown against them or the addition of 100,000 US soldiers monthly. Each German line was breached with enormous losses to both sides. The Germans were at the end of the line. What is also fascinating is the discussion of the Imperial high command and their lack of comprehension that they had lost the war, a fact that every infantryman knew. Even more interesting is the coverage of the Kaiser's last days in power. The armistice required his abdication although the old emperor was in the clouds till the last believing he would remain in power. For the allies the guns fell silent on armistice day. For the Germans they had to march home to fight the anarchists and bolsheviks and their revolution. In amongst those soldiers was a young corporal recovering from mustard gas who believed the

German army was betrayed. His name was Adolf Hitler, and with him went the seeds of WWII.

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### **Bernie Charbonneau says**

"In the late summer of 1918, after four long years of senseless, stagnant fighting, the Western Front erupted. The bitter four-month struggle that ensued-known as the Hundred Days Campaign-saw some of the bloodiest and most ferocious combat of the Great War, as the Allies grimly worked to break the stalemate in the west and end the conflict that had decimated Europe."

As with some of the books that I have recently read about The Great War, by the time we get to the final chapters and the last of the conflict we sometimes miss out on the details leading to Armistice Day. As the opening quote projects, with the U.S. heavily involved fresh for action, the last push was often brutal.

Mr. Lloyd has done a very commendable job of concentrating on the movements of the belligerents involved. With a writing style that keeps the reader engaged with the views of both the allied and axis on how and why the victories and failures led to the end. Of course I would recommend numerous other books to get an overall concept of the War before attacking this novel but keep this close as a side by side to learn the struggles of the platoons, companies and brigades involved.

This was my first book by this author and I would not hesitate to recommend this volume to anyone and will be looking for other books.

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### **Paul says**

Concise account of the Allied campaign that brought Germany to defeat in World War I. Gives an understanding of just how much the Allies learned about 20th century warfare during 1914-1918, leading to tactical innovations that finally broke the stalemate on the Western Front. Only drawback is a paucity of maps.

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### **Peter McLoughlin says**

The last one hundred days until the armistice of WWI have not received as much attention as other parts of the war. This is largely because it was believed that Germany lost the war already with the failure of its offensive on the western front the previous spring and the fall of 1918 was merely an endgame. It didn't get the attention it deserved by early writers because of the "stab in the back" story that was widely circulated in Germany after the war to explain her defeat. The last hundred days of the war and the complete ruin of the German army explain how the armistice happened even though the allies had not reached German soil. Major battles included Amiens and the Argonne-Meuse. The Argonne-Meuse fought by fresh American doughboys killed 50,000 in a few days nearly half of the American soldiers lost in the war. The book is replete with descriptions of the major battles and gives a flavor of the fear in the ranks, the bloody killing and shelling, the chaos of the fighting, and the shattered landscaped that looked like something out of Dante's Inferno. A good description of the lines of the map that the generals saw and the bloody terror that the soldiers witnessed.

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## **Tony says**

I picked this up immediately after reading Nick Lloyd's excellent book on Passchendaele, which I also recommend. My knowledge of World War One mainly revolves around its' causes - a popular subject at O-Level, A-Level and Degree when I was a lad and The Somme so a lot of this history was new to me.

The thing I like about Lloyd's books - or the two I've read so far - is he tells the story not just from a British point of view. So, here he is good on how the German Army fell apart under the constant pressure of Allied assaults and how the myth of the 'stab in the back' that Hitler was to feed on - perhaps because he felt it was true - developed.

Lloyd's writing is sharp and straightforward\*. His research impeccable and he tells the story with a real drive. Highly recommended.

\*Straightforward isn't a 'faint praise' btw. There are some historians, not often in military history, who seem to revel in writing that proves how clever they are but ends up being nothing but wanky intellectual frippery.

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## **Derek Weese says**

While there have been a veritable flood of books published on the origins of the First World War and the initial battles in Flanders and the Marne, as well as long winded looks into the veracity, or not, of the Schleiffen Plan, few books have ever been written on the final Allied offensive that broke the back of the German Army and ended the war. And none that didn't focus on the entirety of the campaign as a whole, not just one side or even one particular ally of one side. This book, a well written and excellent one, fills that gap.

'Hundred Days' tells the oft neglected story of how the Allies won, if not decisively, the First World War, defeated the German Army, and drove it nearly to annihilation in a series of grinding, attrition based offensives that also saw some examples of maneuver warfare towards the end.

Following their defeat of the Russian Empire in 1917 (and yes, it must be said that the answer to the rhetorically asked question of whether one can win a land war in Asia is yes, one can; the Germans did in the First World War by trouncing, decisively and completely, the Russian Empire) the Germans, after stopping briefly by Italy to smack them upside the head (nearly taking them out of the war as well in the Caporetto Battles), shipped large formations of veteran and well equipped men to the Western Front. What made this so harmful to the Allied cause was a multifaceted problem.

First off the Allies were tired, exhausted, and drained of morale. The grinding battles of Paschendaele and the disastrous Nivelle Offensive (which helped to cause a mutiny in the French Army) had damaged the Allies more than they had damaged the Germans, and they were not prepared to face a new, reinvigorated German offensive. Secondly the Germans were bringing to the match new tactics, tried and tested first against the Russians and then perfected against the Italians (tactics that form the basis for infantry assault tactics to this day, by the way) and a sense of victory. They believed that they could win the war, and this mighty revitalized the German Army on the Western Front. After all, their comrades being shipped westwards had not only trounced the Italians and knocked the Russians out of the war but they had also conquered, in a matter of days, Romania in the first ever mechanized offensive in history. (Though minus armor, the Germans never developed much in the way of tanks during WWI) All of this combined to make the German Army that spring a very confident, and eager to display their new found skills against their tired, exhausted foes. And finally, the Allies were desperately waiting for the arrival of the American Army. The French

especially were desperate for relief, relief they hoped to find in the form of fresh American troops. This added a sense of urgency to both sides, the Allies hoping the Americans would arrive in time, the Germans hoping that their coming offensive would knock one or the other of France or the British out of the war before the Yanks could show up.

The ensuing German offensives, called various names but most often known to history as the Kaiser offensives, were, initially, tremendous successes. The Germans broke the Western Front wide open and restored maneuver, their strong suit, to the war. Albeit, only for a brief time. As bad as their blows were hurting the Allies, they were taking considerable losses themselves, and their High Commands insistence of adding strategic objectives as the offensive rolled on only spread out and diffused the German efforts, in effect softening their blows.

Finally, at the Second Battle of the Marne, the Allies, primarily the French, with a large dose of American help, stopped the German offensives.

As the Americans led the way in launching a joint Allied offensive that pushed the Germans from the environs of Paris, the supreme Allied commander, Ferdinand Foch, could feel that victory was in the air. Nick Lloyd tells the story of how the Allies, battered and bruised from the series of massive German blows they had absorbed over the Spring, recovered, quickly, and began landing knockout blows of their own. The author covers all sides, giving fair treatment to the French, Germans and even the Americans, something that should be remarked upon as he is British and most British historians tend to celebrate their own triumphs at the end while overlooking the French and American contributions and overlooking the plight of the retreating and defending Germans.

Starting at Amiens, the 'Black Day of the German Army', the Allies kept up a constant, hammering series of offensives that, slowly but surely, drove the Germans back to their frontiers. The British led the way with their tanks and the awesome hitting power of their Canadian and Australian Army Corps, easily the baddest troops on the battlefield in 1918. The French, while tired and almost used up, contributed mightily, regaining honor lost during the mutinies the previous year. Only the Americans had a mixed report.

The American Army, green, under-trained, under-equipped, and indifferently led does not make for glorious reading during the First World War. While American troops did well when under Allied command and mixed in with French or British armies, as a separate unit the deficiencies of the American Army were born out in bloody, tragic detail. In the hellish nightmare of the Meuse-Argonne Forest, nearly 100,000 American soldiers would be killed in action in a little under two months, for little gains of lasting significance. For all their faults, however, Lloyd shows the reader that the Americans learned from their incredibly costly mistakes, rapidly at that, and despite their often inept tactics, they showed remarkable bravery and incredible courage in the face of certain death as they often charged in, almost fanatically, towards positions that the British and French would avoid.

By early November, however, the game was up for Germany. Her Army was all but finished, she was short on everything from ammunition to boots and especially food and medicine. Morale at home was almost nonexistent and revolution was in the air. Germany signed the Armistice, and the First World War ended.

Nick Lloyd shows that it was not politics, but Allied arms that convinced the Germans to give up the fight. Also he does a very convincing job of overturning the German myth, which many there still believe, that it was leftist politicians who stabbed the Army in the back. The Army was done for, on its last legs and even its High Command understood this. The Armistice was a blessing in disguise for the German Army as it gave them the opportunity to turn home and root out the Communists.

However the Allies did not win decisively. The German Army, though in a bad way, was still functional and the Allies did not occupy Germany. While it seems that such a step would be overly harsh in today's overly sensitive political climate, the truth is that minus that occupation is exactly what gave the conditions time to brew that allowed the rise of the National Socialists.

All in all an excellent book, hopefully it will spawn more research into this most pivotal of moments in 20th century history.

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## Peter Goodman says

“Hundred Days: The campaign that ended World War I,” by Nick Lloyd (Basic Books, 2014). Remarkable. The Hundred Days, from the middle of July, 1918 through the beginning of November, are the days when the British, French and eventually the Americans, having held off Ludendorff’s final spring huge “peace offensive,” finally turned the tide, began advancing, and broke the German army. Lloyd uses every resource--archives, letters, diaries, books, official accounts, etc.--to describe how the Entente finally named a single generalissimo to coordinate all the armies (Foch), who planned the series of attacks that one after the other destroyed the Germans’ ability to resist. His account goes from the highest strategic councils to the utter brutality and squalor of the combat. I had no idea how much gas they used---the Germans more than the Allies. I will never think of the French as surrender monkeys: they bore the absolute brunt of the fighting, and the war was almost entirely on their territory. Lloyd explains that the Allies finally learned how to fight the Germans: not with huge, days-long artillery bombardments that could be sheltered from and which told the Germans exactly where the attack would come---but from secret, carefully hidden buildups just behind the lines, complete with deception and camouflage, followed by sudden, overwhelming, terrible artillery bombardments that the troops finally knew how to follow behind. They used tanks to excellent effect; they controlled the air. The Germans resisted—the high command struggled and refused to acknowledge their losses and their deteriorating situation until the army itself began to crumble and rebel and desert and refuse to fight. Lloyd says the reason the American divisions were so huge because they didn’t have enough experience staff officers. There was the culture clash---the Brits were almost offended by the Americans’ informality and offhandedness. It took a while for the Americans to learn how to fight. At first they tried the old fashioned ways that didn’t work---mass attacks across the front, which were slaughtered. But they learned fast, did a magnificent job at St. Mihiel. Casualties on all sides were enormous, some of the highest of the war. And there is no doubt that the Germans were beaten. They had run out of men, out of food, out of equipment. The Allies were driving them. Hitler was wrong. The Germans lost. The book has excellent maps, and a good bunch of photos.

<http://www.nicklloyd.co.uk>

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