

April 1917
Avril 1917

Hand-drawn map of Hill 145. The map shows three main routes: 10, 12, and 11. Route 10 is labeled '10 BDE' and Route 12 is labeled '12 BDE'. Route 11 is labeled '11 BDE'. A circled area on the left is labeled 'Pimple'. Red star-like symbols are placed along the routes. The map includes handwritten notes like '10x12', '12x11', and '4x3'. Various numbered points are marked with circles, some of which are crossed out or have other markings.



1 April 1917

The Canadian Forestry Corps has its own General



The importation of timber to the British Isles, which was in the area of 10 million loads (presumably horse-drawn truck loads) before the war, is now one third that amount.

With the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, the shipping of timber is reduced again across the Baltic and Atlantic. This is why the work of the Forestry companies in Great Britain and France is so crucial. Local forests of all natures are being cut due to emergency war needs. Companies of timber cutters with their own mobile sawmills are dispersed where needed under British oversight.

Battalions of the Canadian Forestry Corps were sent separately to England, Scotland, then to France, under rather loose arrangements with the Colonial Office, the Board of Trade, the War Office and the British Army.

But Canadians insist that there should be one Canadian authority to link the dispersed companies from North Scotland to Jura in southern France.

On 1 April 1917, Colonel Alex McDougall, the leading officer of the Canadian Forestry Corps in Great Britain and France, an experienced Canadian lumber industrialist, is promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. He becomes the Director-General of Timber Operations in Great Britain and France.

Canadian Timber Operations in Europe are becoming bigger than a Division.

C.W. Bird, and Lt. J.B. Davies (CFC), *The Canadian Forestry Corps: Its Inception, Development and Achievements* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1919).

Robert Scott Troup, «Forestry», *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Twelfth Ed, 1922), Vol. 31, p. 102-3.



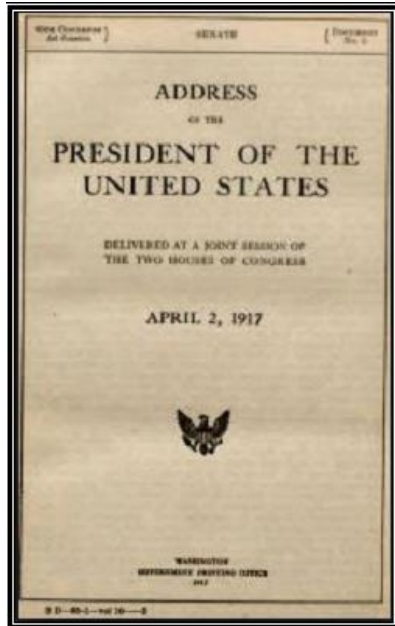
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

2 April 1917

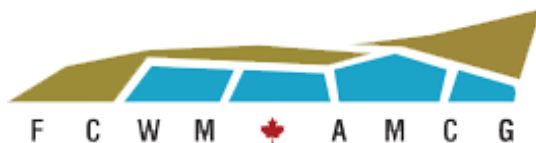
President Woodrow Wilson's angry speech to Congress



On 2 April 1917, the president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, who had promised in the election campaign of 1916 that the United States would not enter the war, now goes to Congress to ask for it.

«With a profound sense of the solemn and tragical character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the Government and the people of the United States; that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it; and that it take immediate steps not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defence, but also to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the government of the German empire to terms and end the War.»

Link and Leary, The Diplomacy of World Power: The United States, 1889-1920 (Edward Arnold, 1970), full text p. 139-147, quote p. 141-2, Extracted from Baker and Dodd, Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson (New York: 1927), p. 6-16.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

3 April 1917

Press War-Lords Eyeing a Victory at Vimy



General John Charteris is the Chief of Intelligence at British Grand Headquarters, in France. He ponders on the Vimy battle looming up:

«Byng, with his Canadians, has a very difficult job. He is going for a place (the Vimy Ridge) which quite defeated all efforts of the French last year. If he succeeds, and I think he will, it will be the end of all dangers of a big attack from the Germans in the north.

«Incidentally, if he succeeds, we shall have very considerable trouble with our Press arrangements. Beaverbrook [owner of the London *Daily Express*, and ‘Eyewitness’ for Canada] has already been on the warpath to insist on even more publicity for the work of the Canadians, and urges that it is absolutely necessary to boost the Canadians because of its effect in Canada. At the same time, Northcliffe [owner of the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *the Times*, visiting America] is sending from America long telegrams that the boosting of the Canadians is affecting not only American opinion, but also recruiting in Canada. He argues that the Canadians are beginning to say that their young men are being sacrificed and the British troops are being spared. We have to hold the balance level between these Press war-lords. »

Brigadier General John Charteris, *At G.H.Q.*, (1931), p. 211.

Photo: «*Daily Mail*» War Pictures.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

4 April 1917

Meeting of Wilhelm II and Karl of Austria



On 4 April 1917, the Kaiser of Germany, Wilhelm II, is in Homburg, Saar, where he is taking a month of rest.

He is visited there by Karl of Austria, who wants to discuss prospects of peace. Karl does not have the stomach for war and sees the terrible effects of the ‘Turnips Winter’ all around him. People are poor, dejected, tired of war, and opposed to more sacrifices for unstated war aims. Protests and labour unrest are becoming indicative of widespread demoralisation.

Karl proposes to Wilhelm that if he renounces his ambitions for retaining Alsace and Lorraine, thereby meeting some of the French unconditional requirements, Austria will grant Germany that part of Poland, Galicia, that was negotiated to come to Austria-Hungary after the war. This is a blunt *quid pro quo* between Emperors.

Wilhelm knows full well that he does not have the power, any more, to dictate policy to the

Hindenburg-Ludendorff régime. He is struggling to save his dynasty and winning the war is the only way out. Karl is also trying to save his Empire, but losing the war is his only way out.

Wilhelm’s answer is fateful: «– **I long for peace, but I cannot beg for it.**»

Virginia Cowles, The Kaiser (1963), p. 383.



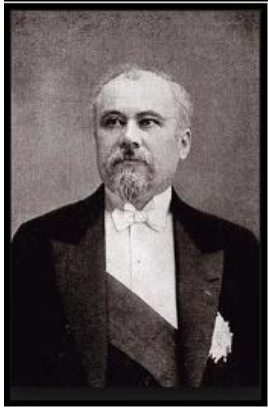
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

5 avril 1917

Le Président Poincaré rencontre le général Nivelle



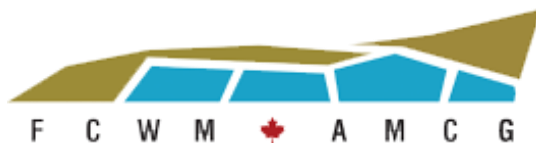
Le 5 avril 1917, le Président de la République française, Raymond Poincaré, reçoit confirmation que les États-Unis vont déclarer, dans les heures qui suivent, la guerre à l'Allemagne.

Sachant toute l'opposition qui se dresse contre les plans du Général Nivelle, Poincaré se rend au Grand Quartier Général de Compiègne, le lendemain, avec le premier ministre, Alexandre Ribot, le Ministre de la Guerre, Paul Painlevé, et certains généraux d'état-major. Il propose à Nivelle que son plan d'offensive soit retardé pour attendre l'arrivée des Américains. C'est un prétexte pour arrêter une campagne qui paraît déjà désastreuse, et qui a essuyé une critique beaucoup trop publique.

Nivelle est outré par la proposition, alors que la première partie de son opération, le bombardement préliminaire du côté anglais, à Arras et Vimy, est déjà en marche. Il offre encore une fois sa démission, ce que ni le Président, ni les ministres n'osent accepter, devant l'argumentation acharnée du Commandant-en-chef français qui défend son plan, et en considération des conséquences politiques qu'un veto civil des plans militaires apporterait au nouveau gouvernement.

C'est donc dans ce Conseil de dernière instance que Nivelle scelle le sort de son opération, qui doit s'enchaîner du nord au sud dans les prochains jours. — *Alea jacta est!* (Le sort en est jeté!)

Elizabeth Greenhalgh, The French Army and the First World War, (Cambridge University Press, 2014).



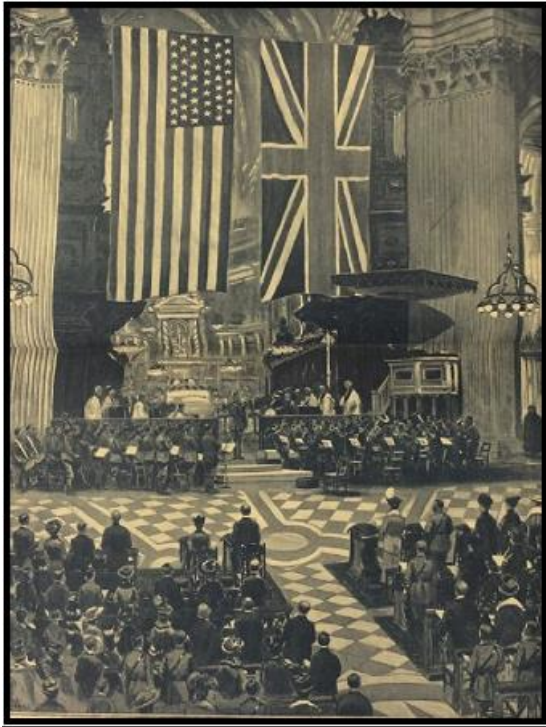
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

6 April 1917

US Declares War to Germany



The founders of the American republic espoused a foreign policy of friendly relations and commerce while distancing the United States from the quarrels of the Old World.

The emerging multi-ethnic makeup of the American population through the 19th century reinforced these policies.

German renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare and the British release of the Zimmerman telegram promising Mexico the return of its territories lost in 1848 in return for a Mexican declaration of war as a German ally finally swung American opinion towards war.

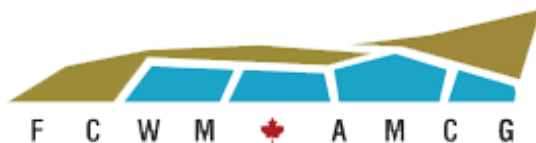
On April 6 1917, Congress voted overwhelmingly in both the Senate and the House for declaration of war against Germany.

Most historians would suggest that the declaration marked the emergence of the United States as a world power.

As for the Zimmerman telegram, its interception and use by Britain remains one of the greatest intelligence coups.

Wikipedia: American Entry into World War 1.

Photo of religious ceremony at St-Paul Cathedral to mark entry of United States into the War. Société d'Éditions et de publications, Librairie Illustrée Jules Tallandier, Le Panorama de la Guerre:: Encyclopédie générale d'Histoire et de Chronologie, Paris(1918), VI.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

7 April 1917

The Kaiser's « *Osterjeshenk* »



In Germany the political situation is very tense after a winter of privations and harsh cold. Unrest in the streets calls for the end of the war.

In particular, the Left in the Reichstag is up in arms that the old Prussian electoral rules still favour the conservative and privileged classes of society and refuse equality of suffrage in the aim of preserving control of decision-making through an overarching imperial system that denies the parliament its democratic influence.

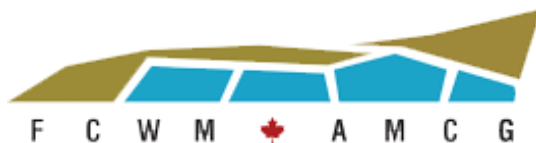
The situation is such that some conservatives concede that if something is not done, the situation that has happened in Russia may very well happen in Germany.

The Chancellor of Germany, Bethmann Hollweg, convinces the Kaiser that some pronouncement must be made recognizing the plight of the people and promising that due regard will be given to lighten their burden.

But the draft statement that he submits for the Kaiser is changed by the Imperial Cabinet and the Easter Message delivered on **7 April 1917** is soon widely termed «**The Kaiser's Easter Eggs**» when all that should come out of

it is only due to hatch after the war is won.

Fischer, Germany's Aims, p. 336;
Gordon A. Craig, Germany, p. 381.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

8 April 1917

Foch rencontre Cadorna



General Foch, who lost his Army Group under Nivelle, is now in charge of the staff planning of the «H Plan» with Seventh and Eight French Armies in the south of France.

The Plan is designed so as to not be taken by surprise if the Germans decide to break Swiss neutrality and round the French defences by the south, or rush on Italy from an unexpected angle. For the purpose, on **8 April 1917**, Foch meets the Commander of the Italian Forces, **General Luigi Cadorna**, a man whose armies are just emerging out of the snows in the Alps.

« **The Commando Supremo was prepared for a strong Austrian attack, but sought assurances of Franco-British assistance if Germany joined her ally in an offensive against Italy. Foch and Cadorna considered the means by which French and British units might best help Italy in such an emergency. The transport, concentration and employment of these units were the object of a prolonged study, whose excellence and usefulness were demonstrated by the events which occurred six months later on the Italian front.**»¹

¹ Hunter, FOCH, 126;
Liddell Hart, Man of Orleans, I:249.



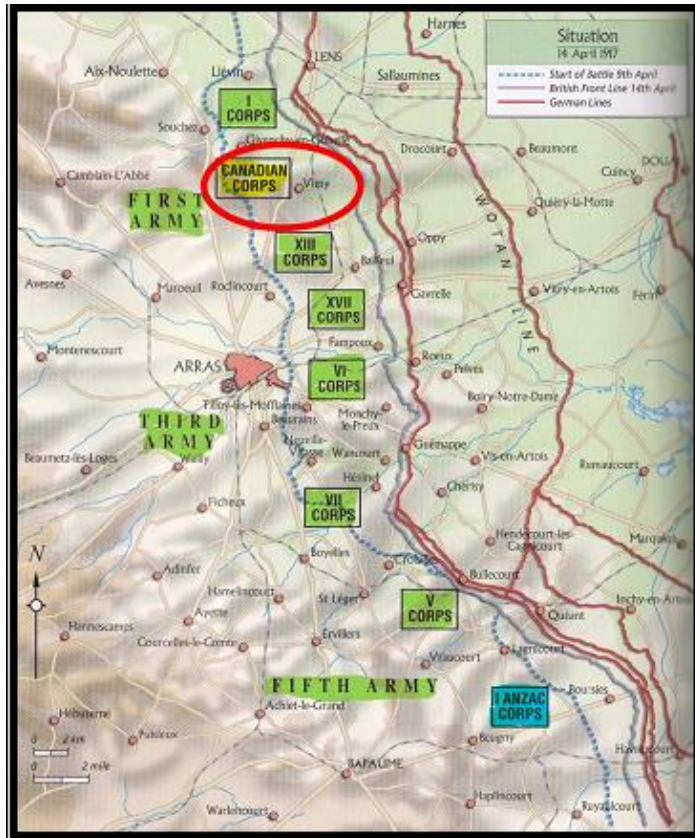
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

9 avril 1917

La Bataille d'Arras



Le 9 avril 1917, le Groupe d'Armées formé des 1^e, 3^e et 5^e armées britanniques autour d'Arras se lance dans une offensive à l'emporte-pièce contre les défenses allemandes, dont certaines le long de la nouvelle Ligne Hindenburg.

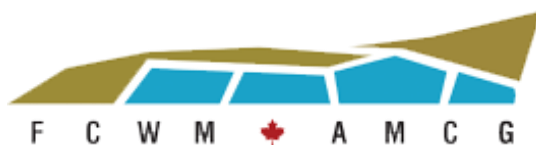
Huit corps sont de la partie: six britanniques, le Corps canadien et le corps Australien/Néo-Zélandais.

Il s'agit là de la première phase de la grande offensive du printemps du général Nivelle.

Ce premier mouvement vise à faire déplacer les réserves allemandes vers Arras de sorte qu'une attaque française, dans le sud, à Rheims, puisse, 7 jours plus tard, frapper soudainement et pénétrer les lignes de défenses allemandes privées de réserves.

Ce grand coup est en préparation depuis la fin de la bataille de la Somme, à l'automne 1916. Toute l'industrie de guerre s'est concentrée sur cet effort.

La première journée s'avérera un succès sur presque toute la ligne d'assaut.



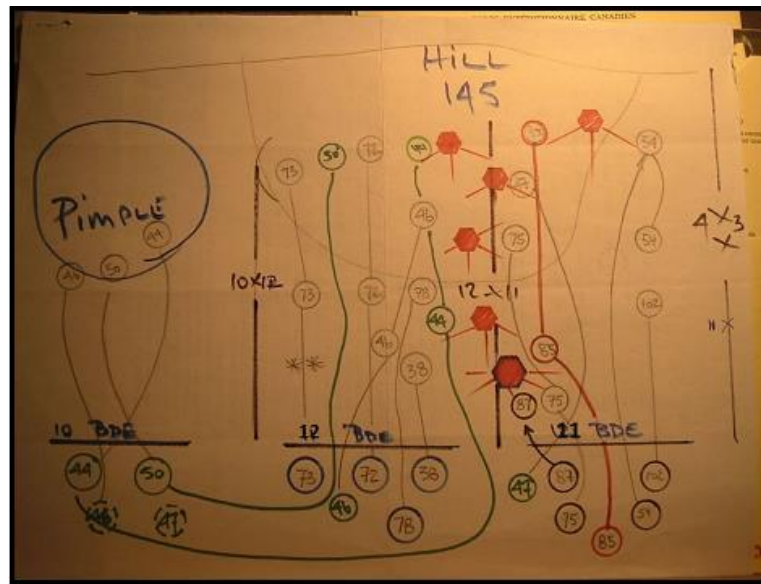
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

10 April 1917

The overnight fight for Hill 145



By the end of the day, Monday, 9 April, the three Canadian divisions on the right had crested the ridge and assumed their positions on top of their respective objectives.

Fourth Division, on the extreme left, however, had to fight until today, **Tuesday, 10 April 1917**, in the afternoon, to get to the top of Hill 145, the highest point where the monument stands today.

Following great difficulties for the two assaulting brigades, which were caused by German strongpoints, in the early part of the operation, battalions that had been kept in reserve for the later assault of the Pimple had to be sent up the hill to reinforce depleted and disorganized units, pass through them, and push the assault up the hill through the night and morning.

— The confusion, noise and hand-to-hand combat in this overnight battle were vicious.

Berton, *Vimy*, Chap 13– «The 4th Division», p. 261-74.

Nicholson, *CEF*, Chap 8.

The sketch shows the battle of 4 Div.



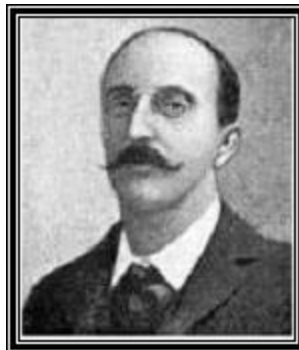
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

11 avril 1917

Le sergent Bissolati pousse l'Armée italienne vers Trieste



Leonida Bissolati-Bergamaschi est un journaliste très connu, ministre socialiste dans le cabinet du premier ministre Paolo Boselli d'Italie. Il ne possède pas de ministère mais agit comme intermédiaire entre le Cabinet et le haut commandement de l'Armée italienne. Il a été volontaire, sergent, au début de la guerre, et a été blessé, se méritant une décoration pour son courage.

Il ne manque pas de courage quand vient le temps de représenter auprès du général Luigi Cadorna, le commandant-en-chef des forces italiennes, le désir des ministres de voir se préparer une autre offensive sur la rivière Isonzo. Cadorna doit tout tenter pour saisir Trieste que les Italiens veulent absolument conserver à la fin de la guerre.

C'est la onzième attaque que Cadorna doit préparer sur l'Isonzo, pour saisir les premières opportunités du printemps. Les pertes y ont déjà été monstrueuses, mais Bissolati n'en démort pas.

Le problème des Italiens, au début d'avril 1917, c'est qu'ils ont peu de renseignements sur les Autrichiens-Hongrois qui leur font face. Un plan concerté de ceux-ci a fait que leurs prisonniers ont raconté de fausses histoires sur ce qui se passe de l'autre côté des montagnes. Les opérations du printemps sur l'Isonzo et la Trentino vont commencer dans un brouillard qui n'est pas qu'humide.

Source: John Gooch, The Italian Army and the First World War, (2014).



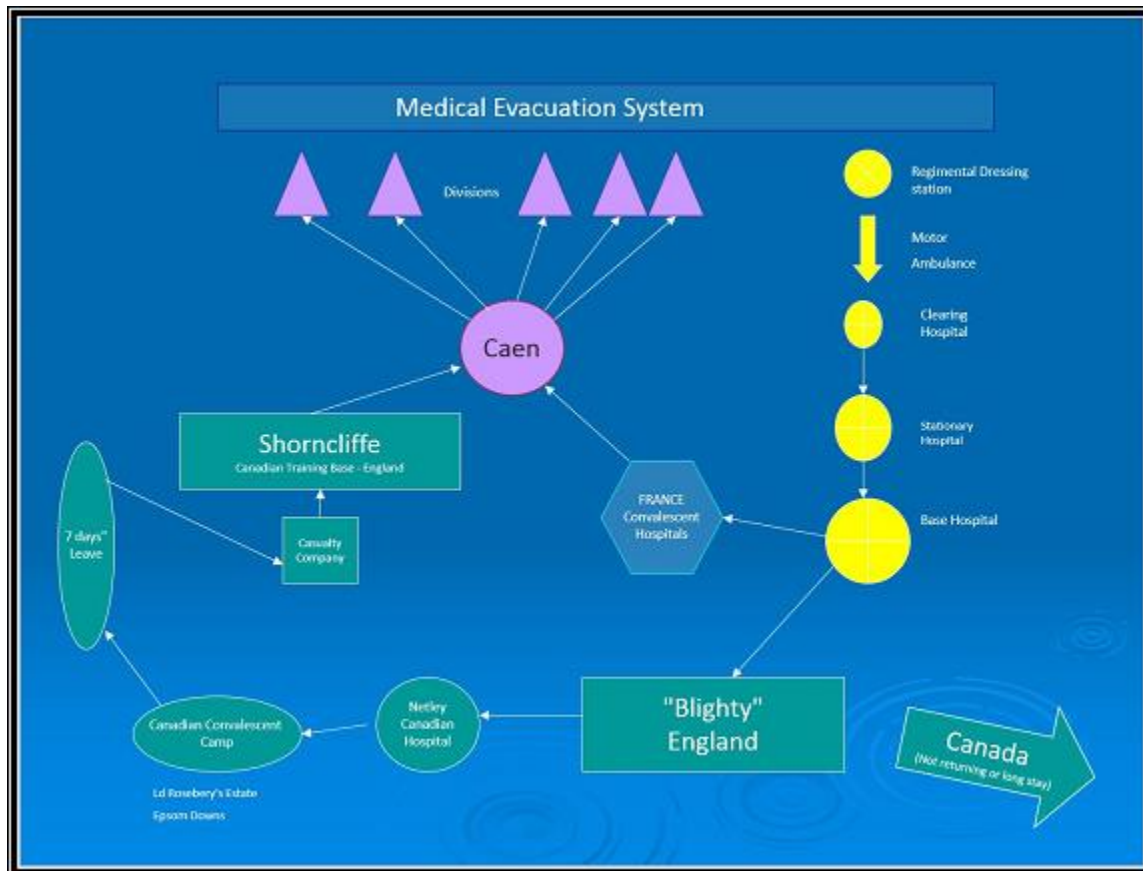
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

12 April 1917

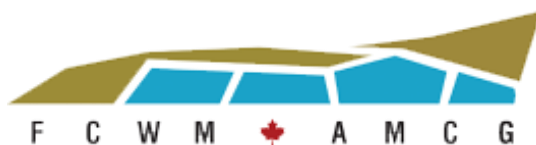
The Medical evacuation system



In the month of April 1917, the British Army will have 120,000 casualties.

Already, in the four days since the attack of 9 April, perhaps 50,000 evacuations of wounded men have taken place, with a large proportion needing long hospitalisation in France or England. Many die along the way, in trains, motored or horse-drawn ambulances, in barges and ships on their way back.

This shows the medical system where a Canadian is patched up and sent back, or shipped home.



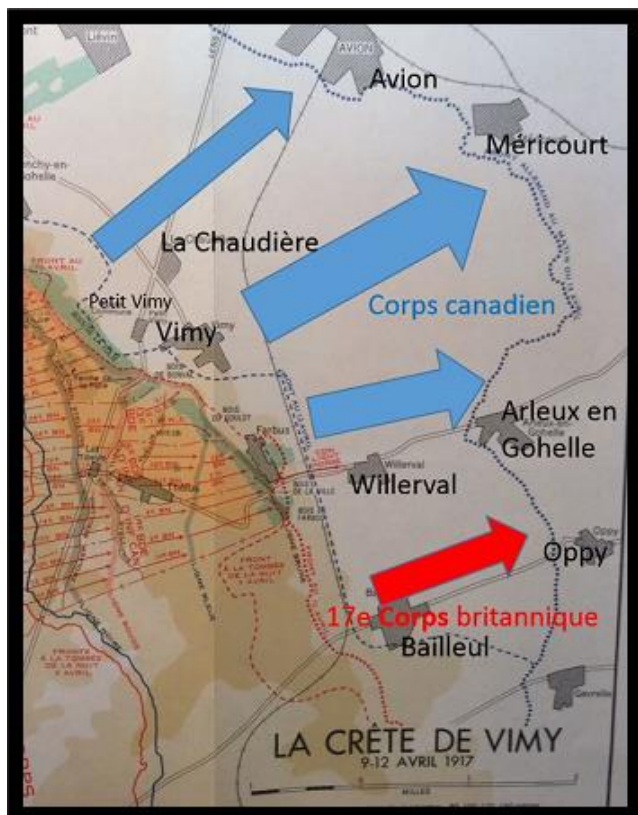
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

13 avril 1917

Pas de temps à perdre à Vimy



Après la capture du Bourgeon [*The Pimple*], hier, à l'extrémité nord de la crête de Vimy, il ne faut pas perdre de temps pour maintenir la pression sur les forces allemandes en retraite.

Malgré la difficulté à faire avancer les canons à travers le marasme causé par leurs propres obus, l'infanterie descend la face est de la crête et marche rapidement vers les villages détruits qui abritent encore les arrières-gardes.

On va même jusqu'à saisir les canons de l'ennemi et les retourner contre lui.

Le but de cette avance est de presser la troisième ligne de défense OPPY-MÉRICOURT-AVION avant qu'elle puisse être encore renforcée. Cette ligne est atteinte le matin du **13 avril 1917**.

C'est devant cette ligne que la bataille de Vimy se terminera officiellement, demain. Juste au delà d'Avion se trouve la voie ferrée Lens-Arras, une artère maintenant vulnérable.

Nicholson, *Le Corps expéditionnaire canadien*, p. 287-9.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

14 April 1917

Newfoundlanders at Monchy-le-Preux



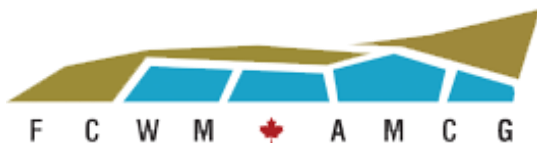
While the Canadian Corps is involved in the Battle of Vimy, the three corps to its south (XVII, VI, XII, belonging to Allenby's Third Army) are involved in the First Battle of the Scarpe, the advance from Arras toward Bapaume, in which two divisions are north of the Scarpe River, and the rest to the south.

In VI Corps, the glorious 'incomparable' 29th Division is involved, on **14 April 1917**, in the assault of three well-defended villages, FAMPOUX, MONCHY-LE-PREUX, and GUEMAPPE. The Newfoundland Battalion has fought valiantly in Gallipoli, in Beaumont-Hamel, and in Gueudecourt with the 29th, and Monchy-le-Preux proves, before the end of the day, another special page in its history.

This time, the Newfoundland Commanding Officer is himself involved in a great deed: he rallies a handful of men in his Command Post when the village is threatened with a counter-attack and fights a long battle with machine guns to keep the village:

«In a welter of fire the line settled again where it had been at daybreak and Colonel Forbes Robertson could walk wearily away from Monchy, satisfied in the knowledge that by his own efforts he had saved it from recapture. For this he did not receive a Victoria Cross – that was an honour reserved for another act of bravery a year later– but there now stands in Monchy a Caribou, the monument which marks every place where Newfoundlanders excelled. Nowhere is it more worthily installed.»¹

¹ Major Kenneth Macksey, MC, The Shadow of the Ridge (1965), p. 106.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

15 April 1917

General Edmund Allenby's exertions



The Battle of Arras included, from north to south, the battle of Vimy Ridge, in First British Army; the First Battle of the Scarpe, in Third Army; and the battle against the Hindenburg Line, in Fifth Army.

Sir Edmund Allenby, a cavalryman, was the commander of Third Army, the centerpiece, starting directly from Arras.

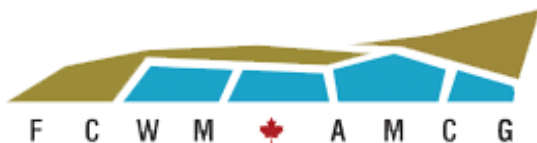
Allenby has been known as 'The Bull' for a long time among fellow officers. His character is such that he has difficulties expressing subtleties. He communicates

with Haig with grunts and noises that they both understand very well, having known each other for years as cavalry officers, but the staff has to try to translate their body language into statements. These men are not stupid, just inarticulate. They can write very well.

However, in the Battle of the Scarpe, which ended yesterday, Allenby pushed too hard. Three of his division commanders decide to present a complaint direct to Field Marshal Haig stating that operations should have been stopped earlier by their Army Commander to avoid casualties. This is not common. Haig has to recognize that Allenby has lost the confidence of many generals around him.

The fact that the Canadians did so well in Vimy has also taken the limelight out of a good first day in Allenby's battle. —The Bull is far from finished. But he is hurting bad on this day.

Jeremy Black, «Edmund Allenby, 1861-1936», in Andrew Roberts et al. (eds), **The Art of War: Great Commanders of the Modern World 17th - 20th Centuries** (Quertus, 2009), p. 268-75, see p. 270.
Matthew Hugues, «Edmund Allenby» in Beckett, and Corvi, **Haig's Generals** (2006), p. 12-32, see p. 27.



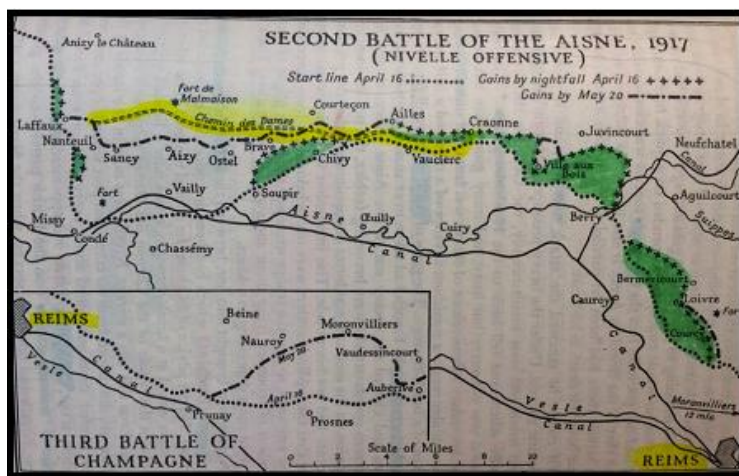
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

16 April 1917

Le Chemin des Dames



The Second part of the Nivelle Offensive is the French part, the Third Battle of Champagne. The French 'Reserve Army' under General Michelet comprises four armies with 1,2 million men. Its objective is to attack on a 60 kilometer-wide front between Rheims and Soissons through the old road known as the Chemin des Dames.

Nivelle has prepared a plan that aims at penetrating deep into German territory with the help of massive artillery.

The hope is that the first part of this campaign, the British Battle of Arras, on 9-14 April, has forced the Germans to move their reserves to the north, weakening their south flank.

Nivelle is full of hopes, expecting that the successful tactics that he has used in Verdun will work in this all out rush. But the Germans were not fooled by the plan. They knew exactly what was coming. Their network of well-sited machine-guns mowed men as scythes in fields of grain.

— *La Bataille du Chemin des Dames* will become well known for proving that dead men can't advance.

Dupuy & Dupuy, *Encyclopedia of Military History*, (Rev. Ed. 1977), p. 969.

Map from Cyril Falls, *The Great War*, p. 278.



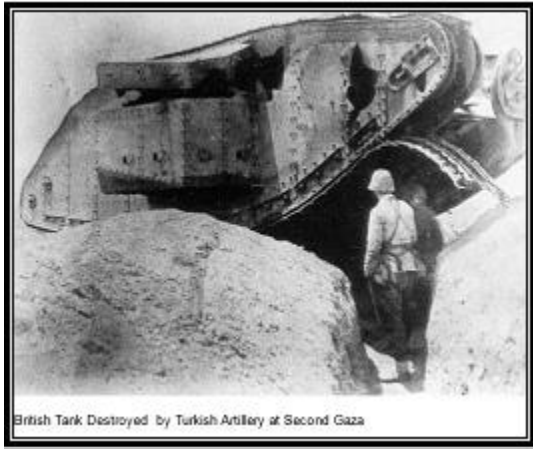
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

17 April 1917

Turkish Victory at Second Battle of Gaza



After the British defeat in March at the First Battle of Gaza, Lieutenant-General Archibald Murray assured London that his next attack would succeed.

The Turks, meantime, rather than venture an offensive of their own, decided to strengthen their positions at Gaza.

Murray's plans were for an attack using similar tactics as practiced on the Western Front: a frontal attack behind massive artillery bombardment, gas and tanks.

Unfortunately, the artillery was simply inadequate in number, the gas ineffective and the tanks unreliable and too few to make a difference.

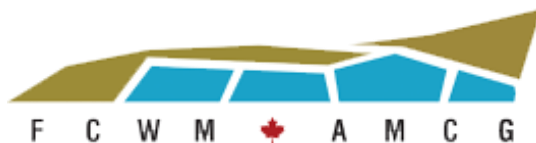
The Turks fought from well prepared defences and inflicted what one British history described as a “costly total defeat” in the only set-piece battle fought in this theatre. Casualties were very heavy: nearly 6500 killed, wounded and captured.

— This is the second poor showing that Murray has made in as many months. A search is on to replace him.

Further information:

Anthony Bruce, [The Last Crusade: The Palestine Campaign in the First World War](#);

Eugene Rogan, [The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East](#), (2015).



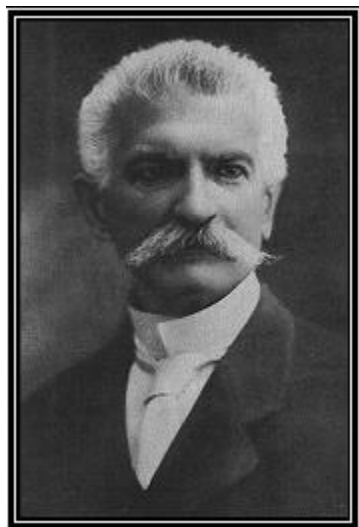
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

18 April 1917

Conference of Saint-Jean Maurienne



The Conference of Saint-Jean Maurienne, on **18 April 1917**, on the frontier between Italy and France, gathers the prime ministers of the nations involved in the Treaty of London, notably David Lloyd George of Great Britain and Alexandre Ribot of France, to decide on some aspects of the division of Asia Minor after the War.

Italy agrees to some compensations for her relinquishing parts of the Mediterranean shores to which she has claims.

But the main point of discussion of this conference is highly secret. The prime ministers ponder the recent secret offer of peace terms by Austria-Hungary, and her acceptance in principle that some compensations would be granted to Italy.

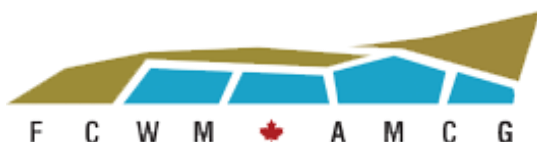
Italian Foreign minister Baron Sydney Sonnino refuses such an offer as he thinks that this is not in Italy's interest, and is being tended by the Dual Monarchy in the aim of disrupting the Entente between countries united against Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The Austrians are worn out and dejected by the war and want to emerge out of it with their empire. But Italy will not let this happen and throws her veto as member of the Treaty of London.

The Austrians are also disillusioned from their alliance with Germany, in which they fear a domination which is already being felt through unfair German war policy.

—This will be the best opportunity missed for some time...

Cruttwell, History of the Great War, (1934, Rpt 1969) p. 366-7.
Lloyd George, Memoirs, IV:2006-8.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

19 April 1917

Difficulties with Salonica



The resupplying of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in Salonica has become very difficult.

With unrestricted submarine warfare, 22 British ships were sunk in the first 12 days of **April 1917**.

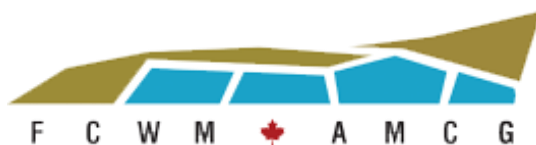
This is a very tough sacrifice for the British government as there is no prospect of this force making any difference.

The French are warned that if General Sarrail does not show success with upcoming operations, the situation will dictate withdrawal of British troops to Egypt, where they are definitely needed. No French Government could politically survive the withdrawal of British army and navy from Greek waters, allowing the Greek government to join the Germanic Alliance Powers.

The matter will be debated again at a Paris conference (early May) showing a difference in policy between British and French Governments.

Prime minister David Lloyd George wants a force there only if it brings results!

Hankey, Supreme Command, II: 633-5.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

20 April 1917

Meeting the British Prime Minister for secret business



Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma is a French citizen serving in the Belgian Army. His vast, influential European family, is split by the war: some of his brothers are in the Austrian-Army.

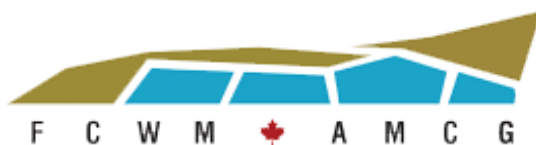
Sixtus has been involved for some time in secretly carrying messages from Emperor Charles of Austria to authorities of the Entente with openings toward secret negotiations for peace.

On 20 April 1917, Sixtus meets the prime minister of Britain in Paris, as he returns from the conference of Saint-Jean Maurienne, where the Austrian offer was discussed among leading politicians.

David Lloyd George's own inclination would be to pursue this contact for all it's worth, but the Italians have vetoed a reply to the offer. The terms of the Treaty of London of 1914 are clear that no signatory of the treaty can deal with an enemy power without the agreement of the other signatories.

— The Italians will not let the Austrians get away with a rewarded abandonment. They want Vienna to feel the full measure of their wrath.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, IV: 2008-11.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

21 April 1917

Nivelle – The Abysmal failure



The second part of the Nivelle Offensive, what some call the Third Battle of Champagne, or the Second Battle of the Aisne, or the Battle of the Chemin des Dames, results, on **21 April 1917**, in abysmal failure.

The political difficulties surrounding the preparations of this campaign were probably the main causes of its failure. It was birthed in open controversy. So much was said in public about it, including in the newspapers, that the secret of its launch was known by all, including the Germans. A government was toppled about it, and the new Minister of War himself had been one of its detractors in Opposition.

The second factor is undoubtedly the tactics of the Germans. Hindenburg and Ludendorff have completely changed the defensive concept, giving machine-guns an unprecedented role in the first

lines of defence. Their network of crossing fires were impenetrable.

Thirdly, despite warnings from all quarters, the Commander-in-Chief who had overpassed all of his superiors after Verdun, could not be seen to be mollified by their exhortations. He did not change his plan after the surprise withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line.

The result is 120,000 casualties in 6 days, but more important, the morale breakdown of the French Army. The recovery from this fatal blow will take one year, and a new Commander-in-Chief.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

22 April 1917

British-American Relations

The Balfour Mission



The British delegation under the direction of **Sir Arthur Balfour**, the former Prime minister of Great Britain, arrives in America on **22 April 1917**.

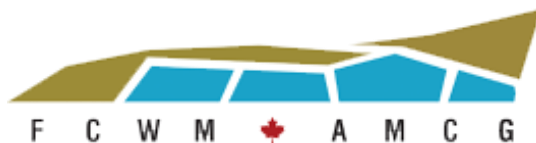
The mission has the objective of sharing information with the United States government and forces, so as to coordinate the crossing of soldiers to Europe, and the sharing of war equipment, severely lacking in America.

Mr. Balfour is accompanied, to his right, by the Minister of Trade and Commerce of Canada, **Sir George Eulas Foster**, and on his left by **Major General G. T. M. Bridges** and **Rear Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair**. **Lord Cunliffe**, from the Bank of England, and **Mr Walter Layton**, Department of Munitions, are also present.

— This delegation will shortly be followed by a French one, no less happy to welcome the New World to an Old War.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, III, 1682.

Picture: TIMES History of the War, Vol XIII, p. 22.



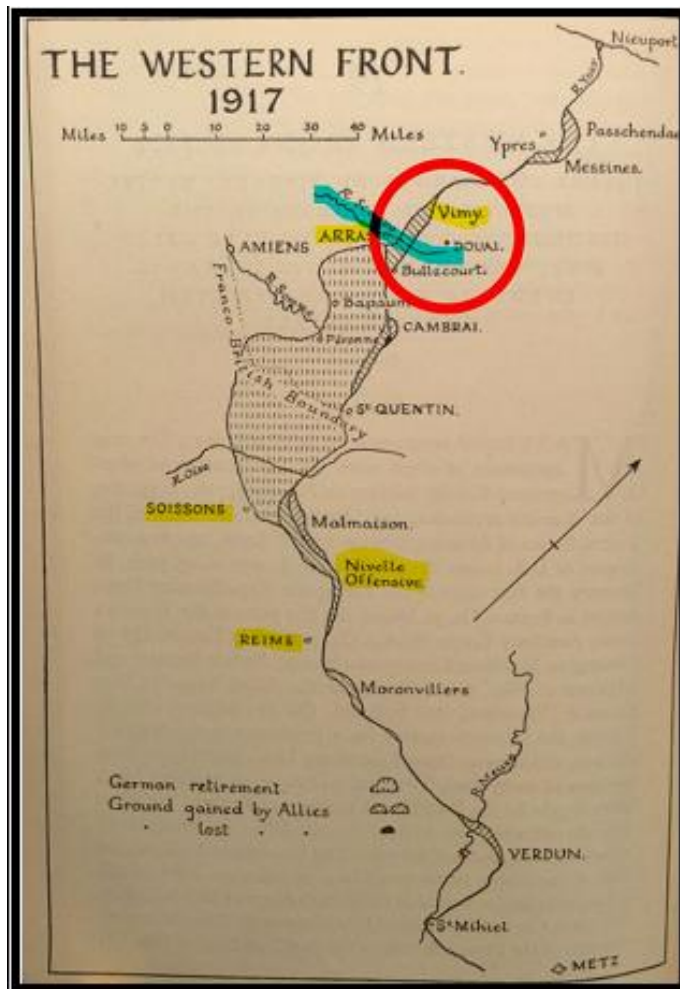
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

23 April 1917

Second Battle of the Scarpe (23-28 April)



The First Battle of the Scarpe was the portion of the Battle of Arras in Third British Army that straddled the River Scarpe, to the east of Arras. It lasted from 9 to 14 April, with substantial advance.

This was followed by the Second Battle of Champagne, launched on 16 April in the French sector, between Reims and Soissons. This battle has not stopped yet, but its results were assessed on April 21st as having been a failure.

On 23 April 1917, the British re-start the Battle of the Scarpe near Arras. They want to progress to the the Droncourt-Quéant defensive line behind Douai, which is the northern prolongation of the Hindenburg Line.

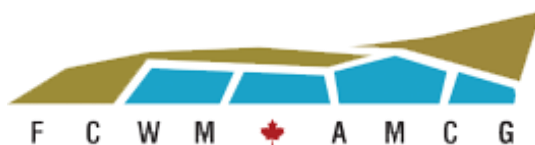
Divisions of the First and Third British Armies therefore go back on the offensive. This includes the Canadian Corps, which faces the villages of **Arleux-en-Gohelle** and **Fresnoy**, to the north of the Scarpe River. The heights of Vimy help with observation for the

artillery, which has been re-positioned.

— But the slogging is tough.

Nicholson, CEF, Chap 9.

Map, Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I*, 208.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

24 April 1917

The Nivelle Offensive



By 24 April 1917, the Second Battle of Champagne has lost its steam.

Since 16 April, Sixth French Army and Tenth French Army have lost 30,000 killed, 100,000 wounded, 4,000 missing.

Sixth Army had twenty battalions of Senegalese Tirailleurs, some 15,000 men. 1400 were killed on the first day alone. This is the largest battle in which they have taken part so far. Many suffered from the April cold and had to be evacuated for frostbite.

Mangin, the Commander of Sixth Army, was a colonial officer for many years. He was behind the idea of having a '*Force Noire*' of African men brought to France to take part in combat as infantry. 50,000 'Senegalese' from various parts of Africa were regimented with French officers and NCOs.

Other regiments of Zouaves are distributed throughout the armies to fill the depleted ranks. They fight with courage often with outdated equipment and insufficient munitions.

Ian Sumner, *'They Shall Not Pass': The French Army on the Western Front 1914-1918*, (Pen & Sword, 2012), p. 156-8.



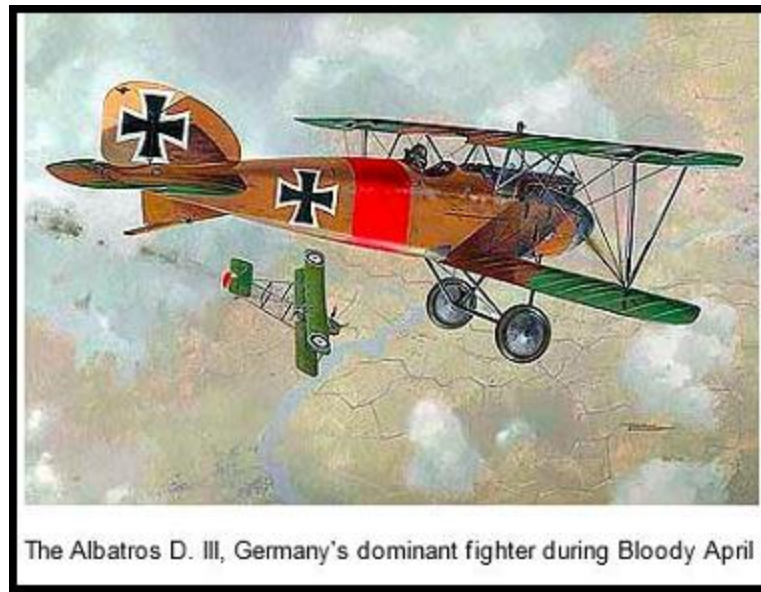
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

25 April 1917

Bloody April in the Skies



The Arras offensives were supported by intense aerial activity. The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and French squadrons flew record numbers of hours in artillery observation, in general reconnaissance, ground strafing and bombing.

The German Jastas (fighter squadrons), despite being heavily outnumbered, outfought the allies. Detailed historical analysis shows that the RFC lost 245 aircraft, the French 55, almost exactly as claimed by the Germans. The best estimate of allied victories, based on German records, is 76 German losses.

Two principal factors decided the April air battles. First was the technical ascendancy of the German Albatros D.III fighters. Second was the superior training of the Jasta pilots, most of whom had flown two-seater observation aircraft in combat, compared to 40 hours of basic training in the RFC before neophyte pilots were rushed to the front

Further Information: Norman Franks, Russell Guest and Frank Bailey, [Bloody April...Black September](#) (London, 1995).



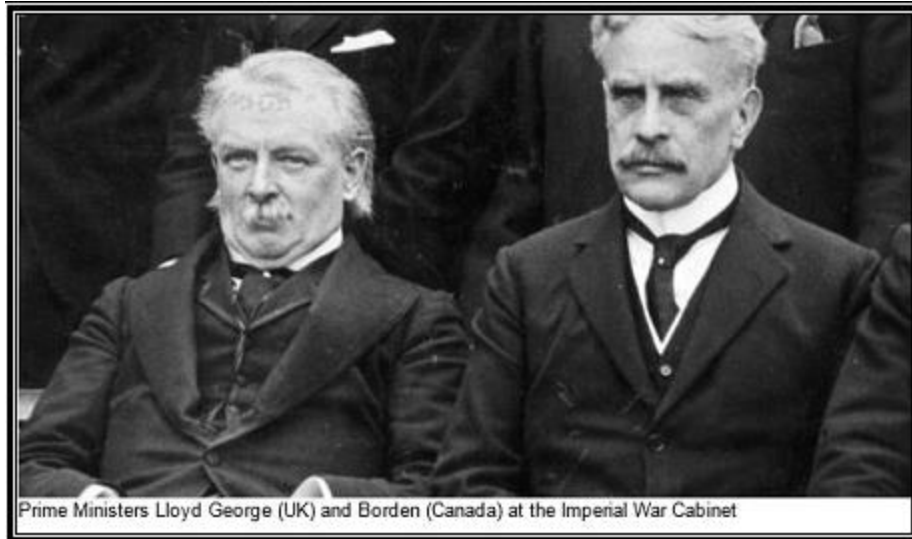
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

26 April 1917

Sir Robert Borden at the Imperial War Cabinet



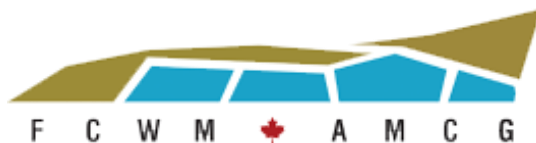
Faced with enormous casualties, British PM Lloyd George recognised that to gain more manpower from the Dominions, a greater share in the strategic direction of the war had to be conceded.

This took the form of the Imperial War Cabinet of Dominion premiers which met throughout **April 1917**.

Borden became a firm ally of Lloyd George in resisting calls for a negotiated peace and in demanding total victory over Germany.

Borden realised that Canada's war effort opened a path to the nation taking control over its own destiny. Sir Robert and his South African colleague, Jan Smuts, together authored the most important result of the War Cabinet, **Resolution IX**, which stated that once the war was won, discussions would begin towards “full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations.”

Further information: Tim Cook, Warlords: Borden, Mackenzie King, and Canada's World Wars.



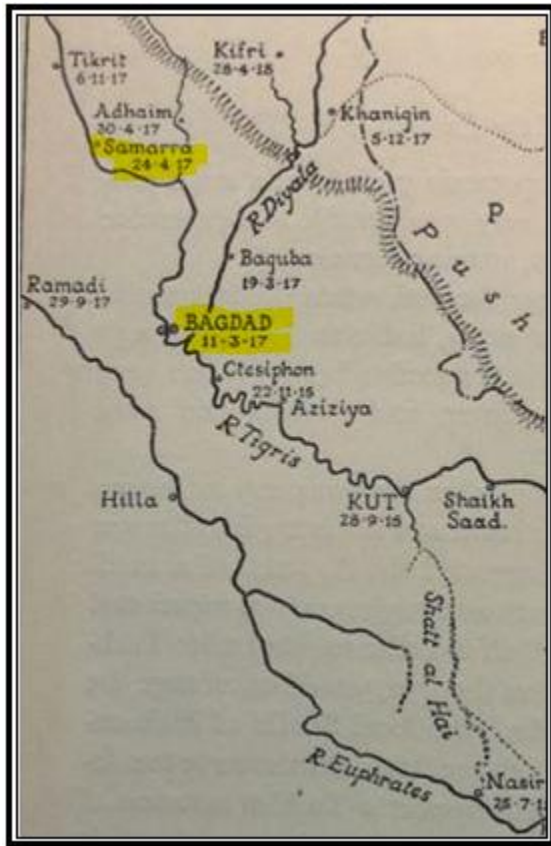
Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

27 April 1917

The defeat of Ottoman forces in Samarrah



Fresh from his success in securing the fall of Baghdad during the month of March, Mesopotamia regional British Commander-in-Chief Sir Frederick Stanley Maude launched an offensive further north with a combined Anglo-Indian force.

His main objective was to capture the **city of Samarrah** and thus to take control of the Samarrah railway to prevent the Turks from transporting reinforcements.

Proceeding up the Tigris river while facing heavy Turkish resistance Lt.-Gen. Maude succeeds in capturing Samarrah on this day, **27 April 1917**, thus ensuring that the railway will be under the control of the British.

The victory is costly with an estimated 18,000 casualties during the campaign.

Further information: BGen Sir James Edmonds, [A Short History of World War I](#) (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 377-93, Map p. 378.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

28 April 1917

Bloody April on the Seas



Since the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, allied shipping had suffered increased losses: 500,000 tons in each of February and March.

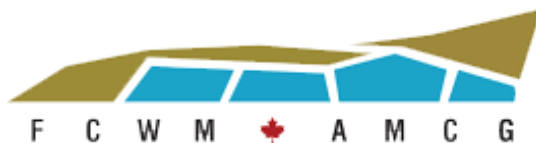
April 1917 proved to be the worst month of the entire war with 860,000 tons sunk. German submarine losses in this period were only nine U-boats.

By the end of April, British wheat stocks amounted to only six months of rationed consumption. The Admiralty remained opposed to convoys, arguing that delays inherent in convoys caused losses greater than the U-boats.

Rear Admiral William Sims, appointed as US Navy liaison officer in London was shocked by the sinkings; he assessed that if unchecked, the U-boats could defeat Britain. He urged that US destroyers be immediately deployed to Queenstown, Ireland.

— They joined the escorts when in late April, the British Admiralty at last endorsed the convoy system.

Further information: TIMES History of the War, Chap 94: «The United States at War», Vol. 13: p. 1-36.
Wikipedia, U-boat Campaign (World War I)



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

29 avril 1917

La Chasse du Lion d'Afrique jusqu'à la rivière Rufiji



La guerre entre les forces coloniales britanniques et allemandes en Afrique se poursuit. Mais les Allemands sont durement éprouvés par la suprématie de la Marine royale britannique sur toutes les mers. Ils sont livrés à leurs propres ressources dans une guerre de guérilla inégale où ils sont toujours en défense et repli, sans espoirs d'approvisionnements d'Europe.

Le seul avantage que possèdent les Allemands est leur commandant, **Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck**, «**Le Lion d'Afrique**», un grand leader de guérilla dont le but est devenu de forcer les Britanniques à dépenser sang et trésor, pour les affaiblir.

Il s'agit d'une guerre de mouvement à pied, marquée de longues marches difficiles, d'escarmouches rapides et dures, de poursuites indécisives dans les jungles et montagnes où la maladie et la chaleur font plus de victimes que les armes.

Au cours de 1916, le Général sud-africain Ian Smuts, commandant-en-chef de forces sud-africaines, britanniques-indiennes, rhodésiennes, belges-congolaises, et portugaises, ainsi que des milliers de soldats et porteurs indigènes, a mené la vaste campagne britannique contre tous les Protectorats allemands.

En avril 1917, von Lettow est repoussé au fleuve Rufiji, dans le coin sud-est du Tanganyika (aujourd'hui Tanzanie). Il est traqué jour et nuit; —mais il ne se rendra pas avant l'Armistice.

Times History of the War, «The Campaign in German East Africa», (Pt. 1) Vol X: Ch. 155; (Pt 2) XII: Ch. 183; (Pt 3) XII: Ch. 206; (Pt 4) XIX: Ch. 276.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG

30 avril 1917

La décision critique sur les convois



Lloyd George fit ses propres démarches, consultant des officiers subalternes en secret, contrairement à la pratique. Il apprit ainsi que de 2,500 navires marchands, 2,400 se limitaient au commerce côtier; aussi peu que cent devaient être protégés des attaques en haute mer.

L'Amirauté avait insisté que les cargo étaient incapables du genre de navigation nécessaire pour les maintenir en convois. Lloyd George leur montra qu'ils circulaient déjà en convois dans la Manche. À la fin d'avril, le Cabinet de Guerre décréta qu'il serait imposé à l'Amirauté d'utiliser le système des convois. **Le 30 avril [1917]** Lloyd George et Curzon s'imposèrent à l'Amirauté, s'assurèrent que des convois étaient bel et bien organisés, et virent à la création d'un état-major général naval.

«Il n'est pas formellement correct de dire que Lloyd George a changé la doctrine navale pendant sa visite, puisque les amiraux avaient reçu quelques jours auparavant les instructions qu'ils devraient s'y soumettre, mais il s'est bien agi là d'une des interventions décisives de la guerre. Et celle-ci rendit Lloyd George encore moins respectueux des opinions des experts qu'il l'avait été auparavant.

«Les convois n'ont pas immédiatement résolu le problème: environ un demi-million de tonnes a été coulé plus tard au sein des convois. Toutefois, la crise avait été réglée.»

Citation traduite de T.O. Lloyd, *Empire to Welfare State: English History 1906-1967* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 80-1.



Friends of the Canadian War Museum – Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre

<https://www.friends-amis.org/>

© 2020 FCWM - AMCG