

1 September 1917

The «Laboratory battle» of Riga



On 1 September 1917, the German 8th Army made a sudden attack on a Russian bridgehead on the Drina River, at Riga. Army Commander General Oscar von Hutier agreed to follow the recommendations of his artillery officer, **Colonel Georg Bruchmüller**, and adopt a new method for launching an offensive.

Bruchmüller, an already well-known artilleryist, designed an intricate method to maximize the potential of each gun under his command to achieve best efficiency.

His great emphasis on surprise and immediate «saturation» bombardment proved the key to assisting assaulting troops with artillery support. His success at Riga became known as a «laboratory battle», where a great discovery was made.

Not only were German artillery methods profoundly influenced by this initiative, but infantry tactics of infiltration that will lead to the ‘Shock Troops’ tactics will be largely achieved because of the tailored artillery support as conceived by Bruchmüller and another brilliant artilleryman, Eric Pulkowski.

These methods will find great success at Caporetto and in the great German offensives of 1918.

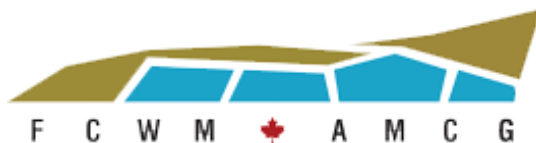
— What the Allies will do with this knowledge will, in the end, prove devastating for the Germans.

General Jean-Claude Laparra, «L’emploi de l’artillerie allemande dans l’offensive: De Gorlice-Tarnow au Chemin des Dames», 1914-1918, No 24 (fév-mar 2005), pp. 25-33.

Wikipedia, «Bruchmüller».

Barnett, The Swordbearers, p. 285-6.

Liddell Hart, Reputations, p. 201.



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2 septembre 1917

Le général Pershing établit son QG en Haute-Marne



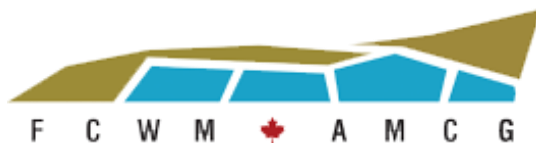
Dans les premiers jours de septembre 1917, le **général John J. Pershing**, commandant le corps expéditionnaire américain en France, installe son grand quartier-général à Chaumont, en Haute-Marne. Un choix dicté à la fois par le désir de quitter Paris et celui de se rapprocher des théâtres d'opérations dans lesquels ses troupes seront amenées à opérer.

Dès lors, ce département profondément rural va devenir le lieu de passage obligé pour quelque deux millions de «Sammies», jusqu'à être le berceau de la seule division de l'armée américaine – toujours en activité – créée hors du territoire national – à Bourmont.

En découvrant ces hommes de toutes origines, de toutes couleurs venus d'un autre continent, le «Nouveau-Monde», les Haut-Marnais vont rapidement éprouver un choc. La stupéfaction, l'incompréhension mutuelle vont toutefois céder la place à des relations privilégiées entre ces «grands enfants» et la population haut-marnaise, au sein de laquelle les plus jeunes ne seront pas les moins marqués par cette rencontre.

Sources : http://mairiedebourg.fr/crbst_14.html

Pour en savoir plus : <http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/fr/entree-en-guerre-des-etats-unis-en-1917>



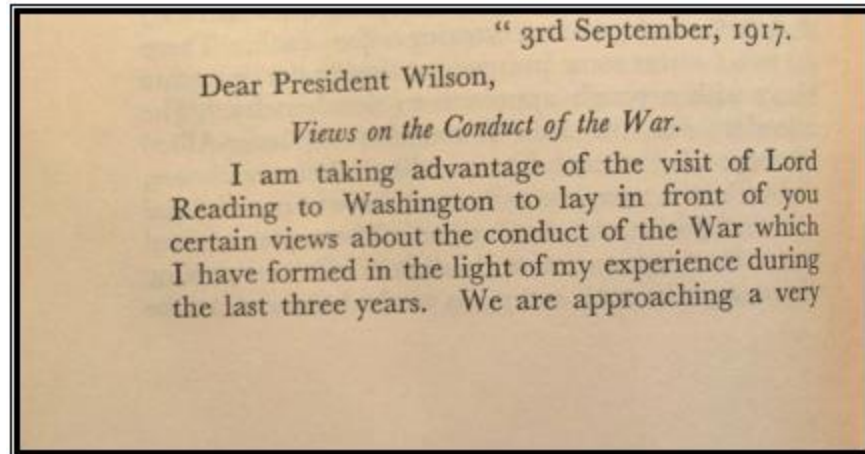
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3 September 1917

Lloyd George's letter to President Wilson



On 3 September, 1917, the British Prime Minister sees himself once again faced with the two 'Brass Hats» who feel like two protruding nails in his shoe. Robertson and Haig are making common front to prevent him from derailing the Flanders offensive.

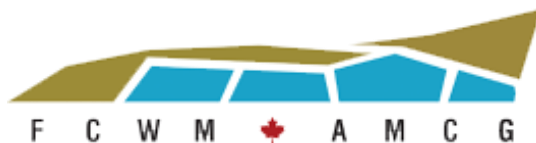
Foch is also in London to discuss future operations, in which he does not want to take part, due to the problems of the French Army.

Lloyd George, having been informed on the real costs of Haig's operation in Flanders, is being told that the 8,000 new soldiers that are being sent to France in September come nowhere near the 100,000 that Haig needs. His divisions are at 2,000 men below their establishment, and he has 52 of them... And there is a new push being prepared for September.

Prime Minister Lloyd George, near desperation, writes to President Wilson of the United States to introduce the idea that the Allies should have a Supreme Council of political Heads of State of allied nations to unify political strategy and gain control over a coordinated allied military strategy.

—His only hope to put the breaks on the Brass Hats is to get a bigger stick and speak louder.

David Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol IV, p. 2348-57.



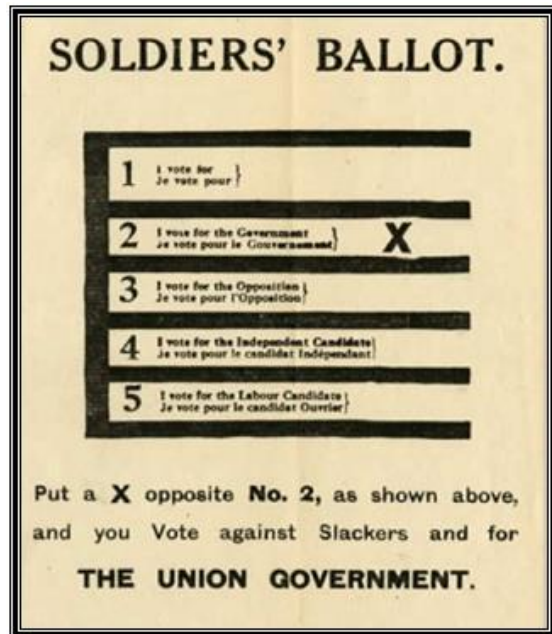
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4 September 1917

The Military Voters Act



Canadian Prime Minister Borden has now been able to legislate the Military Service Act (1917) which forces men of military age to serve in uniform until the end of the war.

The first of ten categories of men, –the unmarried between 22 and 45, will now be required to register and report for duty.

Knowing that there is an election coming in the Fall, Borden is now planning for an outcome that will protect this hard-won Law.

On 31 August 1917, Parliament has accepted in Third Reading the Military Voters Act, which determines how the men serving overseas will be able to vote for that election.

With this law acquired, the Government is now able to start the set up of Elections Overseas for serving personnel.

The law's wording does not make it clear how the votes will be tallied in respect to the individual's riding.

But the Government will sort it all out in time...

Desmond Morton, Canada at War, p. 73; also by Morton, Histoire militaire du Canada (Athéna, 2007), p. 171-6.



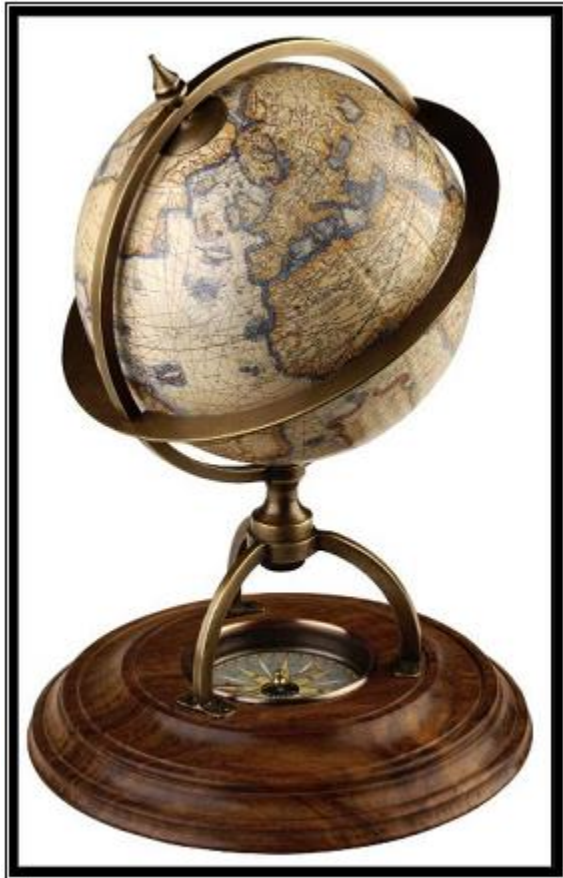
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5 September 1917

President Wilson's Global Inquiry



In early September 1917, President Woodrow Wilson sets up «The Inquiry», a group of selected academics from Ivy League American universities, with a headquarters at the New York Library.

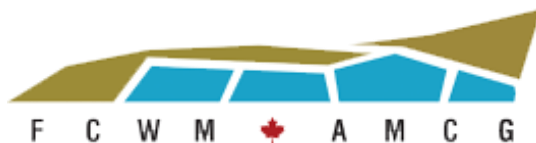
These intellectuals, who will peak at 126 participants, are commissioned to work on enunciating the world's problems with a view to finding a solution to international conflicts. Walter Lippmann, the brilliant columnist, is a personal selection of the President.

Wilson sees himself as a rare humanist with world power leverage, and wishes the post-war period to be a moment in history when global re-organization will set the tone for relentless peace.

Groups of these academics will look at different continents, sort out where the tensions are, and suggest arrangements to release them.

This Inquiry will later be assessed to be worth little, if not an indication of the «unworldliness» of the President's men that boded ill for the future Peace Conference.

David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, p. 260-1.



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6 septembre 1917

Mentez! – Il n'en reste jamais rien

Avance britannique en Flandre **Victoire imminente en Belgique**

Au début du mois d'août, les rapports propagés par la Presse sur les assauts des alliés dans le secteur de Ypres ont encore une fois mis beaucoup d'emphasis sur des succès exagérés et des victoires imminentes.

Mais au début de septembre 1917, il est devenu évident que les convois de blessés, incluant ceux évacués vers les hôpitaux des Îles britanniques, laissent entrevoir que beaucoup d'information dans les journaux est créée pour des fins de propagande.

Le public s'objecte maintenant à se voir trompé, voyant que des mesures ont été prises pour que les blessés arrivent de nuit, pour ne pas être vus du public.

Il passe dans l'opinion un vent de rancœur qui pousse des rumeurs effarantes que le gouvernement ne réfute plus de façon satisfaisante. On demande la paix dans la rue, on s'insurge ouvertement contre les politiques de guerre. Beaucoup d'incertitude vient aussi de récits de ceux qui reviennent.

—La propagande prouve encore une fois que mentir tend à donner un effet contraire de celui attendu.

Leon Wolff, Flanders Fields, p. 153.



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7 September 1917

Paul Painlevé becomes Prime Minister in France



Alexandre Ribot, a man with a strong background as a minister of Finance, became prime minister of France on the fall of the Government led by Aristide Briand, in March 1917. He was the fourth PM since the beginning of the war.

Ribot was involved in supporting the Nivelle offensive which tarnished his government a month later. Since then, he promoted Pétain to rebuild the French Army and do as little as possible until the arrival of the Americans.

On 6 September 1917, Ribot resigns as head of Government when his Minister of the Interior, Malvy, loses the confidence of powerful Socialists.

The man appointed by President Poincaré to replace him is **Paul Painlevé**. Painlevé is a brainy scientist who was Minister of War under Ribot. Cautious and measured, he wants undersecretaries to be assigned to each of the French armies to report to Government. —Pétain is against that and threatens resignation. Painlevé climbs down.

Painlevé will progressively be eaten alive by «*Le Tigre*», Georges Clemenceau, who in sixty days, will undermine his government by his unrelenting criticism of waiting inaction.

—The halting scientist will be easy meat for the ruthless animal who now wants to become the last man standing in a fighting France.

Barnett, *The Swordbearers*, p. 289;
Wikipedia, «Ribot», «Painlevé», «Poincaré» and «Clemenceau».



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8 September 1917

The War-Time Elections Act

On 6 September, Arthur Meighen introduced Bill 133, for First Reading.

This War-Time Elections Bill will be ramroded into law by the Government with Second Reading done as a skip-Sunday filibuster into the nights of **Saturday, 8 September, and Monday, 10 September 1917.**



The Government has stated its case from the beginning: Soldiers at the front must be heard through their families, as they are not able to influence opinion as free citizens can. Meighen states:

«The measure constitutes an attempt to repair, so far as Parliament can repair, the injustice which I have described as falling under present legislation on our overseas forces, and ultimately on Canada herself. The only method of reaching a result that may be said best to represent or re-echo the voice of our soldiers abroad is to reach their representatives at home. If the direct vote cannot be obtained, if the direct influence cannot be obtained, then the best way to repair that injustice, at all events the only way that seems available, is to reach such of their kin at home who can best be said to be likely to vote in such a way and to influence the electors in such a way as they themselves would do were they upon our shores.»¹

— This eminently fair-sounding approach will prove the most controversial Canadian legislation ever.

¹ Hansard, 12th Parl., 7th Session, Part VI, p. 5416.



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9 September 1917

Intelligence in the Canadian Corps



The summer of 1917 was a time of great progress for the Canadian Corps.

Having had its four divisions together for one full year, the Corps was the only such formation of the British Expeditionary Force not to have had its divisions replaced.

All along, the repair of the Canadian divisions after severe losses was done within the Corps itself, on the insistence of the Corps Commander and with the support of the Canadian Government policy for the

maintenance of the integrity of the Canadian formation in France.

This allowed the Canadians to work together in a more sustained way than was anywhere else possible. In particular, the Intelligence staff of the Canadian Corps evolved two procedures of their own that were a direct consequence of such organizational stability: the Intelligence File, a method of dissemination to frontline units, and the coordination of harassing fire.

The Canadian Cyclist Corps, an extension of the General Intelligence Staff, were instrumental in providing battlefield information for the analysts at Corps, Division and Brigade headquarters.

General Arthur Currie, «Historical Resume of Canadian Corps Intelligence», in Major J.E. Hahn, The Intelligence Service within the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918, (Macmillan, 1930), pp. xii-xxii.



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10 September 1917

The German Council replies to the Papal offer of conciliation

Catholic Pope Benedict XV has taken upon himself to offer conciliation to the parties at war, and suggest that the Vatican might be instrumental in fostering negotiations for peace.

Papal Nuncio Pacelli was sent to Germany as a diplomat to introduce the idea before Benedict sent a letter, on 15 August 1917, to all heads of states involved in the conflict.

The onus was on belligerents to delineate new war aims that would allow concessions such as would be mutually acceptable to the Entente and to the Central Alliance.

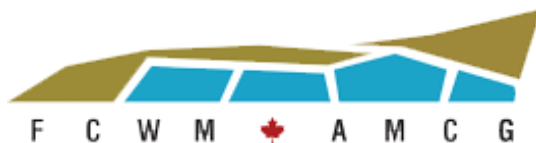
The diplomacy surrounding this offer soon centered on Belgium. As an apple of discord, Belgium was big enough to test the appetite of both sides for relinquishing a serious *sine qua non*. It soon proved impossible to gain any distance between the two sides.



On 10 September 1917, the Kaiser's German Council replied to the Pope with a letter that made not an inch of *rapprochement*, referring to the Reichstag's *Friedensauflösung* (Peace Resolution) of a few weeks past, which made no concessions. The famous phrase by the German Foreign Minister, Richard von Kühlmann, dismissed the attempt :

«— Who told you that I want to sell this particular horse? He is the finest animal in my stable.»

Cruttwell, A History of the Great War (1934), p. 372.



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11 septembre 1917

Guynemer Tué



Le 11 septembre 1917, Georges Guynemer décolle pour ce qui sera sa dernière mission au-dessus des lignes allemandes.

Son engagement dans la Grande Guerre et sa mort à 22 ans en feront une légende de l'aviation de combat. Il a déjà 53 victoires à son actif quand il décolle pour sa dernière mission à bord de son avion « Le Vieux Charles », de Saint-Pol-sur-Mer vers Poelkapelle.

Les Allemands identifieront son avion et sa dépouille dans un champ mais ne pourront récupérer ses restes, détruits par un bombardement.

Le destin foudroyant de ce jeune aristocrate inaugure l'épopée de l'aviation de chasse. On peut y voir une survivance de la chevalerie, avec ses codes et son honneur, dans un monde où la guerre est devenue massacre de masse.

Georges Guynemer a légué à l'École de l'Air sa devise : « Faire face » et une colonne a été érigée après la guerre près du lieu où il est tombé.

À son sommet une cigogne en vol, emblème de son Escadrille des Cigognes, «unité de chasse la plus victorieuse des ailes françaises entre 1914 et 1918.»¹

Sources : <http://www.anatc-tnb.fr/memoire/GeorgesGuynemer.pdf> ;

¹Wikipedia «Escadrille des Cigognes»

Pour en savoir plus : <http://www.horizon14-18.eu/georges-guynemer.html>



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12 septembre 1917

L'Artillerie du Général Plumer commence

Dans la campagne de Flandre, la Cinquième Armée britannique du Général Gough a renouvelé ses attaques pendant tout le mois d'août, un mois très pluvieux, pour saisir la hauteur de la crête de Passchendaele-Wytschaete, à l'est de Ypres.

Son avance de quelques kilomètres a été faite au prix de pertes très sérieuses, dans un terrain effroyable.

Depuis le début de septembre, les pluies se sont arrêtées et le terrain sèche sous un soleil réparateur.



C'est le général Plumer de la Deuxième Armée, à la droite de la Cinquième, qui prend la relève comme fer de lance dans cette campagne. Plumer a tiré ses leçons de la première phase du mois d'août. Meticuleux et ordonné, il prend son temps pour préparer mieux qu'à la Cinquième - réputée pour son emportement - les attaques de ses divisions, dont les coriaces Australiens sont maintenant à l'avant.

Mais Plumer, en prenant son temps, néglige le facteur le plus important dans les Flandres: le rare beau temps. Il laisse passer les quelques jours de soleil qui lui permettraient de profiter d'un terrain plus sec.

—C'est une erreur fatale d'un mauvais choix de leçon à retenir.

Wolff, In Flanders Fields, Chap 10.



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13 September 1917

Chancellor Michaelis under Ludendorff's spell



The Government of Germany has been forced to reconsider its war aims when Parliament raised the matter of negotiations for peace, in the summer of 1917, and when the Pope presented an offer of negotiation in view of international Peace talks, recently.

But such discussions were not to the liking of the German Military High Command, which was instrumental in getting the Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, fired.

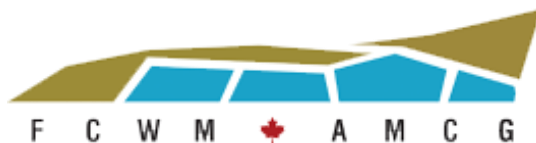
He was replaced by **Georg Michaelis**, 'Germany's first bourgeois Chancellor,' a bureaucrat selected for his inclination to follow dictates of the Crown Council and damper the parliament's notes that might be out of tune.

On 13 September 1917, Ludendorff sends a Memo to Michaelis outlining what a proper foreign policy might entail.

— It is in clear terms a warning that any interference by civilian government will be considered treasonable.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, pp. 2069-76.

<https://firstworldwarhiddenhistory.wordpress.com/category/germany/>



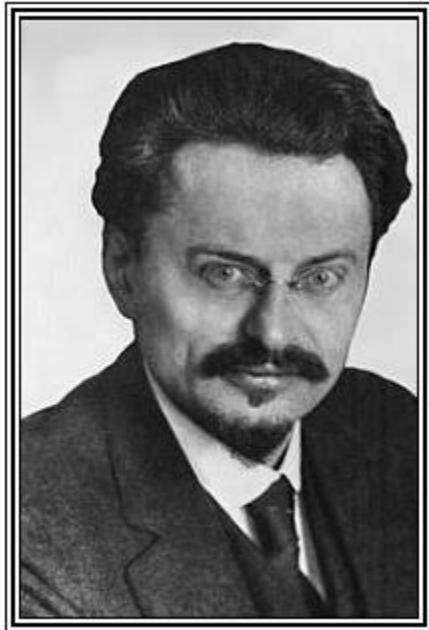
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14 September 1917

Trotsky jumps into the fray



Ukrainian **Lev Davidovitch Bronstein** adopted the *nom de plume* «**Trotsky**» early in adult life when he became a revolutionary socialist writer, and served time in prison.

He was in New York in early 1917 when the first signs of a socialist revolution were seen in Russia. He travelled back to Russia to be part of it.

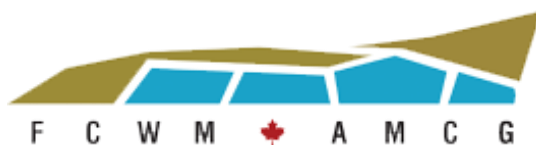
On the way, he was interned in Nova Scotia, where he proved a thorn for the Canadian authorities. He was released and authorized to travel to Russia on a visa.

Once in Russia, in May, Trotsky had a fulgurant effect as a revolutionary leader. Not a Bolchevik from the start, he re-connected back with former adversaries Stalin and Lenin through personal contacts. He was imprisoned by the Provisional Government with the Bolcheviks in early August.

On 14 September 1917, Trotsky was released from jail with other socialist agitators following the failed coup of General Kornilov against the Head of the Provisional Government, Aleksandr Kerensky.

This is the moment that Lenin assessed as being ripe for attracting the active army into the socialist revolution and Trotsky will prove the perfect man to take in hand the military side of the takeover of Government. Trotsky will immediately rise in the Petrograd Soviet and will seize the reins of the Petrograd garrison, bringing capital armed strength to the October Revolution.

— The rest, however, becomes complicated Communist history.



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15 September 1917

The French learn from the Germans



The replacement of Falkenhayn by Hindenburg as Chief of the General Staff, at the end of 1916, brought a great improvement in German land warfare tactics. This of course was due to Ludendorff, Hindenburg's sidekick, a man with an obsession with the improvement of techniques of war.

Ludendorff ushered in the defence in depth, which Falkenhayn could not understand, and his innovations in the domain of artillery, defensive works, use of machine guns, and counter-attack in depth, have all shown remarkable results in the battlefield.

Now Ludendorff is on to something again with the *Stoßtruppen*, the Storm Troops, these experts on the attack who use movement and flexibility with uncanny skill.

But the French under Pétain are now studying German techniques right out of their enemies' textbooks. *Le Deuxième Bureau* (Intelligence) is now producing teaching materiel right out of the German sources in order to better know what to expect, but also, so as to use such techniques themselves.

On 15 September 1917, the publication of The Construction of Defensive Positions, introduces techniques that the French – never known to be very thorough in their defensive work– recognize as indeed superior.

Corelli Barnett, The Swordbearers, p. 280-2.



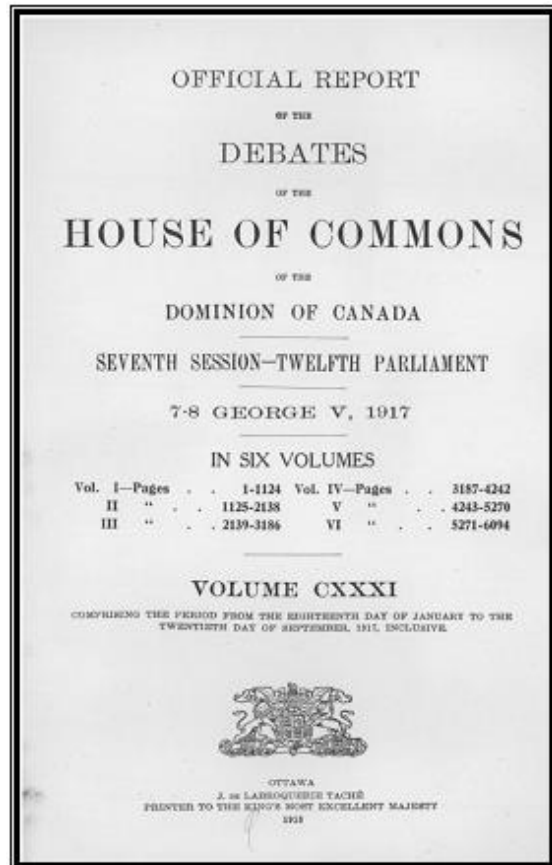
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16 September 1917

The War Time Elections Bill rushed through Third Reading



The War Times Elections Bill was introduced to the House of Commons on 6 September. The Second Reading of the Bill was pushed in a limited debate for Second Reading on 8 and 10 September. On 12 September, the debates in House Committee were limited by the imposition, by Prime Minister Borden, of Rule of limitation 17B. On 14 September, the Government, again, imposed limitation on debates. The Bill was made into law at Third Reading, on **15 September 1917** at 02h30 in the morning. — Nine days that changed the country!

The War-Time Elections Act now brings closure on the fact that the invitation by the Prime Minister to form a Coalition Government with the Opposition has been refused. The Opposition has also refused to extend the life of the Government to the end of the War, so that there will be mandatory elections before the end of the year. This Act also confirms the general manner in which the elections will be conducted, with the many special war-time dispositions meant to compensate for the fact that soldiers overseas cannot exercise their rights as

advocates in the elections. Conscription is as good as done. —*Alea iacta est* ¹

Hansard, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, Parts V and VI.

¹ «The dice is cast»



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17 September 1917

Laurier on *War Time Elections Act*



Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada between 1896 and 1911, and now Liberal Leader of the Opposition, is shocked that the Government has dared ramrod Bill 133 with limitations on House debate.

«If you want any further evidence that the *Conscription Act* was passed for political purposes alone, you find it in the infamous act just passed for the disfranchisement of men who are by the laws of the land our fellow-citizens.

«By the *Conscription Act* all British subjects resident in Canada between the ages of 20 and 45

are liable to be called, but by the *War Times Election Act* subsequently passed, all naturalized subjects born in enemy countries, and naturalized after the 31st of March 1902, are disfranchised, unless they enlist.

— «Do you see in these two acts any evidence that the government intend to win the war, or to win the elections?»

¹Skelton, O[scar] D.[ouglas], *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, The Carleton Library No. 21, 1965, Rprt 1971). With Introduction by General Editor David M.L. Farr, Vol II, p. 193.



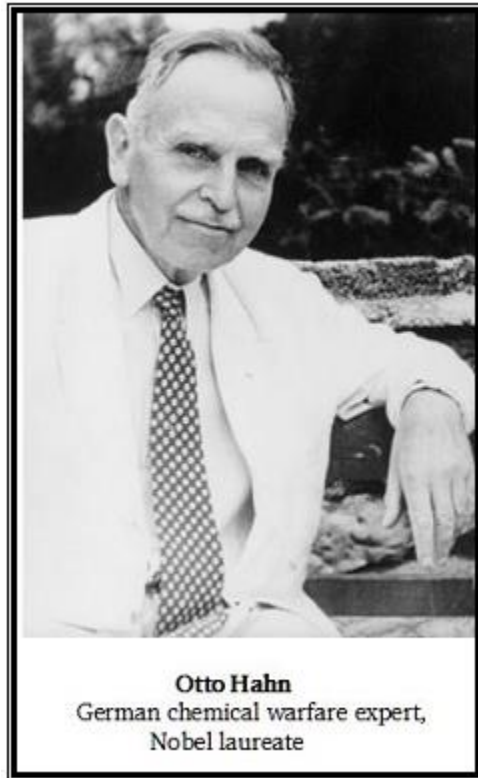
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18 September 1917

Central Powers Prepare a Fresh Offensive in Italy



Although the Austrian-Hungarians held in the mid-August 11th Battle of the Isonzo, they suffered serious losses. There was doubt in the Imperial General Staff that Austria could withstand another blow.

Chief of the General Staff, Paul von Hindenburg, decided that Austria had to be reinforced and that the Central Powers should go on the offensive in Italy.

The General Staff sent three experts to the Italian front, including **Otto von Hahn**, Germany's leading chemical warfare expert.

Reinforcements strengthened the Austrian-Hungarian Army Group and a new 14th Army was established under General Otto von Below, with ten Austrian and six German divisions, including some released from the Russian front.

The quiet sector around Caporetto was selected for the offensive, with a good road leading into the Venetian plane.

—Surprise of a vicious kind awaits the Italians.

Further information: John Schindler, Isonzo, The Forgotten Sacrifice of the Great War



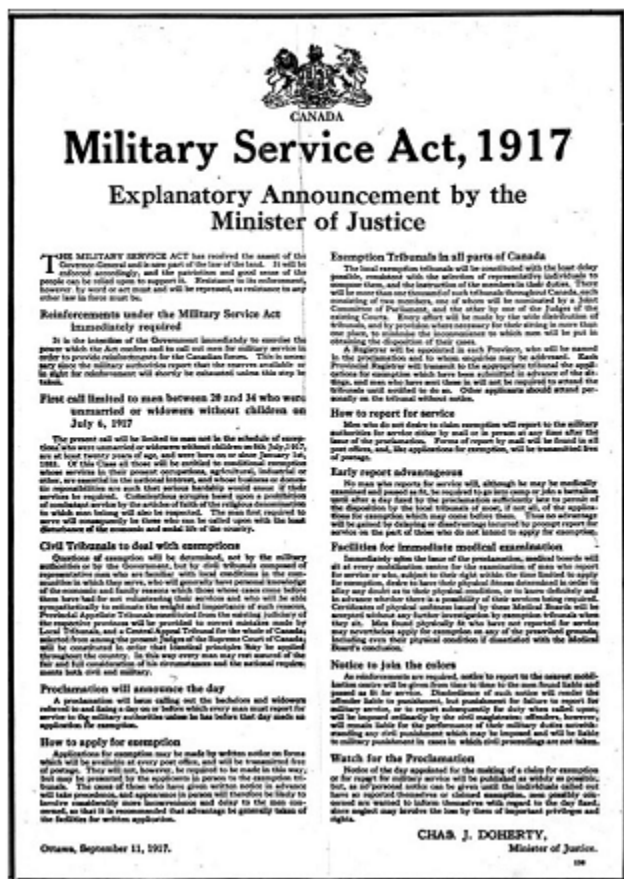
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19 September 1917

The Military Service Act Hits the Road



The Military Service Act became law on 29 August. This is the law that introduces Conscription that the Government wants to protect through the recent *War Time Elections Act*, a modification of elections procedures that will make sure that the Government stays in power to prevent its abolition.

On 11 September 1917, the Minister of Justice, Charles Doherty, makes an «Explanatory Announcement» of the Act, outlining its provisions. It is published in all newspapers of the land in the following weeks.

The Minister makes it clear that a Proclamation, to be made shortly by the Government, will require all men between 20 and 34 years of age who were unmarried or widowers without children on July 6, 1917, to report by mail or in person to military authorities.

He also makes it clear that local tribunals will consider applications for exemption.

Photo source: Mississauga at War, Mississauga Library System. <https://mississaugaatwar.wordpress.com/news-from-1917/military-service-act-1917/>



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20 septembre 1917

Le général Plumer jouit d'une victoire d'un jour

Depuis la fin d'août, la Deuxième Armée britannique a pris la relève de la Cinquième Armée (Général Gough) comme fer de lance de la *British Expeditionary Force (BEF)* dans la bataille de Flandre belge.



Le général Herbert C.O. Plumer, le commandant de la Deuxième, a bien pris son temps pour préparer son attaque et n'a rien ménagé en ressources pour battre le terrain pendant 8 jours par une préparation d'artillerie gigantesque.

C'est le **20 septembre 1917** que ses divisions se lancent contre les défenses allemandes, alors que la pluie abondante du mois d'août a été séchée par un soleil de septembre, qui a duré jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

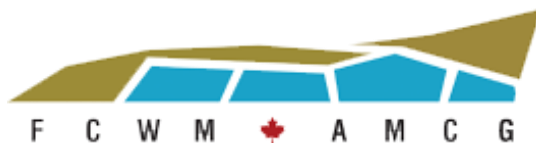
Les divisions de Plumer font un bond en avant de 900 mètres, alors que les premières positions allemandes doivent reculer. La bataille qui prend le nom de «Bataille du chemin de Ménin», suit ce chemin en direction des hauteurs Passchendaele-Wytschaete et amène les Anglais du Canal de Commines à Ypres-Roulers.

C'est la victoire d'un jour de Plumer, après toutes ces préparations. La poursuite de cette bataille jusqu'au 26 septembre ne donnera à peu près rien de plus.

Sources: Leon Wolff, *In Flanders Fields*, p. 163-77.

<http://milguerres.unblog.fr/bataille-de-la-route-de-menin-20-septembre-1917/>

En savoir plus : <http://www.passchendaele.be/fr/Sur nous/La bataille de Passchendaele 1917>



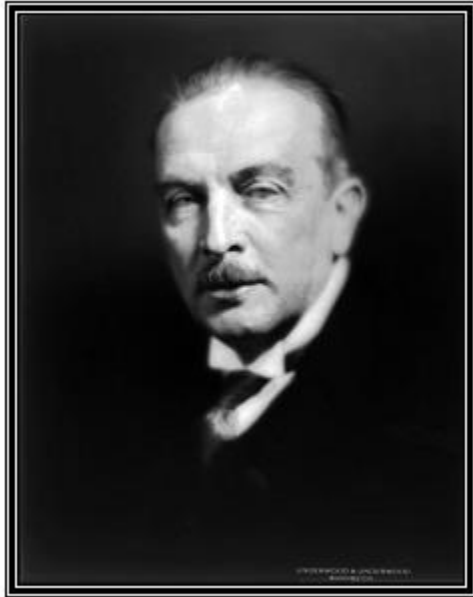
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21 September 1917

The Kühlman Affair



German Foreign Secretary **Richard von Kühlmann** was recently involved in the diplomatic openings made by the Holy See for Peace negotiations.

Despite his own views that concessions should be made on the question of Belgium, the reply of the Crown Council was the maintenance of war aims that included a post-war control of Belgium.

Kühlmann nevertheless wanted to know more about the solidity of British views on Belgium, and arranged for information to be obtained from the British Government through Spanish diplomats.

Arthur Balfour, at the Foreign Office, managed to reply to the Germans in a manner that left no doubt, if any subsisted after the Pontifical offer of mediation, that

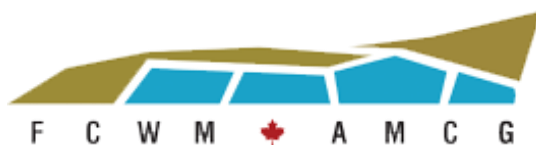
Belgium remained an unconditional issue.

He also made sure that all Allies were informed of Kühlmann's initiative and that the German High Command knew about it too, and the British reply.

The strong negative replies by Great Britain, reiterated in Wilson's, in Prince Sixte's, in the Pope's, and now in Kühlmann's initiatives for Peace, make a clear policy:

— Germany will do or die in this war. It will not escape the noose by diplomatic slippage.

Fischer, Germany's War Aims, Chap 15: «Michaelis and Kühlmann: Renunciation in the West?», p. 405-28.
Lloyd George, Memoirs, IV: 2001-4.



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22 September 1917

Four men of substance

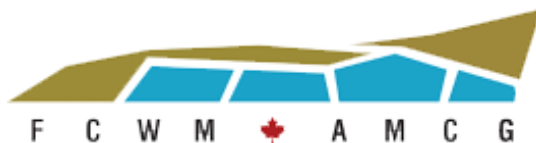
Now that **United States General John J. Pershing** has his first division up on the line, he ranks among the national commanders of the Western Front.

Four men are now emerging as being at the forefront of the battle for France. **Général Philippe Pétain** is the Commander in Chief of the French Army, **Field Marshal Douglas Haig** is the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in France, **General Ferdinand Foch** is the Chief of the General Staff of the French Army, and «**Black Jack**» **Pershing** is the Commander-in-Chief of the United States forces.

With the gradual arrival of near two million Americans in the theatre of war, in 1917-1918, the relationship between these top officers will determine how millions of soldiers and their immense matériel will be used to reach victory.



At this point, nobody knows that the lowest ranking of these four will emerge as the galvanizing Generallissimo.



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23 septembre 1917

Le général Allenby prépare son cadeau de Noël



Le premier ministre britannique Lloyd George a utilisé la phrase devenue célèbre, lorsqu'il a nommé le **général Edmund «Bull» Allenby** commandant-en-chef du Front égyptien, au début de 1917:

«Je veux que vous offriez Jérusalem au peuple britannique comme cadeau de Noël.»

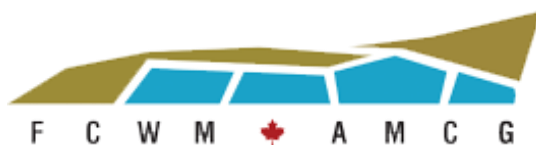
Il a répété la même phrase dans un message au mois d'août, incitant Allenby, mais lui fournissant aussi le matériel dont il a besoin, contre l'avis du chef de l'état-major général à Londres.

Lloyd George s'efforce encore, comme toujours, d'orienter les efforts ailleurs qu'en France, où le général Haig s'évertue à percer des défenses qui ont toujours résisté, même aux attaques les mieux planifiées.

Allenby fait preuve de grande créativité dans son nouvel environnement. Il invente des techniques et protège le secret de ses plans avec brio.

— Il anticipe une manoeuvre agile et mouvante, d'abord vers Bersheba, et ensuite en Terre Sainte, pour envelopper son cadeau.

Wavell, The Palestine Campaign (1928), Chap IV.



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24 septembre 1917

Les Gueules cassées - ils veulent rire!

Beaucoup d'hommes sont affligés par des blessures terribles qui les défigurent et rendent leurs relations difficiles avec les autres.

Bien vite, ils veulent réaffirmer leur humanité en riant.

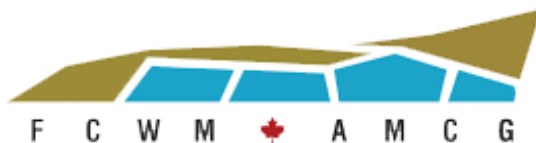
«On nous a répété bien des mots héroïques. Y en a-t-il un qui soit plus frappant que celui-ci: Rire quand même!»

Proféré par des hommes qui n'ont plus ce qu'il faut pour rire?» écrit Le Figaro du **23 septembre 1917**.



Photo de la clinique du Dr. Morestin, Val-de-Grâce, France.

https://www.herodote.net/Les_gueules_cassees_-synthese-1938.php



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25 September 1917

Haig is not happy with Robertson



On 25 September 1917, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, David Lloyd George, met with the new French *Président du Conseil*, Paul Painlevé, in a conference in Boulogne.

Boulogne is a favorite place for the two governments to meet for consultation, but Haig, as Commander-in-Chief in France, is usually there to prevent any decision with which he might not agree.

Painlevé used the occasion to ask Lloyd George if they could count on British forces to take a sizeable portion of the line from the French.

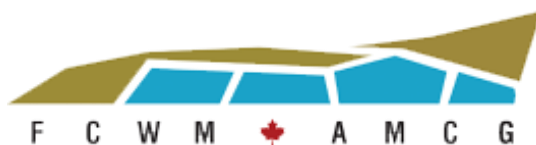
The two Chiefs of the General Staff, Robertson and Foch, being present, it was agreed that the transfer would take place.

When Haig heard about this decision only on 3 October, he hit the roof. Robertson, he wrote in his diary, ‘rode the high horse’, but ‘comes badly out of this, in my opinion.’¹

The relationship between the two men will not be the same again.

— When Lloyd George is in his backyard, Haig needs someone to protect his back...

Sheffield and Bourne (Eds), Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters, 1914-1918), p. 331-2
Lloyd George, Memoirs, V: 2764-5.



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26 September 1917

‘Roar of a Gippsland Bushfire’



This is how Australian official historian Charles Bean described the rolling barrage which opened the Battle of Polygon Wood.

On the morning of **26 September 1917**, I Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) retained the principal task on the offensive going into Polygon Wood, while V British Corps on its north headed towards Zonnebeke.

The Germans knew the Australians were in place on the 25th, and the strain was telling on both sides. As information was relayed

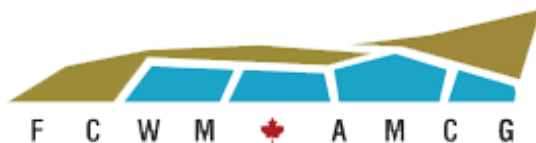
back to General Headquarters, a change in the attack plan was implemented at the last minute – new objectives, extra troops, extra materials. Chaos ensued as efforts to pass information continued.

In spite of the chaos, the one Anzac and five British divisions drove toward their objectives over what would become a week-long battle.

— **“The barrage, which descended at 05:50 on September 26th, just as the Polygon plateau became visible, was the most perfect that ever protected Australian troops.”**

C.E.W. Bean, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914, Volume IV – The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1917, p. 813.

Photo caption: Australian troops manning improved shell craters at Polygon Wood (AWM E00971).



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27 septembre 1917

La Conférence démocratique des Socialistes



Avec le retour de Lénine et Trotski sur la scène politique de Saint-Petersburg, les socialistes extrémistes sont représentés par un Comité exécutif des Soviets qu'ils dirigent.

Cette présence socialiste, avec son influence populaire explosive, occupe immédiatement une place importante au sein du gouvernement provisoire de Kerenski, réduit à cinq personnalités, dont un socialiste menchevik.

Ce comité exécutif des socialistes organise, le **27 septembre 1917**, une grande conférence démocratique qui réunit dans la ville 1,598 délégués des Soviets russes. En l'absence d'un Parlement élu, cette conférence obtient que le Directoire de Kerenski se rapporte dorénavant à un Conseil permanent, élu par cette assemblée. Ceci force Kerenski à démissionner de la présidence et prendre le poste de généralissime au sein du gouvernement.

Les socialistes, qui viennent de s'accaparer d'une partie importante du pouvoir, refusent de faire une coalition avec la droite.

— Ils ont le vent dans les voiles et entrevoient pour très bientôt l'apogée de leur Révolution.

Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, Histoire Universelle, Vol III, De la Réforme à Nos Jours. Gallimard, 1958 (1962). p. 906.



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28 September 1917

British Intelligence and casualties

Brigadier-General John Charteris, the Chief of Intelligence in the British Great Headquarters (GHQ), is trying to assess the effect of two months of offensive action in Flanders.

He knows that the weather is the key factor for the next days. **«As the sun loses power»,** he reflects, **«it necessarily takes much longer to counteract each fall of rain.»**¹

And rain means death.

«The casualties are awful; one cannot dare to think of them. The temptation to stop is so great, but the obviously correct thing for the nation is to go on. I would not have believed that any troops would have faced what the Army is facing. But the Army knows it is winning. It is easy enough here for us, with all our information about the Germans, to count the cost coldly, to strike a balance sheet and see what is right to do. But for the men, and even more so for the regimental officers, it must seem a pretty hopeless outlook. Yet it is not at the front, but in England, that the calamity of casualties affects resolution.»²



— With the limited results of Second Army's last 6-day attack, they are to do it again on 4 October.

¹ Charteris, At GHQ (1931), p. 257.

² Ibid.



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29 September 1917

A dashing commander's obsession



On 28 September 1917, Field Marshal Haig has a meeting with his army commanders, telling them that the dry weather of September has revived his hopes that tanks and cavalry can take to the field in Flanders.

If August was very wet, the last month was one of the driest septembers on record.

Haig therefore renews his old obsession to breach the line with fast-moving forces and run deep into enemy territory, where the less defended rear can be upset.

But Haig's generals are less optimistic than he is, and General Plumer, the Commander of Second Army, in particular, sends him a letter that considerably dampens the picture.

General Gough, at Fifth Army, who was involved intensely in August, has the following point of view:

«From a tactical outlook his hopeful opinion was not justified when one considered the ground, the weariness of our own men, and the stout hearts which, despite of all, were still beating under German tunics.»

— The point will be moot. Rain is on the way. Big rain. Passchendaele rain.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, IV: 2214-5.



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30 September 1917

Billy Barker and his trusted Camel



Canadian **Captain William G. Barker**, a renowned fighter pilot already with Military Cross and bar, was wounded in August and sent to England for a rest as an instructor.

Impatient for action, he soon returned to France to regain command of his C Flight, 28 Squadron.

The squadron was re-equipping with the Sopwith Camel and, on the **30 September 1917**, he made his first flight in the type. He was allocated RFC serial number **B6313**, the 313th Camel built.

The Camel remains the emblematic British fighter of the War, credited with the greatest number of enemy aircraft destroyed. With its rotary engine, powerful and sensitive elevator and small rudder, the Camel was a difficult aircraft to master, naturally unstable and capable of nearly instantaneous changes in direction or attitude. It was armed with two .303 Vickers machine guns. Barker flew B6313 almost exclusively for the rest of the War, scoring 46 of his 50 victories in his one trusted aircraft.

— It became «**the single most successful fighter aircraft in the history of the Royal Air Force.**¹»

¹ Wayne Ralph, «Barker, William George», Dictionary of Canadian Biography:

Wayne Ralph, Barker VC: William Barker, Canada's most decorated war hero (London and Toronto, 1997).



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