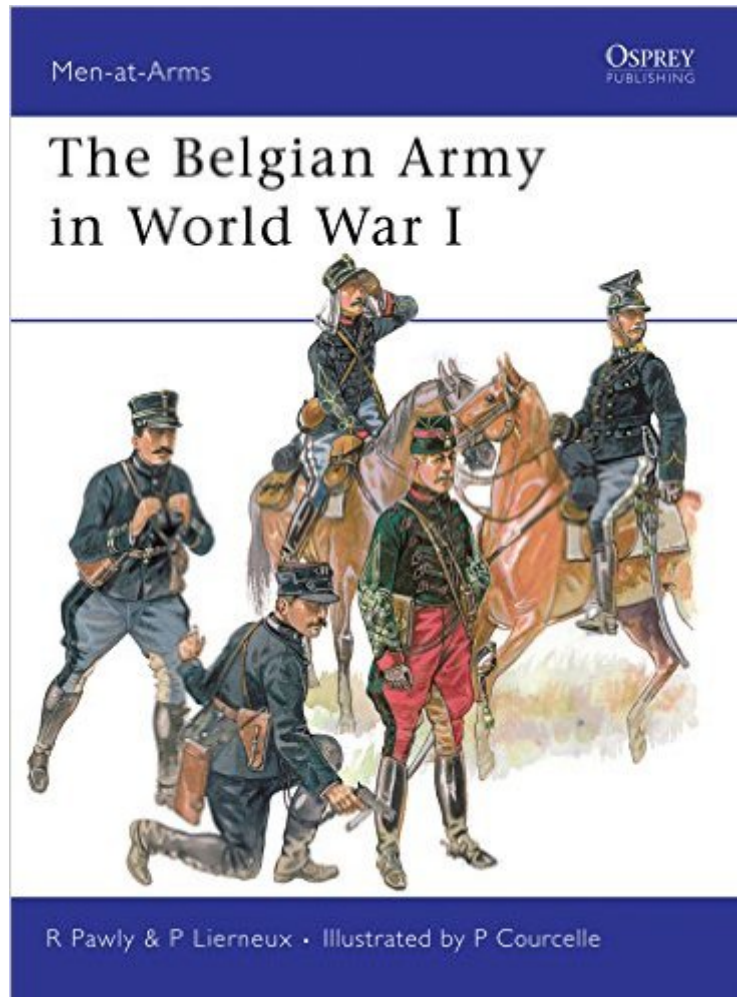


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The Belgian Army In World War I (Men-at-Arms)



Synopsis

While small in numbers, the Belgian Army played a vital role in World War I (1939-1945) that is often overlooked. Germany's invasion of neutral Belgium, which led Britain to declare war in August 1914, should have been swift and fierce yet the unexpected heroic defense, against great odds, of Belgian fortresses, frustrated the German Schlieffen Plan for a thrust to Paris and a lightning victory. The plucky Belgian resistance proved successful in buying time for French and British troops to mobilize and report to the front, where the Belgians would then go on to fight, stubbornly defending the northern end of the Allied trench line for the rest of the war. Discover the story of this determined Army, from their organization and commanders, to their uniforms and equipment. The only main combatant army of World War I not previously covered by Osprey, this volume will be an important addition to any enthusiast's collection, accompanied by detailed artwork and archive photographs.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is not a very good Osprey book - it is readable in some parts, but nothing more. The valiant fight of Belgian Army between 1914 and 1918 deserves to be more known than it is and I was very happy that Osprey made a book on this topic - but it was not well done. The description of events is of course superficial, because Osprey MAM books are only 48 pages long - but it was still possible to write more on the battles waged by Belgians. Author however mostly wasted pages 3 to 8, describing XIX century European politics and a general history of beginning of World War I - something it was not necessary to do. Those six pages could have been put to a better use. The

description of organisation, weaponry and equipment of Belgian Army at the beginning of 1914 is extremely superficial! There is not even a one page battle order with names of great units and their commanders! We have to dig deep in descriptions of color plates to find some information about weaponry - and even there it is fragmentary. The campaign of 1914 is described in some detail, on pages from 8 to 20, but after that the whole period January 1915-December 1917 is expedited on six pages, with mostly the generalities like "Belgium purchased guns, rifles and machine guns to make up the shortfalls" - but what kind of weapons and from whom? Mystery... Also the description of Belgian front from 1915 to 1918 is mostly just a copy of press articles written by a journalist in 1916 and 1917... Not only this book is very superficial, but it is also poorly written and chaotic - and there is only one little and poorly made map! But the WORST thing are the color plates by Patrice Courcelle - or should I rather say "no color" plates, as there is hardly any color in most of those plates!

THE BELGIAN ARMY IN WORLD WAR IRONALD BOWLY AND PIERRE LIERNEUX OSPREY PUBLISHING, 2009 QUALITY SOFTCOVER, \$17.95, 48 PAGES, MAP, PHOTOGRAPHS, ILLUSTRATIONS, BIBLIOGRAPHY, INDEX

When Belgium's army mobilized for World War I in August, 1914, it was small and inexperienced compared with its European counterparts. Because of Belgium's neutrality, the Belgian officer corps, trained at the Ecole de Guerre, didn't attract superior candidates. The Belgian Army had evolved from the Belgian Civic Guard, established in 1831. That force maintained order and provided wartime auxiliary services such as supply. It wasn't until 1913, when threatened by German military expansion, that Belgium established compulsory military service. By August, 1914, it had grown to 117,000 men serving in six infantry divisions and one cavalry division. But even with this re-organization, supplies were minimal: only one bullet per man was available for training at weekly range practice. Soldiers had to improvise or borrow equipment. Few machine guns were distributed, and the Belgian Army had no heavy field artillery. The Belgian Parliament refused to purchase more sophisticated weapons equivalent in quality to those used by German troops. The Belgian Army also encountered difficulties in administration. General Selliers de Moranville, Chief of the Belgian Army's General Staff, didn't want King Albert I to devise strategy, and disagreements between the two men caused conflicting orders to be dispatched; King Albert I wanted to strengthen the forts while Selliers wanted to concentrate troops in Belgium's center. The German invasion of Belgium from August, 1914 to November, 1914 was quick and decisive and provided the Germans access to France.

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