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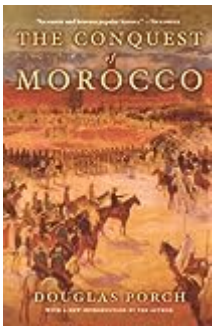
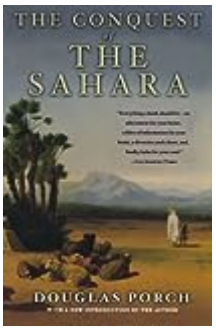


Douglas Porch. *The Conquest of Morocco.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005. xxiv + 335 pp. $15.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-374-12880-7.



Douglas Porch. *The Conquest of the Sahara.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005. xviii + 332 pp. $15.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-374-12879-1.

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Two Pot Boilers as Remakes of *Beau-geste*

About a year after George Bush had launched his ill-fated invasion of Iraq (by which time the American and British armies were having to face the reality that they were not being welcomed as liberators), readers of the *International Herald Tribune* might have been surprised to learn that the Pentagon had organized a viewing of Gillo Pontecorvo's 1965 film *The Battle of Algiers* on the Algerian War of Independence "for a group of military and civilian experts." Apparently, the hope was that American proconsuls in training might get some tips on "how [not] to win a battle against terrorism while los[ing] the war of ideas."[1]

With Bush's war on terrorism clearly in the back of his mind, military historian Douglas Porch has republished his two *Conquest* volumes (1982 and 1984, respectively) exactly as they originally appeared, except that he has discarded the original preface to the volume on Morocco and introduction to the volume on the Sahara in favor of new introductions for each. These, indeed, are insightful analytical essays that consider the subjects of their respective volumes in light of the contemporary,

evolving geopolitical situation. In the introduction to *The Conquest of Morocco*, Porch comments on the pros and cons of indirect rule, as promoted by Marshal Hubert Lyautey and Sir Frederick Lugard and proposes parallels between classical nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialism and globalization today. In the introduction to *The Conquest of the Sahara*, he evokes the colonial-era French pacification of the Algerian Sahara, with reference to the theories of C. E. Callwell as outlined in his *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (1904). According to Porch, "the French domination of the Sahara from 1905 ... closed out an era," (*Sahara*, p. xvii). Future colonial wars, like the French conquest of Morocco, would no longer be small. Rather, "as the twentieth century dawned, imperial warfare would become more, not less, destructive, as rivalries between the great powers increased the stakes in the game of conquest and as ideology kicked in as an increasingly potent factor in the cohesion of a resistance movement" (*Sahara*, p. xvii).

Yet, these essays are considerably less introductory to the respective volumes than were the original preface and introduction and make no effort to explain why Porch has failed to revise and update the original texts in any way. The original bibliographies, except for the references pertaining specifically to the new introductions, remain unchanged. Porch has even retained the original pagination as well as his unusual way of indicating references.[2] Thus, in addition to being somewhat out of date, both books continue to display the signs of glib, anecdotal, journalistic writing that conveys a message that is, at best, impressionistic and, at worst, superficial and sometimes inaccurate–even if fun to read. Errors appearing in the original volumes have remained uncorrected.

Porch is a Professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and a specialist on post-1815 French military and colonial history, much of which involves the savannas, steppes, and deserts of the Muslim world. He is thus in a position to propose parallels between the consequences of, for instance, the *coup d'eventail* incident of 1828 that led to the French conquest of Algeria, and Bush's obsession with Osama bin Laden and Saddam. Indeed, the final paragraph in the new introduction to the Morocco volume is revelatory. Evoking a post-September 11 visit to Washington, D.C., Porch relates how he "was greeted with a measure of enthusiasm by a young man at the Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict branch of the Department of Defense who announced that descriptions of Gallieni's and Lyautey's *tache d'huile* or 'oil spot' methods of imperial pacification borrowed from *The Conquest of Morocco* had inspired the establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams that seek to rebuild civil society in Afghanistan" (*Morocco*, p. xxii). Very good–but one still wishes that Professor Porch had thoroughly revised both books before republishing them.

The titles of both volumes suggest a far broader scope than what they actually cover. In the case of the volume on Morocco, Porch concentrates on what became French Morocco between approximately 1903–when certain French officials and army officers began to seriously consider a full conquest of the country–and 1914. At the same time, he barely mentions or completely neglects such matters as the rise and fall of Spanish Morocco, including the Spanish Sahara (Rio de Oro), and the strange cases of Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish enclaves since 1694 and 1697, respectively, that constitute the remaining European-ruled territories on the African continent.

The volume on the Sahara, as the introduction to the first edition (but not to the second) specifies, concentrates on the French occupation of southern Algeria. Indeed, Porch could have titled the book "How France Dominated Most of the Tuareg," for it focuses on the conquest of the Ahaggar Tuareg. While nevertheless including apercus of significant events and personages concerning other parts of what became francophone Africa, it neglects large chunks of the Sahara Desert. It has almost nothing to say about the French occupation of the Mauritanian Sahara. It likewise, being French-centered, has very little more to say about the imperial activities of the English in Egypt and the Sudan and of the Italians in Libya.

As the introduction to the re-published Morocco volume makes clear, Porch wrote both of his "Conquest" books "for fun" (p. ix), as off-shoots of his more academic studies on the history of the French army: *Army and Revolution in France: 1815-1848* (1974), his revised 1971 Cambridge University doctoral thesis, and *The March to the Marne: The French Army, 1871-1914* (1981). Porch explains that while preparing a chapter on the French colonial army for the latter volume he "made the acquaintance of Hubert Lyautey, Theodore Pein, deranged sultans, conniving diplomats, ruthless soldiers, camel-riding subalterns–material simply too good to restore to the archives,"[3] and therefore wrote the two volumes in rapid succession. The notes for both of them, however, reflect only a minimal consultation, on his part, of official archives: the C series of the French Military Archives (Archives Historique de la Guerre) for the Morocco volume and the H series for the Sahara volume, both housed

in the Chateau de Vincennes near Paris. Porch has really grounded both volumes on published memoirs and travelers' accounts as well as on secondary works. The Sahara volume, however, reflects some use of archival materials, particularly chapter 16, "The Dark Side of Beau Geste." Here Porch details the social, economic, and ecological degradation that occurred in Tuat and other Saharan areas because of the French occupation. As a work of serious research, it is clearly the exceptional chapter that confirms the rule.

Porch has given the volumes similar structures. They begin with a set of chapters that establish the settings and through a series of tableaux, Porch describes the lands and the peoples, setting the stage for detailed yet impressionistic treatments of the main subjects.

In the case of the Morocco volume, Porch begins by contrasting the lives of Europeans in the Tangiers of 1903–existing then as a sort of treaty port–with life at the Sharifian court at Fez. He then introduces major European and Moroccan protagonists: the French diplomats, Georges Saint-Remy Taillandier and Charles de Saint-Aulaire; the English Consul, Sir John Drummond Hay and the British Minister, Sir Arthur Nicholson; the Moroccan Sultan, Abdul Azziz; and the Sharif of Ouezzane, Sidi Mohammed. Porch's presentation of these individuals stresses the picturesque and the bizarre.

To place the Morocco volume in what one might call a dramatic French continuum, Porch opens chapter 1 by suggesting that the *coup d'eventail* incident of 1828 led, after 1904, to the French occupation of most (but not all) of Morocco, as would be formalized by the protectorate treaty of 1912.[4] In chapter 5, titled "Taghit," he details the unstable situation of the Algero-Moroccan frontier in 1903, and in chapter 6, "The Call," he introduces Colonel Hubert Louis Gonzalve Lyautey, the future Resident General of Morocco and Marshal of France on his way, in 1903, to take command of the Ain Sefra Sub-division in the South Oran border area of Algeria, facing Morocco.

Following the introductory chapters, Porch begins to unfold the main action of the Morocco volume in chapter 7, "The Rogui" (the name given to a Moroccan challenger to Sharifian authority), with a description of the causes and consequences of the assassination of the English missionary, David Cooper, by Muslim fanatics, for having accidentally entered the grounds of the Moulay Idris Mosque in Fez.

Porch opens his Sahara volume with a presentation of the bizarre aspects of the lives of European residents in the difficult setting of nineteenth-century Tripoli. Next, he presents and describes the Sahara Desert in general terms, focusing on the difficulties, vagaries, and risks of travel through an oasis and on the advantages and disadvantages of camels as beasts of burden. This is followed by a short anthropological brief on the Tuareg, whose submission, many pages later, in 1905, brings the narrative, except for a few afterthoughts, effectively to a conclusion.

Having established the setting, Porch now picks up the first of several episodes constituting the main action of the book. He details the first Transsaharan Railway project and the resulting two Flatters missions, the second one of which ended in cannibalistic disaster in 1881 at Bir-el-Garama, just to the north of the Ahaggar Plateau, deep inside the Algerian Sahara.

In succeeding chapters in the Morocco volume, Porch details the stepped up French pressure on the Moroccan government that caused the steady deterioration of the capability of that government, the *makhzen*, to govern. He also details the European diplomatic struggle for mastery of the Moroccan situation, whereby the French first bought out the British in 1904 by conceding them a free hand in Egypt and then, in 1911, the Germans, following several diplomatic crises, by permitting (temporarily, it turned out) the enlargement of German Kamerun at the expense of the French Congo. Against a backdrop of arguments among politicians, diplomats, and soldiers as to whether the pacification of Morocco should be effectuated through peaceful penetration and reform or through forceful conquest, Porch describes the unfolding of the Casablanca Crisis, the Chaouia campaign, the pacification of the Beni Snassen, the two sieges of Fez, the imposition of the protectorate treaty on the new Sultan, Moulay Hafid, Colonel Charles Mangin's victory at Sidi Bou Othman, and the French occupation of Marrakech and the Zaer.

Porch ends his Moroccan story with the so-called junction of East and West, near Taza, in May 1914, marking French control of the overland route in Morocco from the Algerian frontier near Oujda to Rabat and Casablanca via Fez and Meknes. He makes the point that peaceful penetration could not have worked. Only by the use of brute force and superior tactics and weapons could the French have hoped to conquer Morocco. By such means, the French came to hold unequivocally what Lyautey, by 1919, would designate as "useful Morocco" (*Morocco*, p. 290).[5]

Following Porch's detailed account of the Flatters dis-

aster, succeeding chapters in the Sahara volume investigate the first French attempts at penetrating the Sahara Desert from the southwest, via the Niger River and Timbuktu (really the eastern extension of French rule from its base in Senegal) and describe the so-called Mores affair of 1896, a failed attempt by a deranged former French cavalry officer to cross the Sahara Desert through Tuareg lands starting from Tunisia. Next comes an examination of the French participation in the so-called race to Lake Chad. The focus is on the bizarre and sanguinary first phase of the Central African (Voulet-Chanoine) expedition and on the less bizarre but still very difficult Foureau-Lamy expedition. Porch ends his story with an account of the formation of the French Saharan troops by Colonel Henri Laperrine after 1901, the Battle of Tit in 1902 whereby the Saharans broke the resistance of the Tuareg, the successful French occupation of the Ahaggar in 1905, and an entertaining aside about the bizarre life and career of Father Charles de Foucauld.

Both books include discussions of French theories and practices of colonial domination and of the pros and cons of the indigenous forces that the French created in Algeria, West Africa, and elsewhere. Several chapters in the Morocco volume describe the long and sometimes painful process whereby French officers slowly trained and took control of the Sharifian army, tying it to the 19th Corps of the French metropolitan army, the so-called Armee d'Afrique, the permanent French garrison in North Africa. Professor Porch, as can be expected, has strong opinions about these matters. He is not particularly impressed by the performance of the Saharan troops, nor does he think too highly of the theory and practice of indirect rule.

But many of Porch's expressed views are tendentious and very often contradictory. His opinions appear to vacillate depending upon the sources he uses to underpin a given passage. Throughout both books, one can legitimately question both his accuracy and the appropriateness, in terms of developing his larger thesis, of his selection of themes to develop in detail.

Take, for instance, the question of the so-called Transsaharan Railway project, the motive for the exploration and surveying expedition in the Algerian Sahara that led to the Flatters disaster of 1881. Porch has chosen to view the matter from an almost exclusively Algerian and Saharan perspective and only presents the first of several railway projects, the one proposed by Adolphe Duponchel in 1878, that was then strongly promoted by Minister of Public Works and then Prime Minister, Louis de Saulces de Freycinet, who set up the Transsaharan Committee in 1879.[6]

Porch neglects to mention that, at almost the same time, the idea of a railway linking Algeria and Senegal via Timbuktu was also being promoted by a few persons who reflected the perspective of the other end of the line, Senegal. A plan for such a railway became a part of the general post-1876 strategy (with roots going back to the seventeenth century) to expand French penetration to the Niger River at or near Bamako and beyond.

The Senegalese end of the Transsaharan project was strongly promoted by a rather curious, solitary explorer and commercial promoter, Paul Soleillet, whom Porch does not mention.[7] This person had returned in 1874 from an expedition to In Salah, financed by the Algiers Chamber of Commerce, fired up over the possibility of a transsaharan railway. In 1876, Soleillet had published an influential book, *Avenir de la France en Afrique* arguing strongly, two years before Duponchel had published his book on the Transsaharan Railway, that a railway should be built linking Algiers to Saint-Louis via Timbuktu. Soleillet had then organized an exploration mission in the Senegal-Sudan region, his second one there, a rapid trip from Saint-Louis to Segou, the capital of Ahamadou's Toucouleur Empire, on the Niger River. Its success led Soleillet to argue strongly for peaceful French commercial penetration of the Sudan. In short order, the same interests and persons in France which supported the Duponchel/Freycinet/Flatters project assisted Soleillet in attempting to organize a third expedition in Senegal, one that would take him, he hoped, from Saint-Louis to Algiers via Timbuktu.

When Soleillet set out on this third of his West African expeditions, he got as far as Medine, a few miles up the Senegal River, from Kayes, in what is now Mali. Here he was arrested in December 1880 by order of Governor Louis-Alexandre Briere de Lisle and forcibly sent back to France. His offense: in a letter to a friend he had criticized the violent methods of military conquest being inaugurated by the Governor and the newly appointed Superior Commandant of the Upper River, Lieutenant-Colonel Gustave Borgnis-Desbordes,[8] that he felt had jeopardized his attempts to travel peacefully through the Toucouleur Empire. His letter had been published, without his knowledge, in an opposition newspaper.

What Porch calls the "Transsaharan Committee" (*Sahara*, p. 85) certainly had its eye on Senegal as well as on Algeria as indicated by its full French title, that Porch does not cite: "Commission superieure pour l'etude des

questions relatives a la mise en communication, par voie ferree, de l'Algerie et du Senegal avec l'interieur du Soudan." Thanks to the foresight of N. C. Legros, the Inspector for Naval Constructions, and Paul Dislere, the Director of Colonial Administration in the Ministry of the Navy, the Senegalese part of the railway project was salvaged following the Flatters disaster. Dakar would thus be linked by rail to Saint-Louis by 1885; Kayes to Bamako and Koulikoro, by 1904; and Kayes to Thies, on the Dakar-Saint-Louis Railway, by 1923. The hope that these and other French West African railways would someday be linked to one another and to the Algerian railway system, via the Sahara Desert, did not die.[9]

Porch's treatment of the so-called race to Lake Chad is like his treatment of the Transsaharan Railroad. It leaves the impression that it was more a Sahara-oriented effort, intended to push the southern frontier of Algeria further and further to the south, than was the case. Rather, the series of missions directed towards Lake Chad were actions forming a major French effort that got underway after the 1884-1885 Berlin West African Conference, to expand French rule inland from all of the French-held beachheads in West and Equatorial Africa, ranging from Arguin and Saint-Louis in the north to Libreville in the south. The reasons for this land grab were complex, ranging from self-generated military imperialism on the part of Naval Infantry and Artillery officers active in the Sudan, as Porch recognizes, to efforts to limit the expansion of other European, particularly British-held, beachheads. The main objective of the missions was to link together and bring some sort of effective occupation to the components of the block of territory in north, west, and equatorial Africa that would constitute the French African empire, while limiting the expansion of the British colonies. The Sahara Desert was only a part, albeit an important part, of that block.

Of the numerous missions and expeditions that, after 1990, were linked to this race, Porch details the 1894 French occupation of Timbuktu, the 1898-1900 Voulet-Chanoine/Joalland-Meynier (Central-African) mission, and the Foureau-Lamy mission. He stresses the almost accidental nature of the first, the result of fractious behavior on the part of certain *Soudanais* (French Naval Infantry and Artillery officers posted to the French Sudan), the madness of the initial leaders of the second, and the great difficulties in accomplishing the third. The latter two missions, plus the Gentil Mission, were part of a set of six that were promoted and supported by the Deputy from Oran, Eugene Etienne, who also headed the Colonial Group in the French Chamber of Deputies.

Although organized separately and involving different branches of the French armed forces, the final three Chad missions were intended by Etienne, and their respective military sponsors–the Army, in the case of the Foureau-Lamy Expedition, and the Navy, in the case of the other two–to be part of a common effort and to converge on one central location. They were never as independent of one another and subject to coincidence as Porch seems to think (*Sahara*, p. 146). Only the Foureau-Lamy expedition was part of an effort to bring the Algerian Sahara under French control. Of course, once these expeditions were underway, they were almost completely out of communication with one another.

Both books, particularly the volume on the Sahara, would have benefited from more seriously designed maps, indeed, several maps per volume. The map in the Sahara volume is particularly unsatisfactory, more an exercise in modern art than a guide enabling the reader to follow the detail of the various expeditions described. The original Sahara volume had no map at all. Unfortunately, the scale of the map in the Morocco volume (1.75 inches to 1,000 miles) is seriously in error. According to this scale, the distance between Oujda and Oran would be 1,000 miles. In reality, the distance between the two cities by railway is 156 miles (250 kilometers).

Possibly it was this very scale that misinformed Porch as to the distance which Lyautey's forces marched from Algeria into Morocco when they occupied Ras-el-Ain in 1904, discreetly renaming it Berguent. According to Porch's Morocco volume, Berguent was 60 miles "farther forward" into Morocco (p. 133). According to his Sahara volume, the distance was 100 miles (p. 298). In fact, this oasis, now called Ain-Benimathar, is 62 miles (100 kilometers) due west of El Aricha, an important French frontier post at the time, and clearly situated in Algeria. But the move to Berguent was only 22 miles (35 kilometers) west of the Algerian-Moroccan border, as it exists today. According to the 1845 Franco-Moroccan Treaty, the precise delimitation of the frontier running from the Mediterranean Sea stopped at the 34th parallel, a few kilometers north of Ras el Ain/Berguent/Ain-Benimathar. The formally recognized frontier line would be extended south, as far as Figuig-Beni Ounif, by 1912.

Although Bechar, after occupation by Lyautey's forces, remained Algerian, Ras-el-Ain, following a similar type of French occupation, remained Moroccan. Given, however, that the Franco-Moroccan accords of 1901 and 1902 provided for mixed patrols along a broad swathe of frontier zone south of the 34th parallel,

Lyautey attempted to associate the Moroccan authorities with his move into Ras-el-Ain. He even requested that the Sultan's representative at Oujda send him a Moroccan flag and second a caid to exercise joint authority at the post.[10] The episode and the way Lyautey handled it proves that even while taking strong measures to defend (and sometimes to extend) the Algerian western frontier, he did not automatically transfer Moroccan territory to French sovereignty.

From time to time, other such geographical and terminological lapses appear in both books. In the Moroccan volume, for instance, the Atlantic seaport founded by Sultan Mohammed ben Abdallah in the eighteenth century as a European trading center and laid out by a captive French engineer is sometimes referred to by its correct Moroccan name, Essaouria, and sometimes by its traditional European name, Mogador. Porch gives no explanation as to his choice of designations nor does he make certain that the reader understands that Essaouria and Mogador are one and the same. In the Sahara volume, Porch informs his readers that malaria, endemic in Murzuk in Lybia, "spread to the east" into the Algerian oases (p. 42). Further on, he indicates that one reaches Kabara, the Niger River port for Timbuktu, by navigating "upstream" from Mopti (p. 137).

Likewise, in describing the final act of the Foureau-Lamy mission, Porch indicates that on leaving Zinder, in early January 1900, Foureau and Lamy "struck out westward in pursuit of Lieutenant Paul Joalland and the remnants of the Central African Mission." In fact, Foureau and Lamy moved southeast, towards the Komadugu Yobe River in what is now northeastern Nigeria. They followed this river east to Lake Chad and then north around the western and northern shores of the lake and then south along the eastern shore. Here they encountered Lieutenant Joalland who had come north, up the east side of the lake, to meet them. The mission then returned south accompanied by Joalland to the latter's base camp on the right bank of the Shari river, near where it enters Lake Chad from the south. What followed, then, was the concluding struggle between the united French forces (as Commandant Emile Gentil and his men had in the meantime arrived from the French Congo) and the Sudanic state-builder, Rabih Zubayr. Although the French won the decisive Battle of Kousseri of 22 April 1900, both Lamy and Rabih were killed.

At this point in the Sahara volume, Porch could have explained that Kousseri, on the left bank of the Shari River, was situated on a sliver of land, extending north to Lake Chad, that had been awarded to German Kamerun by treaties of 1893 and 1894 with Great Britain and France, respectively, thus separating Nigeria from Chad. It is for this reason, one that Porch does not make clear (he does not mention Germany at all in the context of Lake Chad), that the French founded their principal settlement in Chad across the river from Kousseri, at a place they named Fort Lamy and is now known as Njamena. Kousseri itself, during the period of French rule in Cameroon, was named Fort Fourreau.

Other such omissions and inaccuracies can be found throughout both books. For instance, Porch is not too clear about the antecedents of Rabih Zubayr who was never, contrary to what Porch has written (*Sahara*, p. 184), a slave of Zubayr Pasha, the mid-nineteenth century Sudanese Arab strongman, slave trader, governor of Bahr-el-Ghazal, and conqueror of Darfur in 1874. Born in Khartoum in 1845 of Sudanese-Arab parents, Rabih was raised as Zubayr's milk-brother. As an adult, he became one of Zubayr's lieutenants and eventually the head of his militia. Rabih continued in the service of Sulayman Zubayr, Zubayr Pasha's favorite son, after the father was "retained in honourable but impotent captivity" in Cairo where he had traveled, in 1876, in order to persuade the Khedive to permit him to retain Darfur.[11] No doubt the Khedive acted against Zubayr because of British pressure to neutralize a major Sudanese slave trader. Sulayman, who, as a result, rebelled against the Egyptian authorities, was captured in 1879 and executed by Romolo Gessi, who had been appointed Governor of the Bahr-el-Ghazal by the new Governor-General of the Egyptian Sudan, the English engineer officer, Charles Gordon. It is not accurate to write, as does Porch, that Sulayman was "defeated and deposed by the English in 1878" (*Sahara*, p. 184). Following the death of his patron, Rabih, his entourage, and his militia moved west, towards Lake Chad, and began the state-building activities that would bring him into contact and conflict with the French.

Then there is the question of Marshal Lyautey's alleged homosexuality and its effects on his career. Professor Andre Le Reverend, who happened to complete a nearly 500-page biography of Lyautey a year after Porch had stated in his original edition of *The Conquest of Morocco* that "no good biography exists" (p. x), does not mention any question of homosexuality. However, he does go into rather tortured explanations as to why it took so long for Lyautey to finally marry–at age 55–in 1909. He evokes Lyautey's engagement to an eligible young woman that he broke off in 1885 because his prospective in-laws had demanded that he formally reaf-

firm his Catholicism just at a time when he was being tormented by religious doubts.[12] Then, a few years later, came his tryst with Lucie Baignieres that, as Porch indicates (*Morocco*, p. 84), had a platonic resolution in 1894. When Lyautey eventually married Ines Fortoul (nee de Bourgoing)–*la veuve d'un colonel*–she was 46 years old, not 38, as Porch reports (*Morocco*, p. 251), and had two adult sons, both in the military.[13]

At the time Lyautey married, he had been promoted and given the job previously held by General Fernand O'Connor, that of Divisional Commandant of Oran. In 1903, O'Connor had attempted to prevent Lyautey from taking up his new posting at Ain Sefra– because of his homosexuality, as Porch writes (*Sahara*, p. 78). It seems more likely that General O'Connor objected to Lyautey's demands to be independent of his authority and to be permitted to communicate directly with the newly appointed Governor-General of Algeria, Charles Jonnart, over his head and over that of the Commandant of the 19th Corps, the senior military commander in Algeria.[14] Jonnart, who had narrowly missed being killed at Beni-Ounif when shot at by Moroccan tribesmen from Figuig while inspecting the frontier from a "safe" spot in the company of General O'Conner, was more than pleased to grant an independent-minded and highly competent colonel (soon to be a brigadier general) such as Lyautey, the independence that he craved. Later, as Divisional Commandant at Oran, Lyautey enraged General Armand Serviere, the new Commandant of the 19th Corps, by not only demanding the right to communicate directly with the Governor-General of Algeria (thus bypassing Serviere), but also to retain his subdivisional command at Ain Sefra so that he could exercise direct and almost exclusive supervision over the whole frontier, from Bechar to the Mediterranean.[15]

In short, Lyautey could and did annoy his superiors by his demands for autonomy and his use of parallel channels of communication with politicians and other influential persons in Paris–behavior and procedures that, while giving proof of his disregard for the normal military chain of command, had very little to do with his sexual preferences. Moreover, if the case of General Henri Gouraud was in any way typical, homosexuals could do quite well, even brilliantly, in the armies of the Third Republic.

Porch editorializes throughout both volumes and in the new introductions about the peculiarities of French officers who served in the colonies: those of the Colonial army, naval troops before 1900, and those of the Armee d'Afrique–metropolitans who served in North Africa, particularly Algeria. They were misfits, he argues, anti-progressive, in many cases pursuing an agrarian almost feudal ideal outside of industrializing metropolitan France. Even if some of them voluntarily sought overseas assignments, many others were forced to do so because they had no other options.

As Porch indicates, Lyautey's transfer from France to northern Vietnam is frequently cited as exile (*Morocco*, p. 81), as a kind of punishment for having published "Le Role social de l'officier dans le service militaire universel."[16] Such is probably not the case. According to Le Reverend, Lyautey had been considering a transfer to the colonies as early as 1885.[17] He finally got his chance in 1893 because a cousin of his, General Edmond Bichot, Director of Colonial Troops in the Ministry of the Navy, supported his request for a posting to North Vietnam (Tonkin) and because he was well thought of by the Army Chief of Staff, General Raoul Francois-Charles Le Mouton de Boisdeffre.[18]

Since France was at peace in Europe after 1871, even if anticipating "la revanche," about the only way for an ambitious French officer wanting action and rapid promotions to accelerate his career was to seek colonial assignments where the action was. In addition, there was the question of money. French officers' salaries, as Porch rightly points out, were very low compared to those of British and German officers; nevertheless, service in Algeria, even pacified Algeria, entailed a raise in pay and more generous perquisites than in metropolitan France. Service in the colonies (outside North Africa) entitled one to even more generous pay and perquisites. Officers who served in North Africa and in the tropical colonies did not forget the Rhine frontier; many of them made efforts to take on metropolitan postings after they had achieved a satisfactory rank overseas. This seems to have been Lyautey's hope. According to Le Reverend, Lyautey dreamed of being eventually called back to France to play a major military if not political role.[19]

Regarding Lyautey's expressed preference for the peaceful occupation of colonies in the making, for concerted efforts to assure their infrastructural and economic development, and for indirect rule ("ruling with the mandarins, rather than against them"–actually, the formula of a former French Governor-General of Indo-China, Jean-Louis de Lanessan, holding southern Morocco by collaborating with the "*grands caids*," and the like), Porch takes a rather cynical view of it all. He describes indirect rule and the ideology that it spawned as

necessities born of weakness owing to lack of resources and manpower necessary for the occupying power to impose a more direct form of domination and as hype intended to counter anti-colonial sentiment at home.

But there was a bit more to the story than that. Although Porch does not mention it, it seems that Lyautey's ideas on colonial development were strongly influenced, during a visit to Romania in 1893, by a successful example in that country of infrastructural development in a less developed setting not linked to traditional colonial compulsion. Lyautey had traveled by boat, from Galati, through the delta of the Danube River, to the principal mouth of the river at Sulina, on the Black Sea. Here, he had met the British engineer officer, Sir Charles Hartley, who, for nearly thirty years, had served as Chief Engineer of the International Danube Commission set up in 1856, after the Crimean War, to internationalize and to improve the conditions of fluvial traffic along this river. Working initially in very primitive conditions, Hartley had directed the dredging of the main channel and the construction of levies that had transformed the Danube Delta from a swamp into a major waterway. His work had enabled oceangoing vessels to navigate some distance upriver and was leading to the transformation of a number of Romanian and Bulgarian towns, set along the Danube, including Tulcea, Galati, Braila, Giurgiu, and Ruse, into important seaports. This work, by a dedicated English army officer, who had served in the same overseas posting over most of his career, inspired Lyautey, as it offered him an example of the sort of infrastructure development work that he thought French colonial officials should make their vocation and top priority.[20]

Surprisingly, Porch attributes to inter-service rivalries the fact that Algeria ended up retaining a much larger chunk of the Sahara Desert and the northern steppe areas, east and west, than did Tunisia and Morocco respectively (*Sahara*, p. 164). Such officers as Theodore Pein, Hubert Lyautey, and Francois Lamy, asserts Porch, grabbed more for Algeria than their counterparts in the other two territories were able to grab.

This assertion overlooks the fact that Algeria, at least the Algerian Tell, experienced a much longer period of French rule than Tunisia and Morocco. Until Tunisia became a French protectorate in 1881, and Morocco, in 1912, it was understandable that French officers in Algeria would nibble away at these "foreign" lands, east and west, to protect and to enlarge an Algeria that, by 1871, was viewed as a part of France. Even after the Tunisian and Moroccan protectorate treaties were imposed, the new French possessions remained protectorates, in fact, second-level possessions, when compared to "French" Algeria. Since the military umbrella for all of French North Africa was provided by the Armee d'Afrique the 19th Corps of the French metropolitan army (referred to mistakenly, by Porch, in the Sahara volume, as the "19th Division" (p. 240)), most officers in the protectorates, for these reasons, would favor Algeria in the matter of territorial expansion. There were, of course, some exceptions. When serving in Morocco after 1912, Lyautey, the Resident General, and his entourage of officers, felt themselves committed to enlarging and strengthening the authority of the *mahkzen*, the area and the populations of Morocco recognizing the Sultan's secular authority.

In the south, inter-service rivalries were of much greater importance in determining French colonial frontiers between Algeria and what became French West Africa, where the French military presence was constituted by Naval Infantry and Artillery units and their native auxiliaries, the *tirailleurs senegalais*, among others. Porch describes the way in which Lieutenant-Colonel Henri Laperrine, at the head of a patrol of seventy-six Saharan troops, was prohibited by the Commandant of Timbuktu from moving south of Adrar into the French Sudan so as to link Algeria to Timbuktu (*Sahara*, p. 270). Here, it should be made clear, that, juridically speaking, the territories forming French West and Equatorial Africa, even if administered by the Naval and then the Colonial Ministries, were more clearly French than Tunisia and Morocco and had the same "right" to French-sponsored territorial expansion as Algeria. Nevertheless, the determining factor in the setting of the southern frontiers was the relative aggressiveness of the respective services and of their men on the spot, the commitment of these men to specific territories, and the degree to which services, men, and territories were supported in Paris.

Professor Porch, as he himself admits, wrote both these books "for fun." They can certainly be read for fun, particularly by persons who do not know too much about the subjects and will not be put off by the errors and omissions appearing in them, but can appreciate a dramatic, ironic, and anecdotal writing style. Even to such readers, however, this reviewer would only recommend these books as very light reading indeed (with the exceptions of their excellent introductions). One cannot help but wonder when reading that the "Volet[sic]-Chanoine expedition of 1898 was simply the most devastating example of indigenous levies running amok" (*Sahara*, p. xiv), knowing that it was above all the two French commanding officers, Voulet and Chanoine, who ran amok, with

the tragic consequences that Porch describes. Likewise, one cannot avoid gasping when reading the statement in the same volume that "the only use the French ever did find for the Sahara was as a testing ground for atomic weapons" (p. 127). Has Professor Porch never heard of Hassi-Messaoud, where the French began to pump oil in 1956?

Readers who would like to "have fun" while reading works of African and colonial military history of higher quality than these should check out Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears: A History of the Rise of the Zulu Nation under Shaka and Its Fall in the Zulu War of 1879* (1998) or, closer to a broad historical view of the Sahara Desert, including the major river that flows through part of it, *The White Nile* (1995) and *The Blue Nile* (1983), both by Alan Moorehead. The three volumes in question prove that a skilled historian can write popular history that is fun to read and also accurate and instructive in ways that these Porch volumes are not.

Notes

[1]. Elizabetta Povoledo,"Pontecorvo and the Rebirth of *The Battle of Algiers*," *International Herald Tribune*, 17 March 2004.

[2]. The references are listed by chapter at the end of each book in a section titled "Notes." They are not, however, numbered individually and consecutively with index numbers placed in the text. Instead of a number, an identifying short quotation drawn from a specific page of the text is set beside the respective bibliographical information. Lists of such citations are identified by the numbers of the pages from which they are drawn. For instance, the first reference in chapter 2 of the Sahara volume, "The Shores of Tripoli," is identified on page 305 by the following quotation drawn from page 13 of the text: "in Mecca or Egypt". It is attributed to L.C. Briggs, *The Tribes of the Sahara*, p. 49. There is no indication in the text itself as to what may or may not be the objects of reference notes. This method of referencing is very unsatisfactory, even if it gives an impression of originality or at least of trendiness. Given the ubiquitousness of excellent typesetting software, why were Professor Porch and his publisher unable to agree on a traditional form of footnoting whereby references and notes would be numbered consecutively and placed at the foot of each page, with identifying index numbers placed in the text?

[3]. It would appear, however, that Porch really did not take these characters out of the archives. Of the 126 reference notes that adorn chapter 8 of *The March to the Marne*, only two refer to materials in official archives, in both cases, the Archives Historiques de la Guerre. There is also one reference to a manuscript in the Pelle Papers housed at the Bibliotheque de l'Institut. In fact, this chapter is based overwhelmingly on the same sorts of published memoirs and secondary materials that underpin much of the *Conquest* volumes, particularly the volume on Morocco.

[4]. Professor Porch claims that in 1900 Morocco was "virtually the only patch of Africa which had yet to be absorbed" into a European empire. However, Ethiopia and Liberia remained independent. Of the two, only Ethiopia would be conquered by a European power, Italy, in 1936. Possibly Porch views Liberia as a special case given that its political class at the time was composed of African-American and Afro-Caribbean settlers who treated the native Liberians as colonial subjects.

[5]. Many years later, in 1981, the term would be paraphrased by King Hassan II of Morocco as *le Sahara utile* to designate those economically exploitable portions of the former Spanish Sahara (Rio de Oro), particularly the phosphate-rich Bou-Craa region, that Morocco had occupied following the Spanish withdrawal in 1975.

[6]. Although Porch claims that the transcripts of the meetings of the Transsaharan Committee have disappeared (*Sahara*, p. 85), one notes that a book he includes in his bibliography, A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism* (1969), lists in its bibliography a set of dossiers on the Transsaharan Railway project available in the French National Archives in Paris. They originated from the Ministry of Public Works and have the following call numbers: F14 12436-12438. Kanya-Forstner's study itself includes a subchapter on "The Origins of the Senegal-Niger Railway" (pp. 60-72). Porch has not listed these archival materials in his bibliography.

[7]. On Paul Soleillet, see Jacques Valette, "Penetration francaise au Sahara et exploration: le cas de Paul Soleillet," *Revue Francaise d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 67 (1980): 253-267, and "Paul Soleillet a Medine: extrait du 'Journal des Voyages', 08/05/1881," *Le Mois en Afrique: Etudes Politiques, Economiques et Sociologiques Africaines* 200 (July, August, September, 1980): 130-135.

[8]. Borgnis-Desbordes's title during his whole period of service (1880-1883) in the Upper Senegal-Niger region was *Commandant-Superieur du Haut-Fleuve*. Contrary to what Porch writes, he was never "governor general of Senegal" (*Sahara*, p. 145). Senegal *per se* never

had a French governor general, only a governor and then, with the creation in 1895 of Afrique Occidentale FranÃ§aise (which did receive a governor general), a series of lieutenant governors. Likewise, Albert Grodet, the first French civilian governor of the Sudan never bore the title of governor general as claimed by Porch (p. 136). Neither was Louis Leon Cesar Faidherbe, who served two terms as Governor of Senegal between 1854 and 1865, ever "governor general of Senegal" as Porch states (*Morocco*, p. 157).

[9]. Regarding the Algerian perspective on this matter, by the time of Algerian independence in 1962, three railway lines had been pushed south into the northern reaches of the Sahara Desert. They terminated respectively, from east to west, at Touggourt, Djelfa, and Bechar (the latter having been extended onward from Ain-Sefra and reaching Bechar in 1906, thanks, in part, to Lyautey's efforts). The three lines were candidates for extension. A fourth rather peculiar effort to bridge the Sahara Desert by rail got underway after 1938 when the threat of war in Europe came as a reminder to French strategists that a transsaharan railway would enable the rapid and relatively secure movement of African troops northward. Initially, the plan was to extend the narrow gauge (105 cm.) Bechar line southward, but it was operating at near capacity owing to the opening of the Kenadza coal mines near Bechar in 1920.

Ironically, given the military origins of this renewed project, the Vichy regime, after the June 1940 defeat of France, gave this plan a stimulus by linking it to an existing standard gauge railway that ran 305 kilometers south along the eastern border of Morocco from a few kilometers west of Oujda to Bou-Arfa, a point in Morocco, 136 kilometers north of Bechar. This line had been opened in 1931 to serve several Moroccan iron, lead, and manganese mines and was linked, just west of Oujda, to the East-West Trans-Maghreb Railway, and, east, just over the Algerian border at Zouj Beghal, to a branch line running north some 50 kilometers to the small Mediterranean port of Ghazaouet (Nemours) where facilities for the transshipment of the iron, lead, and manganese had been developed. A plan had been established in the 1930s to extend this railway south from Bou Arfa to Bechar and Kenadza so as to expand carrying capacity from the coal mines. Indeed, construction began on this extension in February 1940.

The Vichy regime took over the project, naming it the "Mediterranean-Niger Railway," shortened to "Merniger," hoping that the new name would erase bad memories of the frequently proposed but never completed Transsaharan Railway. By February 1941, this line had reached Bechar (and Kenadza via a dual-gauge track). Construction south of Bechar was halted as a result of the allied landing in North Africa in November 1942; however, it resumed after the war, the rails reaching Abadla, 90 kilometers from Bechar, in 1948. Except for two short spurs opened along this line later on, nothing more was constructed. The line went into decline after Moroccan independence in 1956 and was closed, south of Bou Arfa, as a result of the frontier conflict in 1963 between Algeria and Morocco.

In subsequent years, the Algerian government launched plans to extend the Touggourt railway south at least to the oil fields around Hassi Messaoud and possibly on to Tamanrasset. Indeed, in 1983, this reviewer saw in the pages of *Le Monde* a classified advertisement placed by the Algerian Ministry of Transport calling for tenders for the construction of a railway from Touggourt to Tamanrasset.

See Bruno Carriere, "Le Transsaharien: histoire et geographie d'un projet inacheve," *Acta Geographica* 74, no. 2 (June 1988): pp. 23-38. Should a West Africa-Algeria rail link-up ever materialize, it would be confronted with a problem of varying track gauges.

[10]. Andre Le Reverend, *Lyautey* (Paris: Arteme Fayard, 1983), p. 303.

[11]. Richard Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan, 1839-1998* (Oxford: University Press, 1961), p. 123.

[12]. Le Reverend, *Lyautey*, pp. 106-107.

[13]. Ibid., pp. 335-337.

[14]. Ibid., pp. 294-299.

[15]. Ibid., p. 324.

[16]. Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey, "Le Role social de l'officier dans le service militaire universel," *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 March 1891.

[17]. Le Reverend, *Lyautey*, p. 133.

[18]. Ibid., p. 193.

[19]. Ibid., pp. 360, 390-391, 414-415.

[20]. See Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey, "Du Role colonial de l'Armee," *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 157 (1900): p. 323; and Le Reverend, *Lyautey*. pp. 176-177.

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