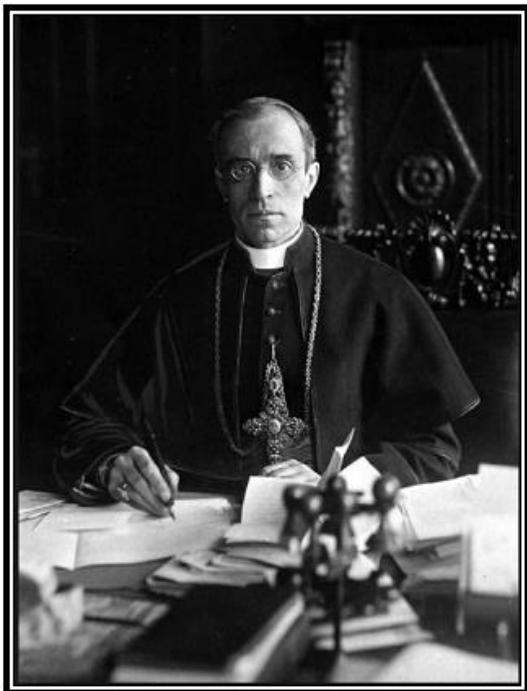


1 August 1917

Papal Nuncio Pacelli in the thick of it



The Catholic Pope, Benedict XV, has been involved, since the beginning of the war, in diplomatic contacts between nations to try to facilitate an end to hostilities and make *rapprochements* possible through a network of Church liaison around the world.

Benedict has now appointed a Nuncio, or special diplomatic representative, to Germany, in view of carrying the Pope's message and formally offer the Vatican's mediation.

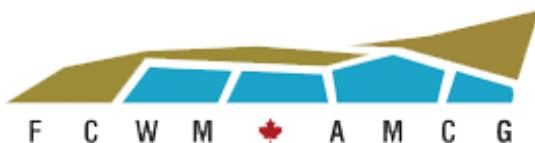
Archbishop Eugenio Pacelli opened a Nunciature in Munich in April 1917, with a view of establishing contact with the King of Bavaria, the Sovereign of the most Catholic state of the German Empire, and then meeting the Chancellor of Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II with a message of Peace.

Rome, on 1st August 1917, that a message of offer, drafted with his help, is being sent by Benedict to all governments involved in the War.

This diplomatic overture follows many representations made previously by the Pope on behalf of all Christianity under hardship, because of conflicts between state governments.

—Nuncio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, just became the most important diplomat in the world.

Craig, Politics of Prussian Army, 331;
Cruttwell, 371-2;
Fischer, Germany's Aims, 405ff;
Kirchberger, Eyewitness, 87.

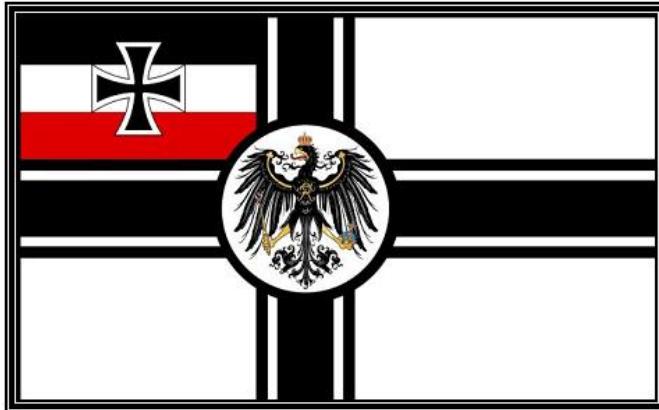


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2 August 1917

German High Seas Fleet Riot



After the Battle of Jutland, the major ships of the German High Seas Fleet (HSF) were kept under the protection of port defences, in Wilhelmshaven, and other ports of the North and Baltic Seas.

From this point, most good sailors and officers are sent to serve with the more active submarine or destroyer services, rather than being kept idle at their station.

Rations and preferment are switched away from the HSF. The remaining sailors in the great battleships are kept doing fatigue in ports. They soon become frustrated with their role and ashamed of their status.

On 2 August 1917, 350 crewmen of the dreadnought *Prinzregent Luitpold* stage a protest demonstration in Wilhelmshaven, asking for action at sea.

Two of the ringleaders, Reichpietsch and Kobis, will be executed by firing squads while others will be sentenced to prison. Court martials bring discipline back.

But morale is floundering around the imprisoned Dreadnoughts. During the remaining months of the war, secret sailors' councils will be formed on a number of the capital ships.

The example of the Bolshevik Revolution is having its permeating effects in Europe.

David Howarth, *The Dreadnoughts*, Ed.-in-Ch. Henry R. Grunwal, (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, Series *The Seafarers*, 1979), p. 158.

Illustration: German Navy War Ensign, 1903-1918. http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Imperial_German_Navy



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3 August 1917

Colonel Lossberg's defence in depth



On 3 August 1917, the first assault by the British in Flanders has been going on for three full days. Haig has four armies involved in it: Second Army (Plumer) on the right flank of a 25-mile line; Fifth Army (Gough) in the Center; a small French army; then Fourth Army (Rawlinson) in the north, along the Channel coast.

Gough's four corps were tasked with the main assault, with II Corps in the most prominent position to advance deep into enemy territory toward the Broodseinde-Passchendaele ridge.

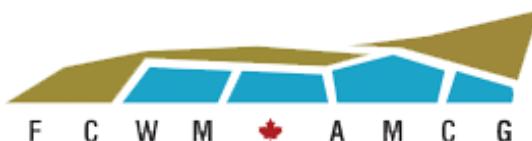
But it has now become clear that the results expected are not being realised. First, the rain started with the battle and turned out to drench all involved, to the detriment of the plodding attaquants.

The German defences, set up under the direction of Fourth German Army's Chief of Staff, **Colonel Fritz von Lossberg**, an expert in the defence in depth recently honoured for his vision, were also

laid so as to have six rows of concrete bunkers with machine gun fire criss-crossing the fields. Sparse troops remain among them, but a network of counter-attack troops at various depth are ready to rush the weak point. This disposition spares loss of front line troops to barrage artillery fire. It also protects machine gunners from any but pin-point accurate heavy artillery.

— Lossberg, with a mind like a steel trap, has nailed the formula for defence in wet Flanders.

For more information: Woolf, Chap 8; Sheffield and Bourne, Haig, and Charteris, At GHQ.



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4 August 1917

« Draw War Loans – The Time is Tough, but Victory is Safe »

After the recent events in the Reichstag, in which the democratic parties have attempted to have a «Peace Resolution» drafted to clearly state war aims and put aside the need for conquest to end the War, the High Command lost confidence in politicians to get popular support for their more aggressive aims.

From this point, with a view of gaining political influence, the military command gets involved in political propaganda.

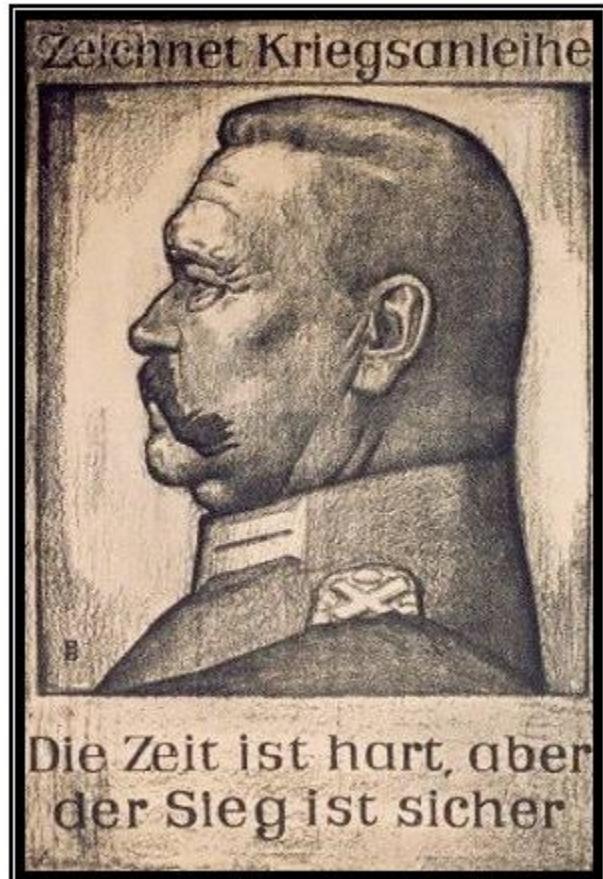
Hindenburg and Ludendorff get involved in messaging directed mostly but not only at the army, outlining that the Peace Resolution ‘would baulk Germany of the total victory which she would otherwise win.’

The necessity for Germany to gain territory so as to be secure is constantly emphasized.

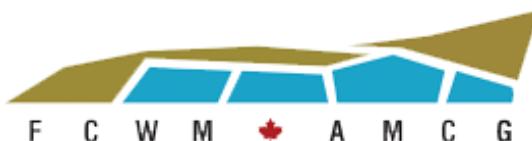
Attacks on the advocates of negotiated peace are accompanied by references to the dangers of democracy.

An official army pamphlet goes to the extent of saying that:

« **Those who do not stop the democratic and international efforts at the threshold are working for the enemy.** »



Craig, Politics of the Prussian Army, 330-1.



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5 août 1917

Vingt-sept règles personnelles

En août 1917, le capitaine Lawrence se voit maintenant attaché au Commandant en chef des forces arabes, le Prince Feisal.

Il sait que les prochaines étapes vont être dures, mener la cavalerie en chameaux dans une guérilla du désert contre les emplacements et chemins de fer turcs en Palestine et en Syrie.

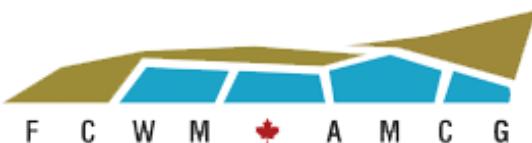
Lawrence sait qu'il représente l'Empire britannique auprès de ces forces divisées par des rivalités tribales et par des chefs impulsifs dont les notions du combat sont de culture ancienne, formées par le désert et la Terre Sainte, autant de la Mecque que de Jérusalem.



Lawrence prend des notes de ses expériences. En août 1917, il dresse pour lui-même les «Vingt-Sept Articles», qui vont guider ses agissements envers les Arabes.

Le vingt-septième Article est celui-ci: «Le début et la fin du secret de comment agir envers les Arabes est l'étude incessante de ce qu'ils sont.»

Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia, «Twenty-Seven Articles, by T.E. Lawrence, August 1917», App. IV, p. 960-5.



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6 août 1917

Une autre conférence à Londres

Les représentants du gouvernement et du haut commandement militaire français se retrouvent à Londres encore une fois pour discuter de stratégies inter-alliées.

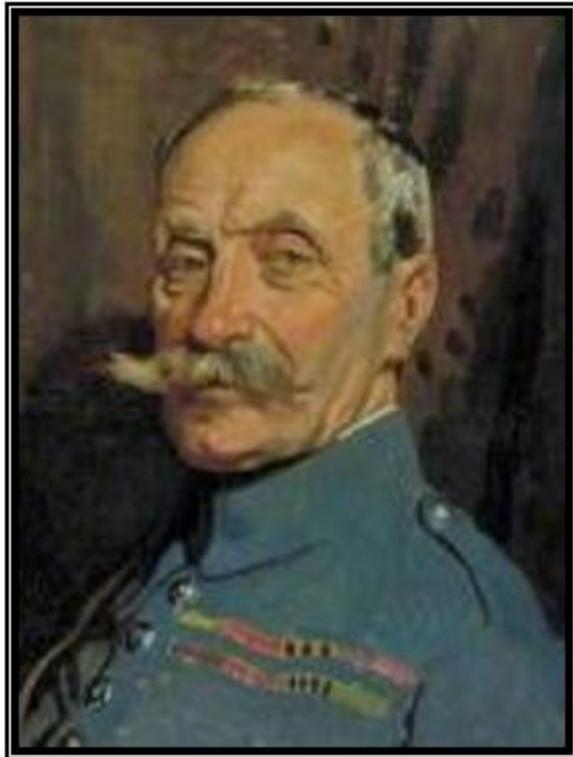
Les agenda des participants sont diamétralement opposés. Lloyd George veut que les Français le supportent pour envoyer du matériel en Italie pour que le focus soit là, de sorte à sortir les Autrichiens de la guerre. Mais il ne peut même plus obtenir le support du Général italien Cadorna, qui croit que c'est déjà trop tard pour cette année.

Les Français, qui seuls savent jusqu'à quel point leur armée est mal en point, ne peuvent d'ailleurs considérer un tel effort pour le moment.

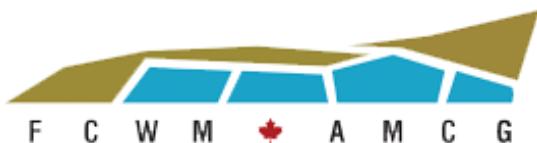
Par contre **Foch** réitère encore une fois sa conviction que les forces britanniques et françaises devraient être unies par un commandement commun, de sorte à coordonner leurs efforts, et il cite la campagne en Flandres des Anglais en exemple.

Le Général Robertson, pour sa part, qui défend les intérêts de Haig, s'objecte aux remarques qui sont faites à l'encontre de la stratégie de Flandres, présentement en cours.

Allez vous y retrouver!



Hunter, FOCH, 138; Liddell Hart, Man of Orleans, I:256.



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7 août 1917

Le débarquement qui n'eut pas lieu

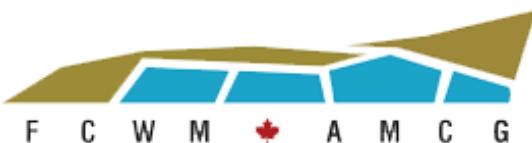


Les plans du Maréchal Haig pour son offensive en Flandre belge incluaient une poussée le long de la Manche par la Quatrième Armée du général Rawlinson, aidée par un débarquement de fusiliers marins, ainsi que de fantassins lui appartenant. Ceci devait se produire le **7 août 1917**.

Mais les revers subis par les Première armée française et Quatrième, Cinquième et Deuxième armées anglaises depuis le début de la campagne, le 31 juillet, ne permettent pas aux troupes qui devaient débarquer de la mer de connecter sur le littoral avec des éléments qui auraient pu avancer assez loin vers l'est. L'opération de débarquement est donc annulée, *sine die*, d'une façon qui amène les généraux Rawlinson (4e), Plumer (2e) et Gough (5e), de même que le général Foch lui-même, à douter de toute idée qui tend vers des percées profondes et des poussées à l'emporte-pièce. Comme dans la Somme, et comme il se reproduit maintenant à Ypres, rien ne permet de tels plans .

Ces généraux qui ont toujours supporté Haig ont appris leurs leçons dans la boue. Rien d'autre que des objectifs très limités ne sont réalistes.

Leon Wolff, In Flanders Fields, 146-7.



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8 August 1917

A fighting Q-Ship goes down with pride



On 8 August 1917, in the Bay if Biscay, HMS *Dunraven*, commanded by **Captain Gordon Campbell VC**, spotted UC-71. *Dunraven* was a Q-ship, a heavily armed merchant ship with concealed weaponry, disguised as a vulnerable cargo vessel.

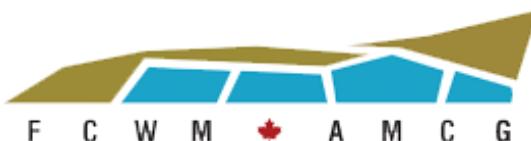
At 11h43, UC-71 opened fire at about 5 000 yards. The Red Ensign was hoisted and Dunraven returned fire with a 2.5-pounder. Campbell ordered to shoot well short to encourage the U-boat to come closer. He pretended to escape but actually reduced speed and made smoke. Fake SOS wireless signals were sent and a party was sent off, pretending to abandon ship.

Shells began hitting *Dunraven*, detonating her depth charges and setting her stern afire. Yet her naval crew remained hidden letting the fires burn. Then a 4-inch gun and Navy crew were uncovered, revealing a warship. *Dunraven* blasted away, UC-71 submerged.

Dunraven was then hit by a torpedo. UC-71 surfaced, shelled *Dunraven* and again submerged. Campbell replied with two torpedoes that missed, and around 3 pm, the undamaged U-boat left the area. *Dunraven* was sinking with one man dead.

— Dunraven was a proud example of Merchant grit. Two Victoria Crosses were awarded to crewmen.

Gordon Campbell, My Mystery Ships, (Doubleday, Doran, 1929) p. 264-281, 295.



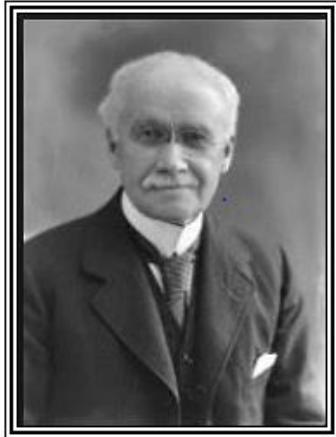
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9 August 1917

The Montreal Newspaper Baron behind the Military Service Act

The newspaper wars continue throughout Canada on the merits of the Military Service Act. Montreal is particularly hard hit by the conflict as British and Anglo-Canadian Imperial interests clash with French-Canadian opposition to the law.



On 9 August 1917, the summer residence in Cartierville of **Hugh Graham**, the rich owner of Montreal's leading newspaper **The Star**, is damaged by dynamite.

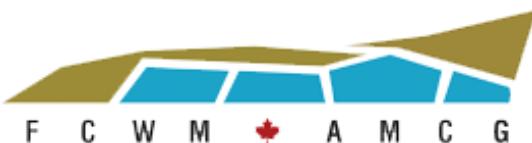
The Star has been outspoken and brash about the lack of interest in the war shown by French Canadians, and Graham's life-long support of Imperial connections and the Canadian Conservative Party makes him a particularly high profile conscriptionist.

Graham is a man of very deep pockets whose pretensions to leadership far exceed his political abilities. But for his trouble, he is granted a peerage as **Baron Lord Atholstan of Huntingdon** (Québec) in the year.

– Newspaper Barons like to throw their weight around, but sometimes it bounces back.

Enn Raudsepp, «Graham Hugh, 1st Baron Atholstan», Dictionary of Canadian Biography
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/graham_hugh_1848_1938_16E.html

Martin Auger, « On the Brink of Civil War: The Canadian Government and the Suppression of the 1918 Quebec Easter Riots», Canadian Historical Review, 89:4, December 2008, pp. 503-40.



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10 août 1917

La guerre en Afrique de l'Est Allemande



Au cours de l'été 1917, les combats en Afrique de l'Est¹ ont repris entre les forces impériales britanniques² et les forces impériales allemandes.

La Force de Protection de l'Afrique de l'Est Allemande (Schutztruppe), sous le commandement du célèbre Colonel von Lettow, a dû passer l'hiver dans des terres innondées par les pluies, pour refaire ses rangs de soldats et porteurs africains. Dès juin, elle fait l'objet d'attaques de forces britanniques en provenance des ports de Kilwa et Lindi.

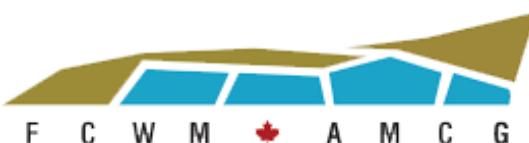
Les combats sont les plus durs de toute la campagne. Les colonnes de marche des généraux Van Deventer (commandant-en-chef britannique après le départ de Smuts) et Bieves font face aux guerillas de von Lettow et du capitaine von Liebermann, dans de vastes étendues au sud de la rivière RifiJI.

Von Lettow doit se replier encore une fois, mais l'acharnement des combats de guérilla impose des pertes importantes aux attaquants.

—Le Lion d'Afrique ne se rend pas, ne donne pas de quartiers, et n'en demande pas...

¹ Aujourd'hui Tanzanie.

² ...formées de contingents de la Rhodésie, de l'Inde, de la Côte d'Or, du Niger, de la Gambie et de l'Afrique du Sud. Sources: F. R. Cana, «East Africa, Military Operations», EB (1922), XXX: 282-4; Edward Paice, Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa, 328-9, 336; Ross Anderson, The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign 1914-1918, (Port Stroud, Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014), p. 230-1.
Photo: King's African Rifles.



11 August 1917

The Great Socialist Conference of Stockholm



At the beginning of the war, socialists of Europe had vowed that they would not allow governments to declare wars in which workers were the chief victims. But the assassination of Jean Jaurès, on the first day of the war, a leading European socialist, marked the failure of this universal rally. Under various national versions of ‘Truce’ (« *Burgfrien* »), socialist and labour parties united behind their national governments. Workers put on various uniforms to kill each other in the name of the states.

But the idealistic Marxist notion of an association of the Workers of the World was not killed. Labour leaders from many countries succeeded in staging a conference for Socialists in Stockholm, in the summer of 1917, for which the recent Russian Revolution was not inconsequential.

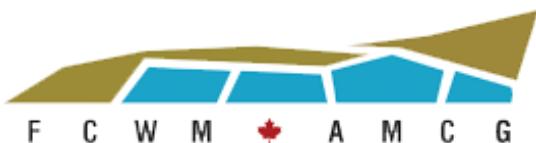
But the Conference could not remain out of the reach of national policy. Germany allowed representatives to attend in the hope that workers’ agitations would destabilise their enemies’ social order, as achieved in Russia with substantial support. But allied governments refused to grant passports to representatives to attend, fearful that such disunity would hatch.

The great Conference that was not joined nevertheless had an important influence on socialist, unionized, and labour movements throughout Europe.

— It marked a departure point where Labour sought to organize itself into a political force and prepare for the after-war New World Order.

Jean-Jacques Becker et Gerd Krumeich, La Grande Guerre: Une Histoire franco-allemande (Tallandier, Texto, 2012), p. 95-7.

Picture : <https://socialhistoryportal.org/stockholm1917>



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12 August 1917

France in the eyes of French Canada



In the context of the Conscription debates that are raging throughout Canada, the province of Québec is in a different predicament.

Although the debate in English Canada is almost all focused on the support for the British Empire, a segment of the propaganda in French Canada, and particularly in Québec, is centered on the theme of supporting France in the War.

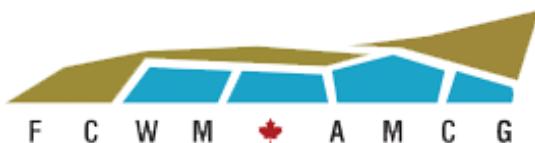
Newspapers are taking sides as to if Canada has, or has not, a duty to come to the aid of the source of French presence and culture in Canada.

The debate in the newspapers is coloured by letters from «Joseph Canada», (later to be revealed to be two male nurses at the Laval Hospital in Troyes), with Frenchman Philippe Millet, expounding on the merits of service overseas for French Canadians.

The links between French Canada and France were tenuous before the war, especially because of France's ultramontainist Catholicism, seen as misdirected by Papal Catholicism in Canada.

Not only will some French Canadians not serve the colonialist British Empire, but they will not serve French libertarianism gone awry.

Djebabla, Mourad, « Le Québec et la première guerre mondiale 1914-1918 – Présentation Dossier thématique », Bulletin d'Histoire politique, 17:2, p. 17-20.



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13 August 1917

Propaganda doing its job



Bucolics.

— He is searching for any way possible to divert Haig from his ‘duck walk’ and get the Italians to bear the brunt for a while.

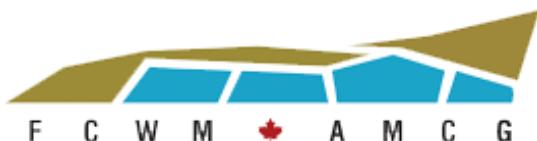
While the British-French offensive in the Flanders has now been going on since July 31st, and successive disillusionments have come to mar every attempt to progress through the stinking mud fields and lugubrious water holes, the reports in the Press have been describing a clear success.

At GHQ, General Charteris, the Chief of Intelligence, is drafting notes for the prime minister (whom he resents) to use in a speech. His diary says, in early August:

« I do not know what form the speech itself will take, but I hope it is not too much Georgic; all that is really necessary is to keep Britain in the limelight and the Germans in the Limehouse.¹ »

But Lloyd George is not in the mood for

¹ Charteris, At GHQ, p. 241. Cartoon from Punch, 1917.



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14 August 1917

China declares war on Germany and Austria

In the last years, China was involved in many turmoils in political, economic and social policy and in foreign relations. The government of Yuan Shih-kai (Shikai), who became President of a new Republic after the fall of the Manchu Dowager and the revolution of 1911, crumbled when he pushed his dictatorship to the extend of attempting to re-create a monarchy and imposing his own dynasty. He died immediately after having been toppled in 1916.

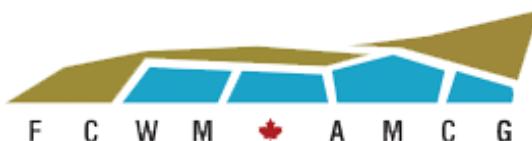
This was followed by confusion and uncertainty when various parties and military leaders competed for leadership in Peking. It soon became apparent that Western powers ensconced in large and beneficial ‘concessions’ in China were the only ones with enough money to influence the course of Chinese politics toward stability and unity.



But the Western Powers had fractions among themselves because of the War and Entente Powers were determined to use the Chinese Government to ban Germany from the concessions. This political struggle saw many Chinese contender fall because of their inability to achieve ‘solvability’ with the Allies.

When Great Britain, France, Japan and the United States were satisfied that **Feng Kuo-chang (Feng Guozhang)** was their man, they forced him to declare war against Germany and Austria on **14 August 1917**. Important German assets accumulated over 20 years of vigorous trade were seized or deported.

TIMES History of the War, Chap 211, «The Intervention of China», XIV: 109-44.



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15 August 1917

“...this is your battle; attack when you are ready...¹”



The point of attack for Sir Arthur Currie's first mission as Canadian Corps Commander was Hill 70. Overlooking and flanking the city of Lens, the Germans had held the area for over two years.

Just as at Vimy, training at all levels was integral. Troops rehearsed movements over muck up terrain using maps and compasses. Currie's plan for the battle was to overrun Hill 70, and having cleared it, to set up a massive defensive zone. If Hill 70 could be taken, he thought, the Germans would counter-attack in the killing zone, where artillery and machine guns would prevail.

On 15 August 1917 at 4:25 AM the barrage of more than 200 artillery pieces begins. The infantry moves in waves shortly afterwards, as troops from the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions assault the height where their aim is to set up so as to dominate the city low ground.

Their German counterparts had been told to hold the hill, knowing they were up against a Canadian division “comprised of first-rate men.²”

— «Surrender was not an option, even in the face of such odds: but German determination was no match for Canadian steel.»³

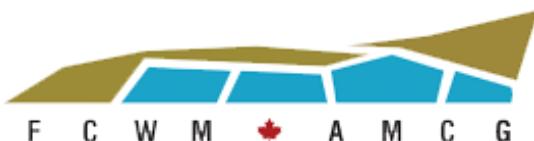
Cook, Shock Troops, see p. 264-295;

¹ p. 265;

² p. 285;

³ p. 287;.

Photo: A view of Lens during bombardment from Canadian lines. August, 1917, Credit: Canada. Dept. of National Defence/Library and Archives Canada/PA-001793.



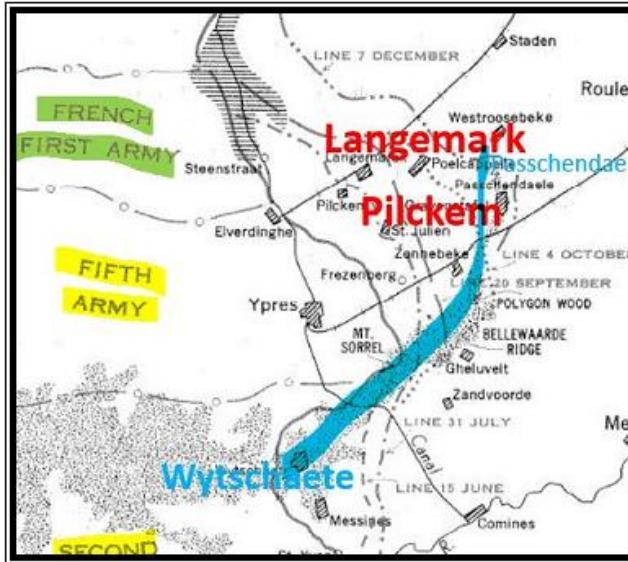
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16 August 1917

The Battle of Langemark, 16-18 August 1917



The operation in the Flanders started with a first push by the Fifth Army in the center. That achieved an advance of 3000 yards in the first day. German counter-attacks immediately pushed back 1,000 yards. This «Battle of Pilckern» ended on August 2nd.

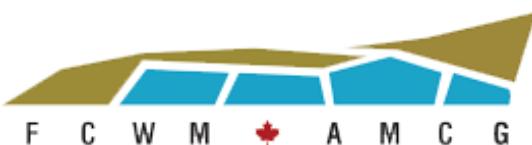
Fifth Army reorganized and staged a second push, two weeks later, «**The Battle of Langemark**», slightly to the north, to regain the momentum.

On 16 August 1917, in rain such as had not been seen in August for four years, British divisions again scrambled forward in the mud, attempting to gain the high ground of the Passchendaele-Wytschaete crest.

The original aim of these operations were to burst through the defence and penetrate into Belgium, to the Channel ports. But like in the Somme, the first attempts are dictating that the strategy will have to be shifted to attrition.

—When nothing else can be achieved on the ground, killing Boche becomes an end in itself.

Nicholson, CEF, p. 207.

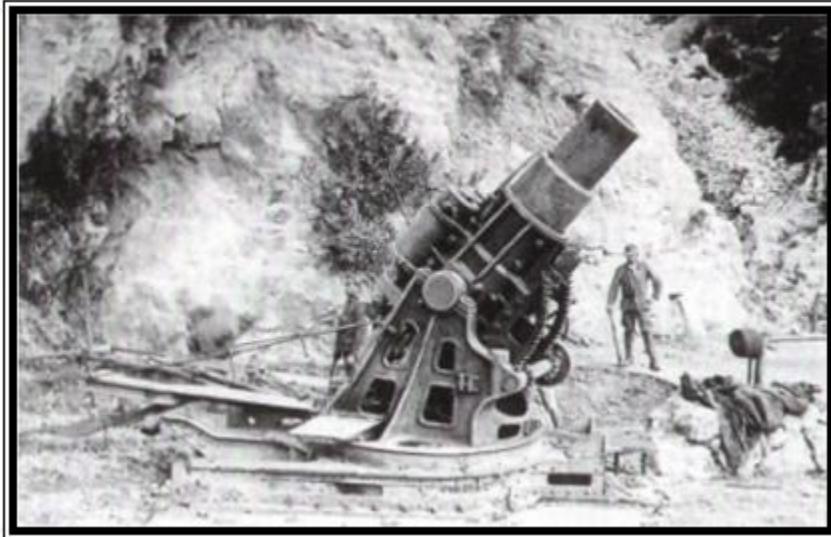


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17 August 1917

Eleventh Battle of the Isonzo



Sensing Austrian weakness, Italian Chief of Staff Luigi Cadorna launched an eleventh Isonzo offensive with 600 battalions and 5,200 guns, three-quarters of his troops.

On the Banjsice Plateau, the Italians were successful but had to withdraw as their logistics failed to keep up with the army.

Other attacks failed, with the Italian Second Army dangerously split in two by the Isonzo River. Casualties amounted to 128,000 killed and wounded on the Italian side and 115,000 on the Austrian.

Although the Austrians had again successfully defended, their army was near exhaustion. Emperor Charles informed the Kaiser that “we would fare far worse in the twelfth (battle)....We have not the necessary means as regards troops.”

German reinforcements from the Russian front will soon alter the balance of forces in this bloody stalemate.

Further information: John Schindler, Isonzo: [The Forgotten Sacrifice of the Great War](#).
Photo: Austrian-Hungarian howitzer 305 mm.



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18 August 1917

Ludendorff's visit to Lens



Since 15 August, the German line of defence has been under severe threat near the city of Lens.

The active British offensive near that city comes as a diversion to the main British operation in the area of Ypres, some 50 kilometers to the north. Three British and one French armies are attempting to reach deep into Belgium and disrupt the Channel ports which shelter submersibles involved in Unrestricted Submarine Warfare against the Allies. Many German army divisions were thus moved to the north to address that critical emergency.

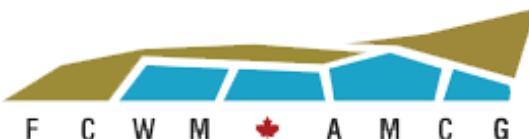
Now the taking of Hill 70, by the Canadians, and their use of this high ground to defeat counter-attack after counter-attack from Lens, has caused a lot of disquiet among the German General Staff. The losses there are now frightful and Sixth German Army has to shift divisions to plug the holes to prevent Canadians from taking the whole city in the next hours.

On 18 August 1917, the Quarter Master General of the German Army, **General Eric Ludendorff**, pays a visit to Lens to ascertain if what is happening there is a major offensive by the Allies, which might indeed threaten Lens, or a diversionary forey having met with unusual success.

Ludendorff's experienced eyes see that this is only an attempt by one Corps to draw forces from the main show to the north. This is exactly what he must not do. Sixth Army is thus left to its own devices.

— But the Canadians are now out of breath. They are in fact extending themselves just a little too much. And they will pay for it...

More information in Delaney and Durflinger (Eds), Hill 70.

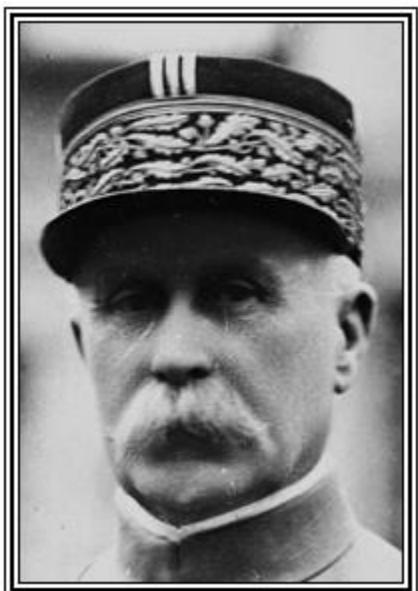


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19 août 1917

Pétain retourne à Verdun



Depuis le 6 mai, l'Armée française est ébranlée par des incidents d'indiscipline, dont plusieurs impliquent des formations aux réputations fameuses et des troupes jusque là admirables.

Mais l'offensive de Nivelle, en avril, a brisé la confiance des soldats dans la hiérarchie et l'état-major, et Pétain a été nommé Commandant-en-chef pour remédier à cette situation troublante, face à l'ennemi aux portes.

Pétain a fait preuve de compréhension et de grande sagesse en maintenant les sanctions disciplinaires à leur minimum. Ce qu'il a fait au cours des mois de mai, juin et juillet, c'est d'émettre des instructions à l'effet que les soldats devaient jouir de plus de congés, de meilleure nourriture, de repos et de silence si possible, et surtout, il a rassuré la troupe que des attaques à l'emporte-pièce, mal planifiées, ne se reproduiraient plus. Ses instructions aux officiers de tout grade sont révolutionnaires et portent fruit.

L'image de ce guerrier de Verdun qui a su avouer les erreurs du Haut Commandement et repartir dans la bonne direction émeut toute la France et lui redonne confiance. Déjà en août, les quarante-cinq jours de grève sont terminés. Il faut retourner au boulot. Pétain planifie un coup sûr pour la rentrée. Il ordonne de frapper à Verdun le **19 août 1917** pour raviver la fierté.

— C'est un geste dur, mais la compréhension de Pétain ne sera pas oubliée par les Poilus de 17.

Gambiez et Suire, Grandeur et Servitude d'une victoire, Chap 4, «L'Illusion pacifiste et la crise disciplinaire», p. 66-80.



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20 août 1917

Le ‘grignotage’ reprend

Pour l’offensive des Flandres, commencée le 31 juillet dernier, le maréchal Haig avait donné la place centrale à la Cinquième armée, ramenée de Champagne, alors que le général Gough devait foncer à bride abattue vers les ports de la Manche en Belgique.

Les deux essais de Gough au nord des hauteurs de Passchendaele-Wytschaete se sont avérés des départs intempestifs, enlisés dans la boue, ne donnant que des gains de terrain de quelques milliers de mètres. Haig réalise que dorénavant, ses ambitions de percées vertigineuses devront être remplacées par le «grignotage» de Papa Joffre, des gains simples, retenus et accumulés au prix du sang.

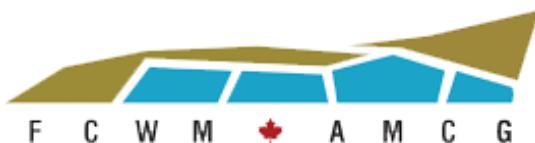
C’est pourquoi Haig se retourne maintenant vers Papa Plummer, ce bonhomme aussi moustachu que Joffre, réputé pour l’attaque de Messines, en juin, qu’il a longtemps préparée et qui s’est avéré un succès franc, limité et durement acquis.

Plummer, commandant de la Deuxième armée, sur la droite, prend la relève de Gough, de sa position plus au sud de la hauteur de Passchendaele-Wytschaete, pour tenter maintenant d’avancer dans le secteur de Mont Sorrel, d’un angle qu’il espère avantageux.

Les pluies constantes de août 1917 en Flandres sont maintenant devenues écoeurantes et malsaines.

— Grignoter dans de telles conditions requiert un courage aveugle.

Leon Woolf, In Flanders Fields (1958), Chap 9: «...the Opening Phase», p. 132-51.



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21 August 1917

Haig Faces War Cabinet



On 21 August 1917, Haig meets the War Cabinet to report on the Flanders Offensive, which was authorized despite Lloyd George's doubts about another large-scale battle in France.

The War Cabinet did not receive much information on the operation, and has almost no alternate sources to weigh against Haig's claims of success.

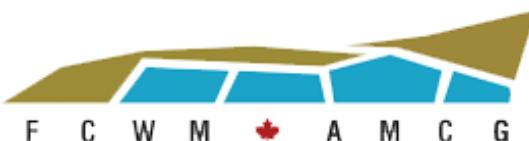
Even the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord Robertson, has to beseech Haig's staff for details of the offensive.

The bland reports from Haig's staff are "remorselessly optimistic" declaring that German morale is weakening.

Haig claims that seventeen German divisions were destroyed and that a great success is imminent. In fact, advances fell well short of predictions at a cost of 68,000 casualties, although the French did gain some relief from the offensive.

—Haig's blockheaded determination to go on straight ahead in the rains of Flanders is an act of blind faith in relentlessness.

Further information: David French, [The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition 1916-1918](#).



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22 August 1917

The US-GB financial balance

In 100 years, inflation has made the value of one 1917 British pound 65.35 times higher than a 2017 Pound.

Taken as a factor of present-day conversion, it can be said that at the time the United States joined the war, Great Britain:

- was spending 757m £ per day for the war;
- had already spent 281,005m £ so far;
- had already paid 39,210m £ with gold and securities to the United States for purchases there.
- had already spent 54,044m £ to advance funds to other allies.
- Was negotiating with United States for loans that would total 84,955m £ before the end of the war.

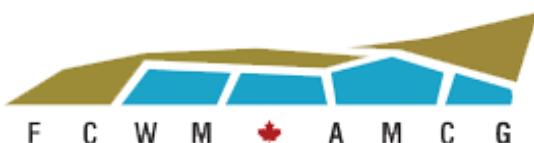


The British pound was worth about \$(US) 4.75 in 1917.

The price of gold was \$US 20.67 in 1917.

— Gold could indeed be serving as ballast in ships on their way back to the United States.

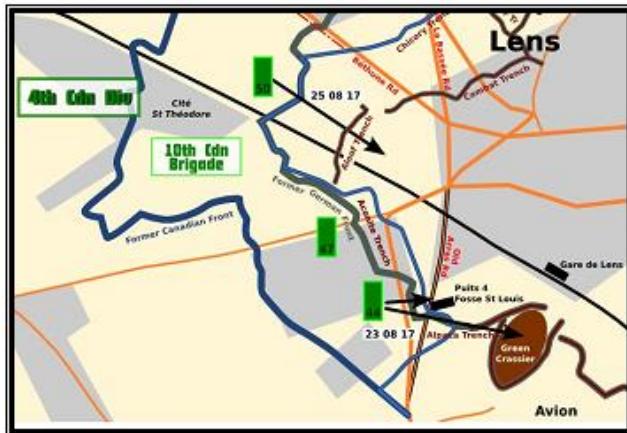
See David Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol. 3, p. 1722.



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23 Augusts 1917

Trouble in Green Crassier



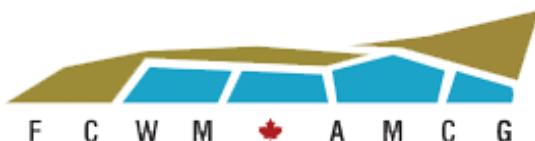
The 44th Battalion, from Manitoba, was selected to attack the Green Crassier, a large mound of mine refuse, and then, once taken, attack the central district of Lens. The corps and divisional headquarters believed that the same tactics used at Hill 70 i.e. infantry attack supported by heavy artillery bombardment, could achieve success.

On 22 August it was determined that the 44th Battalion needed more support in the form of elements of the 50th Battalion. However, it was not possible to get the support organized in time and thus the 44th attacked the Green Crassier alone.

The Germans waited out the artillery bombardments in tunnels and bunkers and emerged once the bombardments ceased. The 44th did not know where these tunnels and bunkers were. The Germans with their hidden fortifications were able to call down artillery bombardment on the Canadian positions at Alpaca Trench and the Fosse. In the afternoon of **23 August 1917**, it was clear that the 44th Battalion assault on the Green Crassier had failed.

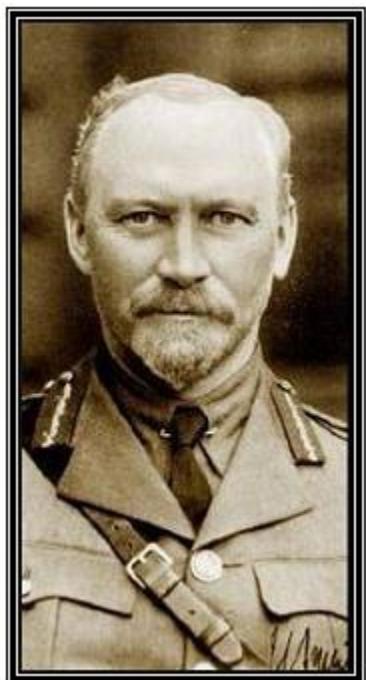
—After 36 hours of battle the 44th suffered 260 casualties while 70 were taken prisoner.

Geoff Jackson, « 'Anything but Lovely': The Canadian Corps at Lens in the Summer of 1917», Canadian Military History, Volume 17, Issue 1, pages 14-16.



24 August 1917

A South African for All Seasons



Back in December 1916, South African General Jan Smuts was still in the jungles of Africa, fighting the Germans around present-day Tanzania. Early in 1917, he was brought to London to serve near the Cabinet War Committee as an adviser and trouble shooter at large.

It was not long before Prime Minister David Lloyd George set Smuts on the question of Air resources.

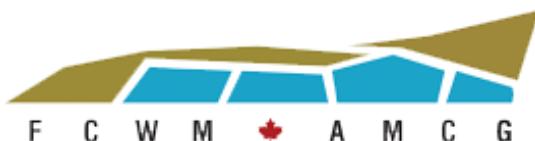
The recently-created Air Board, put together as an agency to regulate the constant conflict between the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and the Royal Navy Air Service (RNAS), is not sufficient to the task. Competition between the Army and Navy air arms is still making the overall Air picture a split vision.

On 24 August 1917, Smuts, a cerebral martinet, presents a report on the question of the management of Air resources that will shape policy to come.

Two things come out of the report that will set the War Committee on the right path: the creation of the Air Ministry, and the creation of the Royal Air Force (RAF).

—By creating an independent Air Force with its own Ministry, Great Britain will be the first nation to recognize Air Force as a separate service.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, IV, 1867-9.



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25 août 1917

La cote 70, le Crassier vert, et la tranchée Aloof, 15-25 août 1917

Le 25 août 1917 se terminent dix jours de combats durs pour le Corps canadien. Si la première partie, du 15 au 18 août, a été couronnée d'un éclatant succès qui rappelle les jours de Vimy, la semaine suivante est moins bien préparée et s'avère souvent improvisée. Les unités qui sont à l'avant du Corps pour ces journées sont durement éprouvées.



Ces batailles pour la prise de Lens coûtent mille hommes par jour au Corps canadien. Le total des Canadiens en uniforme, en tous lieux, est de 303,000, dont 6% sont des officiers. Mais il n'y en a que 100,000 dans le Corps.

C'est de plus l'infanterie qui subit la plupart de ces pertes. On constate en extrapolant que les pertes de l'infanterie forment près de 90% de toutes les pertes canadiennes. Or les 48 bataillons d'infanterie du Corps canadiens comptent, lorsqu'ils sont à leur plein effectif, 1000 officiers, sous-officiers et soldats par bataillon. 900 pertes par jour sont donc statistiquement imputables à environ 50,000 fantassins.

C'est là que se trouve la crise du recrutement qui se déroule au Canada, et qui fait tant d'animosité entre les partis politiques. Le fantassin, soldat de l'infanterie, 'Reine de la Bataille', est finalement pratiquement seul à mourir.

— Et c'est exclusivement de fantassins dont on a besoin chez les conscrits...



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26 août 1917

Un retour bien préparé au charnier de Verdun

Le général Pétain a lancé une attaque bien spéciale, il y a six jours, et elle est couronnée de succès **le 26 août 1917**.

C'est en effet en donnant la mission à son ancienne armée, l'Armée de Verdun, la Deuxième Armée française, celle aussi de Nivelle, et maintenant commandée par le général **Guillaumat**, que Pétain veut remettre l'Armée française toute entière sur la route du succès.

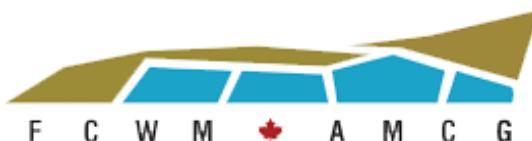
L'attaque qu'il supervise lui-même est un cirque ambulant où on trouve plus d'artilleurs que de fantassins, et une concentration de canons apportés d'ailleurs comme il ne s'en est jamais vu, même autour de Verdun.



Le but de ce martelage est de redonner confiance à la troupe et implanter l'idée que dorénavant, les hommes n'avancent plus seuls. L'exercice fait dire à l'historien Corelli Barnett :

«Soixante pour cent de la force étaient des artilleurs, seulement quarante pour cent d'infanterie. Dans un corps d'armée les artilleurs dépassaient les fantassins par deux pour un. Pour huit jours clairs et brûlants d'août, cette concentration d'artillerie a écrasé et battu les défenses allemandes, en labourant et re-labourant le sol. Le 26 août, l'attaque organisée à la minute près a suivi un bombardement planifié au fin détail. Les hauteurs de Mort-Homme et la colline 304 sont tombées, et 10,000 prisonniers allemands ont été capturés. Le succès a été complet: une bataille aussi parfaitement organisée qu'un chronomètre, avec des pertes légères.»¹

¹Barnett, The Swordbearers, p. 283-4 (tr.)



27 August 1917

The Kaiser's Optimism Overlooks Manpower Crisis



Crown Prince Wilhelm

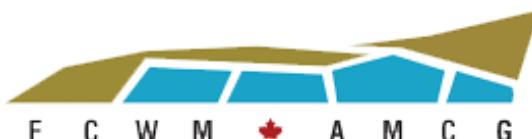
In 1916, the German Army was flush with manpower. However, the enormous casualties suffered at Verdun and the Somme drained the pool of replacements, at the same time as 125,000 skilled workers had to be returned from the Army to bolster the war industries.

Crown Prince Wilhelm, who had commanded at Verdun, was deeply concerned about Germany's staying power; he urged Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg to consider the various peace initiatives, including one from the Pope.

In mid-August 1917 he had written his father to register his concerns; the Kaiser replied shortly after that the manpower situation was improving as wounded men returned and new conscripts were called up.

Buoyed by the success of the submarine campaign and underestimating the Americans, Ludendorff and the Supreme Command rejected peace probes and re-iterated their maximalist demands, scuttling chances for negotiations.

Further information, Fritz Fischer, [Germany's War Aims in the First World War](#)

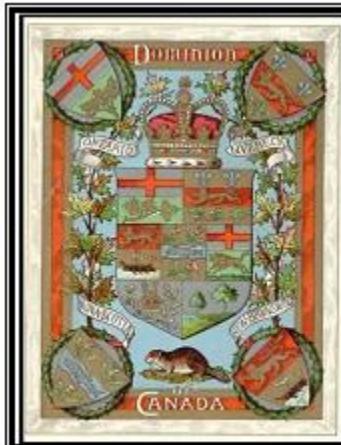


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28 août 1917

La Loi c'est la Loi!



**ATTENTION
La Loi Canadienne
sur le
Service militaire
obligatoire
prend force
demain
29 AOÛT 1917**

A la fin de 1916, les lourdes pertes au front en France et en Belgique ont créé des problèmes de renforts pour les commandants canadiens outre-mer.

Le recrutement au pays a aussi ralenti et le système d'enrôlement volontaire n'a plus suffi au besoins.

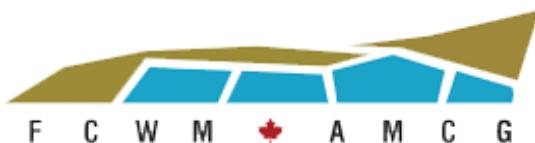
La voie était ouverte à des mesures controversées de conscription nationale et l'affrontement et les débats sur cette question, en 1917, furent des plus violents de l'histoire politique du Canada.

La Loi sur le Service Militaire fut débattue au Parlement pendant l'été et adoptée le 28 juillet 1917. Elle prévoyait que tous les citoyens de sexe masculin de 20 à 45 ans seraient tenus de faire leur service militaire, jusqu'à la fin de la guerre. Presque tous les députés fédéraux francophones s'opposèrent à cette Loi, alors que presque tous les députés anglophones l'appuyaient.

C'est demain, le 29 août 1917, que cette Loi prend force à travers le Canada. Les hommes des âges visés par les premiers contingents d'appelés doivent se rapporter aux Centre de recrutement partout au Canada. Ils n'ont pas le choix de porter l'uniforme.

—C'est là qu'il sera déterminé s'il existe des raisons pour qu'ils en soient dispensés.

Richard A. Preston, «Loi du Service Militaire», Encyclopédie canadienne..



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29 August 1917

“They are liable to commit excesses of all kinds...”



On August 29, 1917 the *Military Service Act* is signed into law by the Governor General.

As predicted by opponents to conscription such as Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Henri Bourassa, there is a vehement reaction in Quebec to the Act, making military service in Canada compulsory.

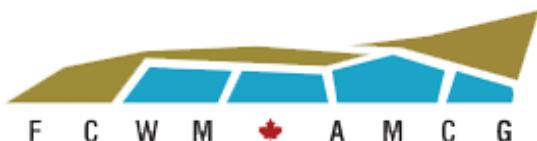
Almost immediately riots break out in Montreal. **Archbishop Paul Bruchési** of Montreal, who supports Canadian participation in the war but who nevertheless considers conscription a “disastrous law”, writes to Prime Minister Borden:

“The people are aroused. They are liable to commit excesses of all kinds. There is one brawl after another. Killings are to be feared in our cities. In the countryside, the people will not yield.

They seem determined to go all the way. There is no one who can calm them down. The life of everyone who has been in favour of the bill or voted for it is in danger.”¹

In Montreal store windows are smashed and tramway rails ripped up. Policemen are called in to disperse the protesters, four are wounded along with two demonstrators. A demonstrator is killed in Philips square. It is feared that this is only the beginning of worse violence to follow.

¹Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, Québec: A History, 1867-1929, Tr. Robert Chodos (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983), p. 522.



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30 August 1917

Trends in Air Fighting



In the early years, air combat often involved attacking the enemy's reconnaissance two-seaters, or defending one's own, using fairly small numbers of aircraft.

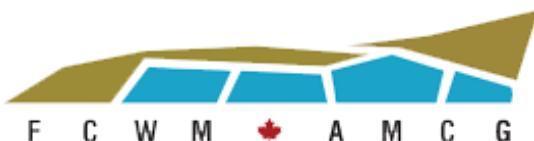
By 1917, tactics have evolved. The RFC mounts two kinds of offensive patrols.

Deep penetrations of up to 15 miles attack aerodromes or railway stations, often in two squadron strength with S.E.5 fighters clearing enemy aircraft and Bristol Fighters carrying 112lb bombs and a gunner to strafe ground targets.

But most daily patrols fly a thirty mile circuit along the front, two or three miles into enemy airspace, with three to six aircraft to counter raids and observation balloons.

German fighters infrequently cross the line, normally appearing in "circuses" of 30 to 50 fighters which enter combat when they see an advantage, but generally preferring the defensive.

Further information: Denis Winter, The First of the Few: Fighter Pilots in the First World War (Allen Lane, 1982)



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31 August 1917

American aircraft production kicks in



The late entry of the United States into the First World War resulted in a delayed involvement of its production and development of aircraft.

One of the most successful contributions to the war effort were the Curtiss JN-3 "Jenny" and JN-4 "Canuck" (as it was known in Canada).

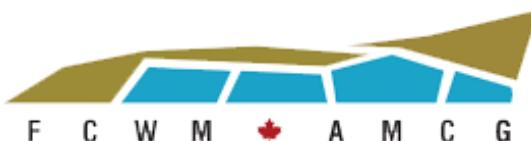
The "Jenny," a two-seater bi-plane trainer is the choice of the Royal Flying Corps, and when the RFC began establishing training schools in Canada and the United States, the production facilities in Buffalo, New York (and later in six additional locations) began manufacturing the needed numbers. Post-war, the "Canuck" made its way into civilian use, and 10 became part of the Canadian Air Force fleet of the 1920s.

"All told, the Jenny was the most important American biplane of World War I despite the fighter types available, these being largely foreign in their origination."

Caption: A Curtiss JN-4 fitted with "snow skids" at Armour Heights, Ontario, in February 1918. The Wing at Armour Heights pioneered cold weather flying in Canada. Photo Credit: Library and Archives Canada MIKAN 3390086

<http://rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/history-heritage/royal-flying-corps-canada/curtiss-jn4.page>

https://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.asp?aircraft_id=980s



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