

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918

## A Distinct Aviation Service



### The Royal Air Force Is Created

On 1 April 1918 the Royal Air Force took its place beside the British Navy and Army as a separate military service with its own Ministry.

It was formed from the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps, with over 20,000 aircraft and over 30,000 personnel, and the Royal Naval Air Service, with 2,949 aircraft, 103 airships and 55,066 officers and men.

Hugh Trenchard, as Chief of the Air Staff since January 1st 1918, and later regarded as the 'Father of the Royal Air Force,' had overseen the process of amalgamation, but had already tendered his resignation in mid-March over Secretary of State for Air Lord Rothermere's false promise to the RNAS of 4,000 new aircraft which did not exist. Trenchard had agreed to remain until April 1st.

Also on April 1st the **Women's Royal Air Force** came into being when concerns were raised about the loss of the specialised and essential female work force, members of the Women's Royal Naval Service and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

— Some 9,000 women chose to transfer to the new service under the initial command of Gertrude Crawford.

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●Michael Armitage, The Royal Air Force, an Illustrated History, 27-28; ●Chaz Bowyer, History of the RAF, 22-40; ●Russell Miller, The Life of Viscount Trenchard, 194-196; [www.rafmuseum.org.uk](http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk)



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April 2n, 1918

## A British Army Wiped Out



### Fifth Army no more

Since 21 March, Op MICHAEL, in Picardie, has made the largest breach achieved by any army in France since 1914.

Fifth British Army (Gough), ill-prepared for the assault, was pushed back right out of its trenches and broken to pieces. From Arras to Reims, the towns of Bapaume, Péronne, Albert, Montdidier, Noyon, are all lost. Third British Army (Byng) and French Sixth Army blocked the gap as best they could.

But Fifth Army is definitely broken. Its divisions were thrown about, depleted by severe casualties. It now has to be pulled out of the order of battle.

General Sir Hubert Gough's Headquarters is sent to reserve with divisions no longer able to fight, and Fourth British Army, which was not attacked in the north, is now reconstituted in Picardie with the remains of Fifth and new divisions being brought in from other armies.

General Rawlinson, the titular commander of Fourth Army in the north, who had been sent to Paris to act temporarily as Military Adviser to the Supreme Council, is

now brought back to command the new Fourth Army.

The aim now is to defend Amiens at all cost because of the key railroad hub and the Somme river transportation from the sea, which are vital supply links.

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●Map from Nicholson, *Le Corps Expéditionnaire canadien*, p. 397.



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# April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918

## At the Helm



### Generalissimo!

At the conference of Beauvais, on **3 April 1918**, the Heads of Governments agree that **General Ferdinand Jean Marie Foch** be appointed to direct the strategy of allied armies on the western front.

This makes him the first allied general to be officially recognized as «Generalissimo» over national Commanders-in-Chief.

*« Le Général FOCH est chargé par les Gouvernements Britannique, Français et Américain de coordonner l'action des Armées Alliées sur le front occidental; il lui est conféré à cet effet tous les pouvoirs nécessaires en vue d'une réalisation effective. Dans ce but, les Gouvernements Britannique, Français et Américain confient au général FOCH la direction stratégique des opérations militaires.*

*,« Les Commandants en Chef des Armées Britannique, Française et Américaine exercent dans sa plénitude la conduite tactique de leur Armée. Chaque Commandant en Chef aura le droit d'en appeler à son Gouvernement, si dans son opinion, son armée se trouve mise en danger par toute instruction reçue du Général FOCH.»*

•Roskill, Hankey, Vol. 1, see picture of document with signatures, p. 576.



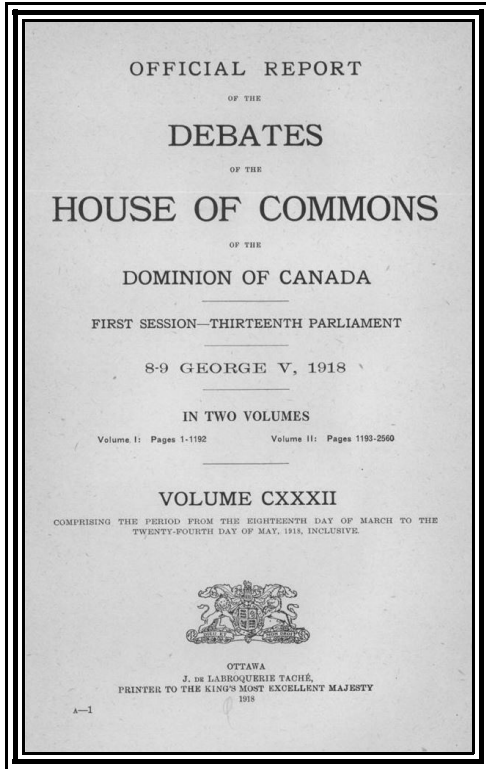
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# April 4, 1918

## A Double Whammy



### The Borden Government brings out two Orders-in-Council

In the wake of the disturbances in Québec City over the Easter weekend, when five persons involved in the large anti-Conscription riots were killed by the army, and some 50 were wounded, the Federal government produces two Orders-in-Council, on **4 April 1918**, that further its powers given by the War Measures Act of 1914, already amended many times.

The first Order-in-Council pertains to «**Regulations for Utilizing the Human Energy of Canada to Best Advantage**», to the effect that from now on:

**«Every male person residing in the Dominion of Canada shall be regularly engaged in some useful occupation.»**

This means that any person over 16 found guilty of not being so 'engaged' by a Magistrate can be fined or condemned to forced labour .

The second Order-in-Council further expands the Military Service Act, 1917, «**Providing for its enforcement consequent on disturbances in Quebec City**».

This empowers Commanding Officers to consider any area where riots happen to be under the rule of military law, and any person arrested therein to be under the jurisdiction of the military justice system, which includes suspension of habeas corpus and judgment under Court Martial Law.

• Hansard, 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 1<sup>st</sup> session, Book 1, 5 April 1918, p. 377-80.



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April 5, 1918

## The Bolt Has Been Shot



### Operation MICHAEL Ends with a Whimper

By the end of March 1918 the pace of the German advance has slowed, and in places stopped, especially on the British Third Army front.

The factor that affected the advance more vitally than any other was the indecision in the German High Command and the change from a strategy of one single massive thrust to a three-pronged advance, none of which was strong enough to achieve a breakthrough.

While the British were falling back on reinforcements, gun parks and supply points, the Germans were encountering mounting problems of supply.

The nature of the terrain meant that artillery could not be brought up quickly enough to support attacks, thereby leading to heavy casualties, and there were increasing problems of morale and fatigue.

Ludendorff was still intent on 'beating the British,' but the drive towards Arras against a strong, well-placed Third Army, and the abortive move against Amiens settled things.

On **5 April 1918**, Crown Prince Rupprecht wrote "**our offensive has come to a complete stop and its continuation....promises no success.**"

— That night Operation Michael was called off. For Germany the war could no longer be won.

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●John Keegan, The First World War, 403-405; ●Barrie Pitt, 1918 The Last Act, 101-109; ●Jeffery Williams, Byng of Vimy, 234-5; ●Correlli Barnett, The Swordbearers, 348-362; ●Trevor Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War, 563-4; ●Tim Cook, Shock Troops, 391



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# April 6, 1918

## A Big Easter Egg

### Churchill's Easter Munitions

In view of the great losses incurred in the German offensive started on March 21<sup>st</sup>, Winston Churchill decreed, as British Minister of Munitions, that workers in the British factories would work over the Easter holidays to make up for the losses in materiel at the front.

Churchill committed to replacing all losses, which he succeeded in doing.

**On 6 April 1918**, he offered the War Office 2,000 guns to replace those lost. The War Office took 1200.

The great surge in overtime showed the fighting forces that the home front was ready to support them wholeheartedly.

As the last classes of conscripted men are being torn out of industry, the role of women in factories becomes paramount.

— They become the beating heart of the life blood system, pumping explosives and steel to the arms and legs of the fighting body.

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●Winston Churchill, World Crisis, Volume III, (Part 2), p. 426-8, incl. own hand-written list in fac simile.

●<https://www.warehouse701.co.uk/blog701/2017/12/22/ww1-munitions-factor>  
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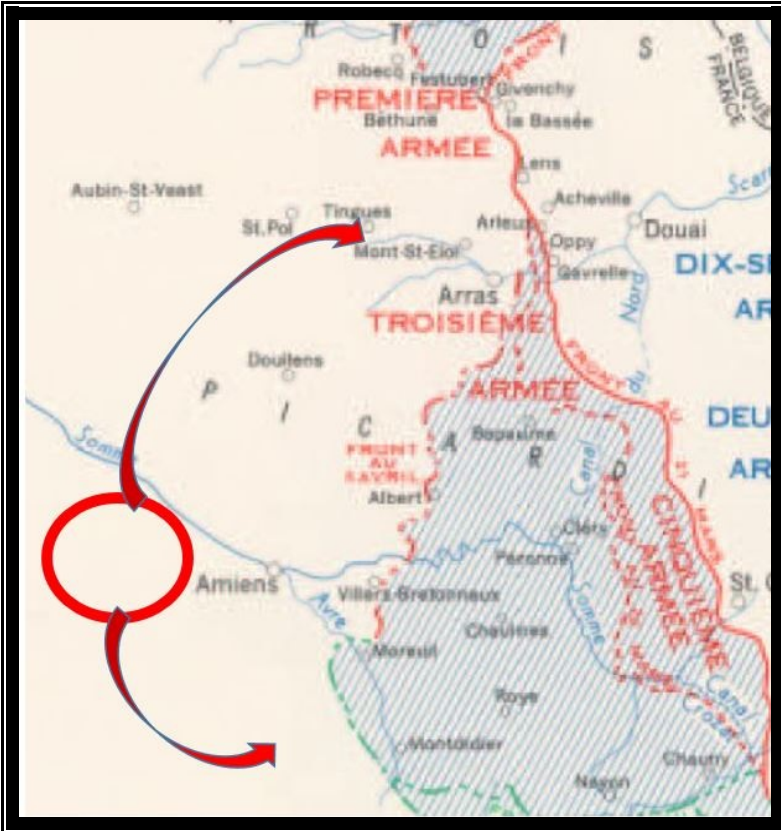
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Le 7 avril, 1918

## Foch Prend sa Décision Stratégique



### Le Maréchal Haig aimerait bien des réserves françaises

Bien qu'il se soit défendu pendant tout l'hiver que des réserves communes entre Français et Britanniques ne soient pas nécessaires, le maréchal Haig se retrouve maintenant avec sa Cinquième Armée au rancart, un grand trou à refermer par sa Troisième armée devant Amiens, et avec la conviction que les Allemands vont maintenant frapper plus au nord, en plein centre de ses défenses devant Arras.

Il implore donc le général Foch, nommé il y a trois jours en charge de la stratégie du front français, de lui prêter des réserves et de les faire bouger immédiatement vers le nord pour devancer la prochaine ruée.

Foch n'est pas si empressé de laisser aller de nombreuses divisions précieuses avant de savoir exactement où Ludendorff à l'intention de porter son prochain coup.

Il accepte tout juste de poster 9 divisions françaises derrière Amiens, que les Anglais ont toujours la responsabilité de défendre, et de les y maintenir.

— Ainsi les jeux sont faits. Foch a sa stratégie défensive bien en tête et attend maintenant fermement de voir quelle pièce Ludendorff va bouger sur l'échiquier de France.

•Hunter, FOCH, p. 161.



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# April 8, 1918

## Trotsky's Big Army



### Trotsky and the problem of officering the Red Army

Trotsky created the Red Army soon into the revolution as an ideological force intent on protecting the Bolchevik Government from its political opponents.

But the severe inroads made into Russia by the Central Powers with the Treaty of Peace of Brest Litovsk have convinced Trotsky that Russia also needs an army to defend against external enemies.

The problem is that during the revolution, officers of the Tsarist Russian army were toppled from their positions and many of them killed by the revolutionaries as representatives of a detested class system.

But Trotsky now needs professional officers who have training and experience as commanders and staff planners so as to meet enemies in the field competently. The improvised proletarian officers,

named and fired at the will of their own subordinates, are proving inadequate to the task.

Trotsky addresses the difficulty by taking on good former officers, but pairing them with Commissars, who make sure that the Communist doctrine is not forgotten in the leadership.

Trotsky is criticized from all sides for the difficulties of the Red Army. But he is faced with the problem of squaring the circle of running a revolutionary army in need of good old fashioned discipline.

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●Condoleeza Rice, «The Making of Soviet Strategy», in Paret et al., Makers of Modern Strategy, p. 650-3.



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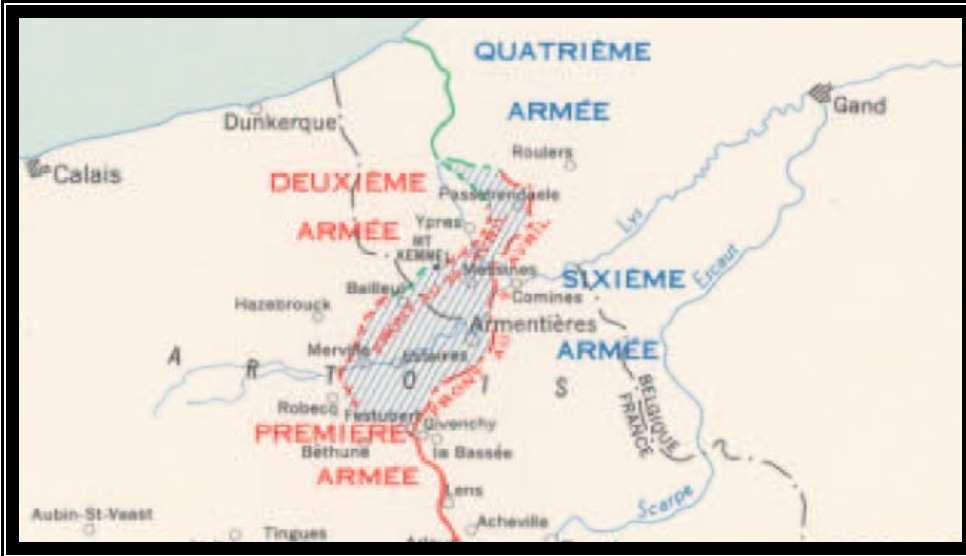
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# Le 9 avril, 1918

## Un Jab dans le Nord



### Opération GEORGETTE

L'offensive allemande lancée le 21 mars en Picardie s'est essouffée devant Amiens le 5 avril. Foch, qui a renforcé Amiens par une réserve imposante attend le prochain coup allemand.

**Le 9 avril 1918**, c'est maintenant l'**opération GEORGETTE** que les Allemands lancent tout au nord, dans le but d'attirer les réserves de Foch pour plus tard retourner au sud. Ludendorff joue ainsi le jeu du chasseur,

mais se fait lui-même prendre au piège.

Foch juge immédiatement que l'avance de quatorze divisions entre Armentières et le Canal de La Bassée est une tentative de diversion. Il refuse de bouger son centre de masse. Haig, qui a toujours redouté que ses armées du nord soient repoussées contre les ports de la Manche et que ses armées du sud se retrouvent isolées, craint d'abord la décision de Foch.

Mais Ludendorff frappe au moment où deux divisions portugaises sont en train d'être relevées. Il s'enfonce trop loin dans cette percée facile, que ses troupes de choc exploitent trop vite et trop loin.

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●Nicholson, Le Corps expéditionnaire canadien, p. 403-4.



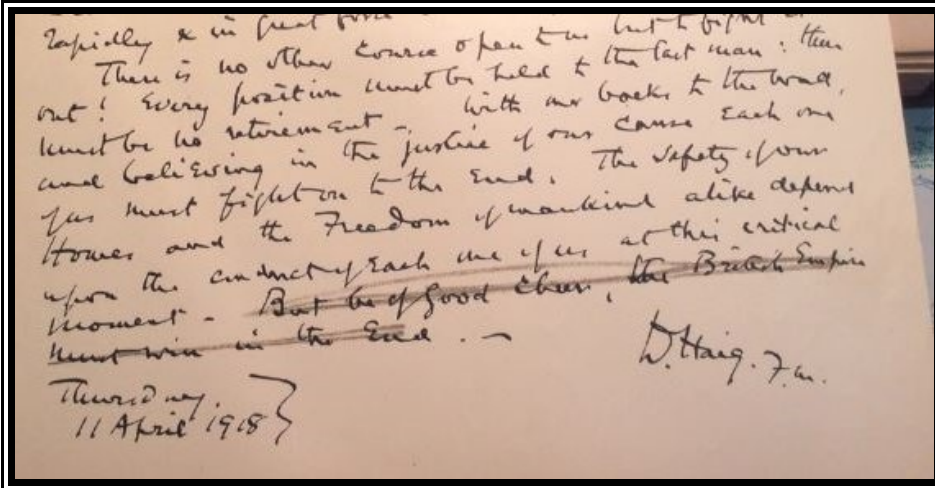
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April 10, 1918

## Haig Against the Wall



### Passchendaele lost

The Hill of Passchendaele, for which the British, Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians lost so many men has now fallen back to the hands of the Germans.

On the second day of Operation GEORGETTE, such blood-soaked sites as Armentières and Messines are also lost, and the Germans are now driving toward St. Julien, Ypres and Hazebrook, sites of so

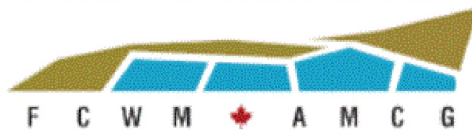
much fighting in 1914 and 1917.

Field Marshal Haig was there in 1914, and the same anguish, four years later, grips him again: the fear that the British will be cut in two and that the northern part pushed into the sea, with all supplies from Britain through Calais and Dunkirk being sealed off.

Tomorrow, in a gesture with no precedent, he will issue the following message to his troops:

**“There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each of us must fight to the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.”**

•Photo of Haig's full text in Winston Churchill's World Crisis, Vol. 4, Part 2, p. 434.



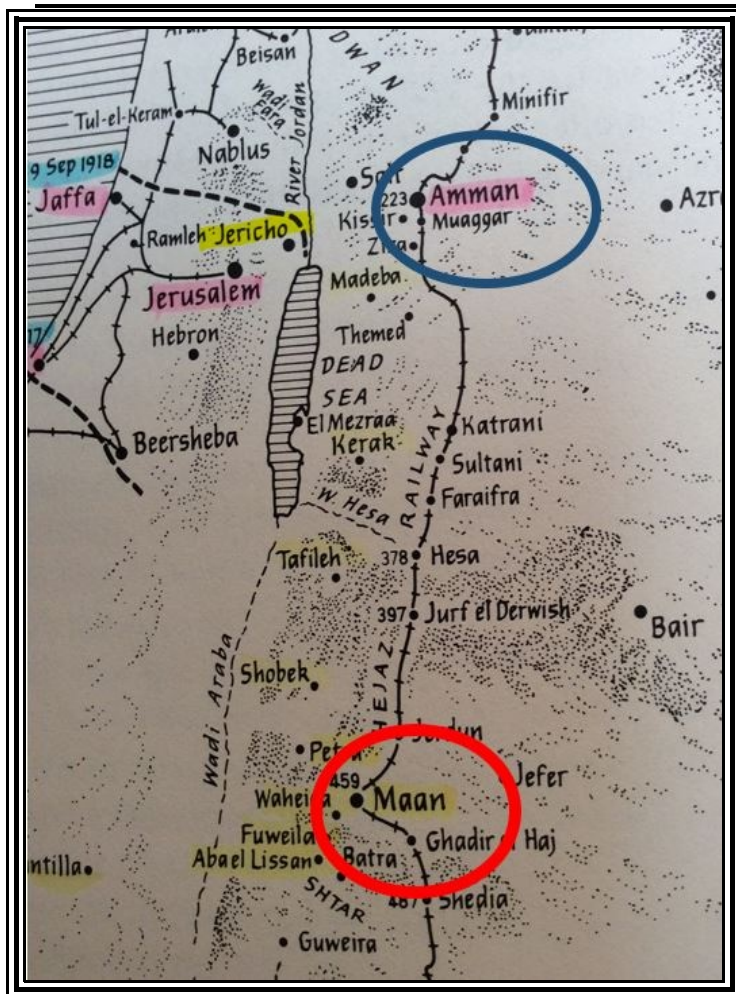
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April 11, 1918

## A Good Lesson from a Double Failure



### The Arab Army's Attack on Maan

After the capture of Jericho, General Allenby planned to continue north in the Jordan River valley, to seize Amman and cut the Hejaz Railway, isolating the Turkish forces around Medina.

Attacking Amman would also draw Turkish forces away from the coast, which Allenby saw as his main line of advance.

The British attack on Amman met stiff resistance and failed but had the effect of drawing Turkish forces away from Maan, a key station on the Hejaz railway.

On **11 April 1918**, Feisal's columns attacked the railway north and south of Maan and soon destroyed rail and captured the station. However, in seven days of fighting, the Arabs were unable to dislodge the well-armed Turks from the town itself, despite support from British bomber aircraft. Feisal was forced to withdraw with heavy losses, leading to a stalemate.

Major Lawrence nevertheless saw this as a superb demonstration by the Arabs of their capacity to fight on conventional tactics, allowing for planning on a larger scale for the future.

- Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia, p. 497-8;
- Anthony Bruce, The Last Crusade: The Palestine Campaign in the First World War.



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**April 12, 1918**

## **Canadian Axemen Do Well**



### **Canadian Forestry Corps gets congratulated**

On this day, the British Secretary of State for War, the 17th Earl of Derby, writes to the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Sir George Perley, to congratulate the Canadian Forestry Corps for exceptional work done in response to emergencies at the Front.

Authorized in October 1916, the Forestry Corps was composed of dozens of companies serving in Great Britain and in France. Huge quantities of wood were needed and rather than shipping it overseas in merchant ships the decision was made to have experienced Canadian lumbermen and mobile sawmill workers in the UK and France to cut down forests and harvest the timber as well as clearing land for aerodromes.

Altogether, some 35,000 Canadians served in the Forestry Corps with many who volunteered considering it a way to serve the country without facing German fire, although some were recruited to join the infantry at the Front.

It is estimated that the Corps supplied about 70% of all lumber that was used by Allied forces, a huge achievement that is not often recognised.

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For more information: C. W. Bird and J. B. Davies, The Canadian Forestry Corps; Its Inception, Development and Achievements, (2017).



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# April 13, 1918

## A Big Bird with Big Eggs



Handley Page O / 400 Bomber of the Royal Air Force

### The Handley Page O / 400 Bomber

In 1914, the head of the Royal Navy's Air Department asked aircraft designer Frederick Handley Page for a "bloody paralysing of an aircraft" for long range bombing. Handley Page designed what was the largest aircraft produced in the UK during the War, the O / 100 which entered service in small numbers.

**In April 1918**, the definitive version, the **H.P. O / 400**, joined both Royal Navy

and Royal Air Force squadrons. By the end of the war over 400 had been delivered.

The bomber was powered by two Rolls Royce Eagle engines, was 19m long with a wingspan of over 30m. Maximum take-off weight was 6060 kg. It had a range of over 1000 km which was reduced when the maximum bomb load of 900 kg was carried.

— It proved to be a reliable and effective bomber.

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Further information: Francis K. Mason, [The British Bomber Since 1914](#).



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April 14, 1918

## The Man in Charge of Timing



### The Meeting of Abbeville

Foch is still opposed to moving any of the reserves for which he has complete command toward the Germans inroad in the north.

Both Haig and Pétain are now calling for help in their respective areas of responsibility, and Foch is still refusing. He wants them to fight it out on their own. In his view, «La bataille du Nord est finie!»

In an acrimonious conference in Abbeville, Foch receives another confirmation of his authority by the governments of France and Great Britain when he is given a letter which addresses him as «**Général en chef des armées alliées en France**», that confirms the arrangements of Beauvais of 4 April, on his status. French President Clemenceau has come to the conclusion that the war will be lost if Foch is not given supreme authority.

But in the end, this supreme authority comes from the central reserves that Foch wields, for which timing is so important.

— Launched too early, they will be wasted, launched too late they will be useless.

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●A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War*, (Penguin, 1976), p. 219; ● Michael Howard, «Men Against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914», in Peter Paret, ed., with collaboration of Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear age*, (Princeton: NJ, Princeton University Press, 1943, 1970, New Ed. 1986), p. 490-1.



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## Le 15 avril, 1918

### Tensions dans l'air



#### Le général Currie « rempli de lui-même »!

Au cours des deux batailles importantes des opérations allemandes MICHEL et GEORGETTE, le Corps canadien n'a pas été directement impliqué. MICHEL a commencé le 21 mars, le jour même où le Corps a été envoyé en réserve d'armée. Ses divisions ont toutefois été dépêchées vers divers corps d'armée pour porter main-forte, mais le QG du Corps canadien a été maintenu en réserve.

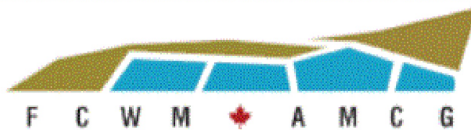
Le général Currie s'est immédiatement opposé à cet état de choses et a exigé que les divisions lui soient retournées pour qu'elles se battent au sein du Corps canadien, comme il avait toujours été entendu qu'elles le feraient. Mais la fonction de corps de réserve d'armée britannique ne prévoit pas ce genre de cohésion; les divisions du corps de réserve doivent être prêtes à se déplacer seules vers les points faibles.

L'insistance du général Currie n'est pas sans compliquer les plans du Maréchal Haig et du Général Horne, le Commandant de la Première Armée.

Horne va même jusqu'à dire que Currie est plutôt « rempli de lui-même » dans sa détermination d'obtenir des privilèges pour les Canadiens. On lui reproche maintenant d'être trop critique des stratégies anglaises et de ne pas avoir contribué suffisamment à la défense au cours du dernier mois.

— Cela n'aide pas que Currie apprend, **le 15 avril 1918**, que Passchendaele a maintenant été évacué, lui qui y a laissé 16,000 hommes!

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●Nicholson, Corps Expéditionnaire canadien, p. 409-11.



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April 16, 1918

## A Difficult Chess Move that Pays Off



### Operation Georgette – Day 7

The German operations in the vicinity of the Lys River, near Ypres, on the Belgium frontier, are still ongoing after a week of advance.

**On 16 April 1918**, the Commander of Second British Army, **General Sir Herbert Plumer**, has to once again give up some ground. This is all ground for which the British Expeditionary Force has fought viciously since the beginning of the war, and the withdrawal is heartbreaking for all involved.

But Plumer and his Chief of Staff, Tim Harrington, nevertheless take the right decision and relinquish such places as Houthulst, Poelcapelle, Passchendaele, Broodseinde and Polygon Wood, so as to buttress Wytchaete and Meteren.

These moves are somewhat unexpected by the Germans who suddenly see their lines of communications not only extended, but pulled in unexpected directions.

Operation GEORGETTE is coming to an end. Foch was right. His strategic reserves were not rushed to the north and they are still in position to respond to any other attempt that the Germans will do to break through the Allied front.

— This was a good move on the chess board, but many pawns have now disappeared.

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●Pitt, 1918, p. 140.



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# April 17, 1918

## A Hard Law But The Law



### Special Secret Parliament Joint Session

In an unprecedented action, the Canadian Government calls Parliament, on **17 April 1918**, for a joint session *in camera* of both Houses (the Parliament building is still in reconstruction).

The Canadian Prime Minister reads a letter from the British Prime Minister giving an outlook of the situation in Europe after the German March offensive. The need for more men is recognized.

The Government will approve, on 19 April, another Order-in-Council amending the Military Service Law, by which all exemptions granted to men from 20 to 22, fit for service,

will be automatically cancelled.

Men of 19 years of age will also be added to the list of admissible persons, in accordance with the original law.

The government thus recognizes that the administration of the exemption program did not work well. 93 % of candidates in Ontario and 98 % in Québec have presented exemption requests. In Québec, 40 % of those called up to report for service did not show up, and 9 % in Ontario.

— The Government has had to challenge no less than 80 to 90 % of cases where exemptions were granted.

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●E. H. Armstrong, *Le Québec et la Crise de Conscription*, p. 267; ● P.C. 919, Government House, Ottawa. *Military Service – Motion by the Prime Minister Enacting Regulations by Governor in Council for the Calling of Men to Military Service*. Hansard, 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament, First Session, 17 April, pp. 832-4, and 19 April 1918,; 933-956.



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# April 18, 1918

## The Compromise



### The Irish Conscription Crisis

Faced with mounting troop shortages, Lloyd George's coalition government enacted the Military Service Bill to extend conscription into Ireland.

The legislation was attached to a new version of the Home Rule Bill, which alienated the Irish nationalist parties, who walked out of Parliament in protest.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin convenes an Anti-Conscription Committee on **18 April 1918**; on the same day the Roman Catholic bishops declare the legislation "an oppressive and unjust law" and call on all Catholics to resist. A one-day General Strike on the 23rd, will be widely observed.

Some 200,000 to 300,000 Irishmen served in the British forces, but conscription remained unimplemented in Ireland.

For the Sinn Fein party, including future President **Eamon de Valera**, the crisis profits them politically.

For Unionists, the crisis is "the final confirmation that the aspirations of Nationalists and Unionists" are incompatible.

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Further information: ●John Grigg, Lloyd George: War Leader 1916-1918 (Allen Lane 2002; Penguin, 2003); ●Gregory & Paseta (eds), Ireland and the Great War, (Manchester University Press, 2002).



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## April 19, 1918

### Georgette On Her Knees



**«A lull descended on the entire front<sup>1</sup>»**

Operation GEORGETTE has been going on since April 9, in the area of the French-Belgian boundary, to the east and south of Ypres.

Once again, the foul ground has been churned by artillery, mixing once again the flesh and mud of the previous years' fighting with the metal of broken weapons and sunken barbed wire.

A million men saw their end there, somewhere between La Bassée and Dunkirk, in unearthly suffering over forty-four months.

The stormtroopers of Sixth German Army have gone as far as they can. It is their turn to face the machine-gun grid of the British and Belgian defences. Some French divisions are now moving in to add to the British firepower.

General Ludendorff has to recognize that a dead man cannot go forward. His attack of the Lys River is out of steam, panting like a wounded animal. Historian Barry Pitt, in his 1918 summarizes:

**«Launching a successful attack is not unlike throwing down a bucket of water: unless one acts with extraordinary rapidity and decision during those vital first seconds, no attempts to dam or channel the flood [166/167] are of any avail, and there is nothing to do but wait until the waters lose their impetus and reach the limit of their dispersion.<sup>2</sup>»**

•<sup>1</sup> Pitt, 1918, p. 141; •<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 166-7; •Photo National Library of Scotland, 317 D. 1514, View of Wytschaete:  
•<http://digital.nls.uk/first-world-war-official-photographs/archive/74547050>



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# April 20, 1918

## Putting The Fight in the Dog



### American Baptism of Fire: SEICHEPREY

In the early hours of **20 April 1918**, the small French town of Seicheprey, near Saint-Mihiel, was subjected to a brutal, surgical surprise attack by battle-hardened *Strosstruppen*.

This was the bloody introduction of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) to the Great War.

Untested American doughboys, outnumbered, out-gunned, out-flanked, fought in thick fog and rain for 24 hours, defending their forward position dubbed “The Sybil Trench”.

Men from the 102nd Infantry Regiment, 26<sup>th</sup> Division, fended off wave after wave of German raiders, in brutal hand-to-hand combat.

Eventually the weary and bloodied

Americans reclaimed the village in shambles.

The 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment had approximately 600 dead from the engagement while the Germans had approximately 100.

This battle was meant to be a deterrent to the tyro, but «Seicheprey» was taken up as war cry for all American troops and made it clear that from this point, as they say there: «they had the fight in the dog».

• Farwell, US Army in Great War, p. 119; • <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36514/36514-h/36514-h.htm>



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April 21, 1918

## The Ace of Aces Brought Down



### Death of the Red Baron

In 1918, **Manfred von Richthofen** was perhaps the most famous fighter pilot on either side of the intense air fighting of that spring.

Richthofen had been credited with 80 victories, a figure probably close to actuality as the German air force was rigorous in documenting claims.

**On 21 April 1918**, Richthofen was leading his section of J.G. 1 when they encountered the Camel fighters of the RAF's 209 squadron, of

which half the pilots were Canadians, including Albertan Roy Brown. In the ensuing dogfight, Brown hit the Baron's bright red Fokker Triplane.

But Richthofen flew on, pursuing another Camel at low level. He lost situational awareness and flew over Australian anti-aircraft machine guns. Richthofen's Fokker crashed.

While Brown claimed to have shot down Richthofen, evidence on the spot suggested that an Australian gunner actually downed the Red Baron.

Richthofen was given a burial with full honors by the Australians at Betangles, near Amiens.

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Further information: Dale Tittler, [The Day the Red Baron Died.](#)



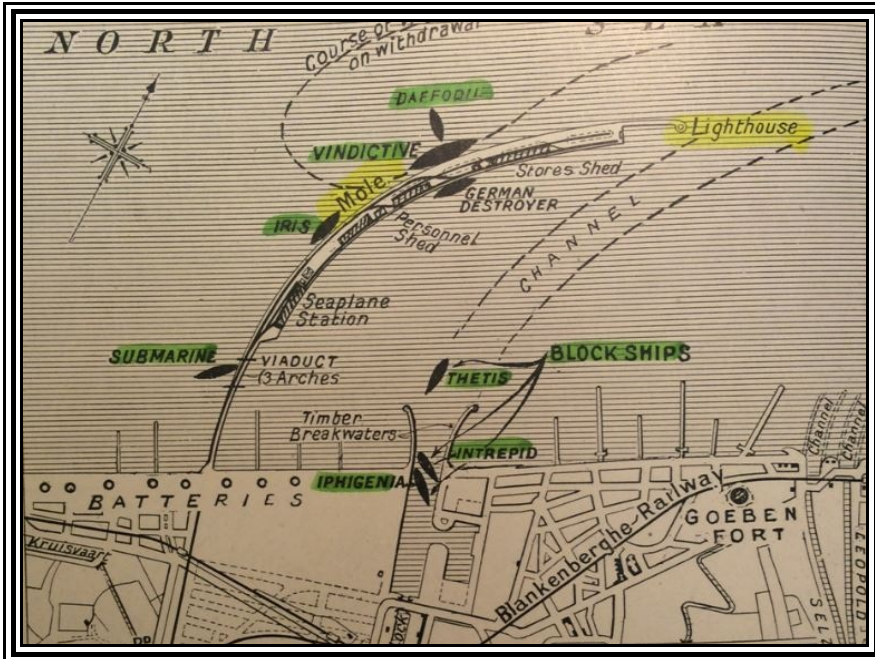
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# Le 22 avril, 1918

## Un Fameux Raid Naval



### Le Raid naval sur Zeebrugge et Ostende

Les attaques des sous-marins allemands sortent des ports protégés des canaux commerciaux de Bruges, en Belgique, principalement de Zeebrugge et Ostende.

La Royal Navy décide donc d'attaquer ces ports et de bloquer les sorties vers la Manche des bassins de protection intérieurs avec des navires coulés en place au cours de raids de nuit incroyablement téméraires.

Dans la nuit du **22 au 23 avril 1918**, l'intrépide Vice-amiral Roger Keyes commande un raid double pour s'approcher des ports sous couvert de

fumée, et y pousser de vieux croiseurs remplis de ciment qui doivent y rester, après avoir été sabordés par des explosifs. Ses plans très étudiés incluent des diversions, et l'extraction des équipages sous le feu des batteries côtières allemandes.

Le raid de Ostende échoue mais celui de Zeebrugge s'avère un des plus beaux coups de main de toute l'histoire navale. Le récit détaillé de cette aventure défie la fiction la plus imaginative.

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●A.J.P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945, p. 103.; ●TIMES History of the Great War, Vol. XVIII, p. 341-50, plan, v. p. 344.



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**Le 23 avril, 1918**

## **BLUCHER en gestation**

### **Op BLÜCHER**

La prochaine opération allemande a été nommée en mémoire du fameux général allemand, héros de la 'Bataille des Nations,' à Leipzig, contre Napoléon, en octobre 1813. Napoléon a dû retourner en France après cette défaite, et a finalement été exilé pour la première fois.

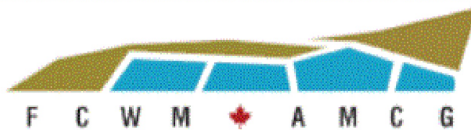
C'est dans un espoir de victoire semblable que le général Ludendorff prépare maintenant la troisième grande offensive du printemps 1918.

Après avoir frappé d'abord en Picardie, avec MICHEL, le 21 mars, il a donné un deuxième coup près de la rivière Lys, en Flandres, le 9 avril. Bien qu'elles soient épuisées, ces deux attaques continuent de forcer dans leur secteur.

Ludendorff veut maintenant retourner plus au sud, en Champagne, pour forcer le passage de la rivière Aisne, où les Allemands avaient été immobilisés en 1914, après la Bataille de la Marne. C'est pourquoi Blücher sera nommée quelquefois la «Seconde Bataille de la Marne». Comme pour la première, le but est de déborder vers Paris, sectionner les chemins de fer, et séparer les armées françaises.

Les préparations pour cette attaque qui doit se passer dans un mois, sont très subreptices et très efficaces. De grands déplacements se poursuivent dans la plus haute prudence.

Ludendorff sait qu'il n'aura plus jamais d'opportunités de frapper avec le même niveau de surprise.



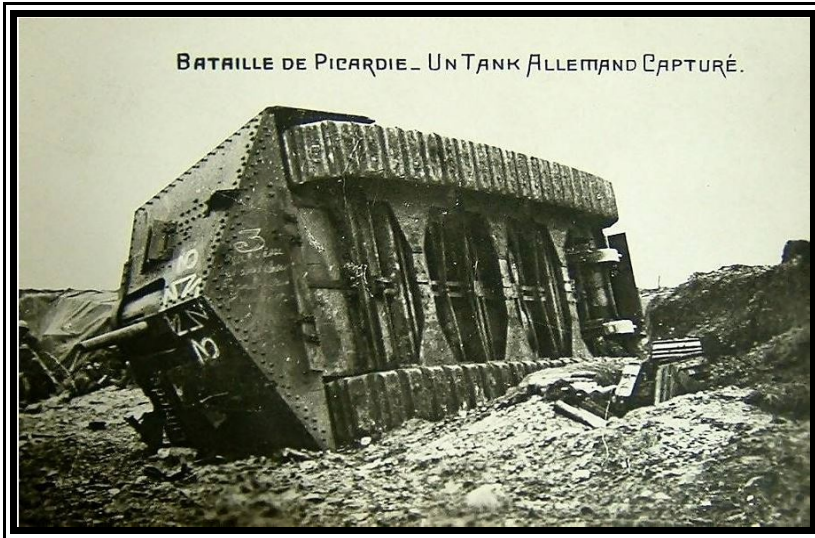
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**Le 24 avril, 1918**

## **Une Bataille Australienne près d'Amiens**



### **Villers-Bretonneux**

L'offensive MICHEL commencée le 21 mars en Picardie s'est ralentie lorsque celle de Flandres a emboîté le pas, mais le **24 avril 1918**, les Allemands y tentent une nouvelle surprise pour atteindre les chemins de fer d'Amiens, point névralgique du système Paris-Nord.

C'est une attaque de nuit à l'emporte-pièce qui frappe la Cinquième Division des Australiens-Neo-Zélandais qui s'y trouvent.

Les combats sont durs, comme à Seicherey, dans les restes du village qui

est soumis à un tir d'artillerie sans préparations, pour ne pas en alerter les défenseurs. Il s'agit aussi du combat où les Allemands font usage du plus grand nombre de chars pendant toute la guerre, treize, eux qui n'en utiliseront que 45 en tout.

L'attaque, premier combat char-char de l'histoire, jouit d'une surprise extraordinaire, mais révèle de graves faiblesses: les Allemands n'ont pas de cavalerie, de camions blindés, ou de quelconque véhicule motorisé de combat pour exploiter les percées. Ils n'ont pas non plus d'arme anti-chars autre que des fusils d'épaule sur-calibrés ou des pièces d'artillerie de campagne qui improvisent des tirs directs.

Les Australiens considèrent cette bataille comme leur haut-point en Europe. Ils la remémorent le même jour que l'anniversaire de Gallipoli, le 25 avril (1915).

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●Ropp, War in the Modern World, (Collier, 1962), p. 290.



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April 25, 1918

## Banging at the Door in the North



### Op Georgette resuscitated

After the push that he has ordered in Picardie, yesterday, Ludendorff now orders a push in the north against Mount Kemmel.

This is a great effort with the last fresh troops in Flanders, after 6 days of lull in Operation Georgette, in the Lys River region of Belgium, near Ypres.

Surprise allows the Germans to take the Mount (modern day Kemmelberg), but they hit the very strong resistance from British divisions that will not give up.

Ludendorff's banging on the door does not lead to any real progress for Op Georgette, revived from its exhaustion by sheer willpower. Foch has now released a few divisions to go north to help Haig.

The partial successes obtained in the last gasp of Op MICHAEL, yesterday, and in this forlorn assault in the north, against Mont Kemmel, spell trouble for the Germans. They are very short of the profit that they expected from their investments in MICHAEL and GEORGETTE.

— They only have a few dice left to throw. 120,000 more American soldiers arrive in April 1918.

•Barnett, The Swordbearers, 362.



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April 26, 1918

## German Engineering to the Rescue



### Germany's Best Fighter, the Fokker D.VII

In late April 1918, the first examples of the **Fokker D.VII** reached the western front. The prototype had been flown by Manfred von Richthofen in the air force's fighter competition; his laudatory assessment resulted in the Fokker prototype being selected.

Most D.VIIs were powered by a six cylinder, water-cooled Mercedes engine. Like many

other WW1 fighters, an alternate powerplant, from BMW, was used but the Mercedes engine was superior. It was structurally very strong and unlike earlier top-line German fighters such as the Albatros series, it could be dived with no worries about structural failure.

The D.VII quickly established itself as the best German fighter, flown by many aces including Hermann Goering. Over 3300 were built and uniquely, the Armistice demanded the surrender of all D.VIIs.

— A BMW-engined example is in the Brome County Historical Society collection in Quebec.

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Further information: ●Wikipedia: Fokker D.VII



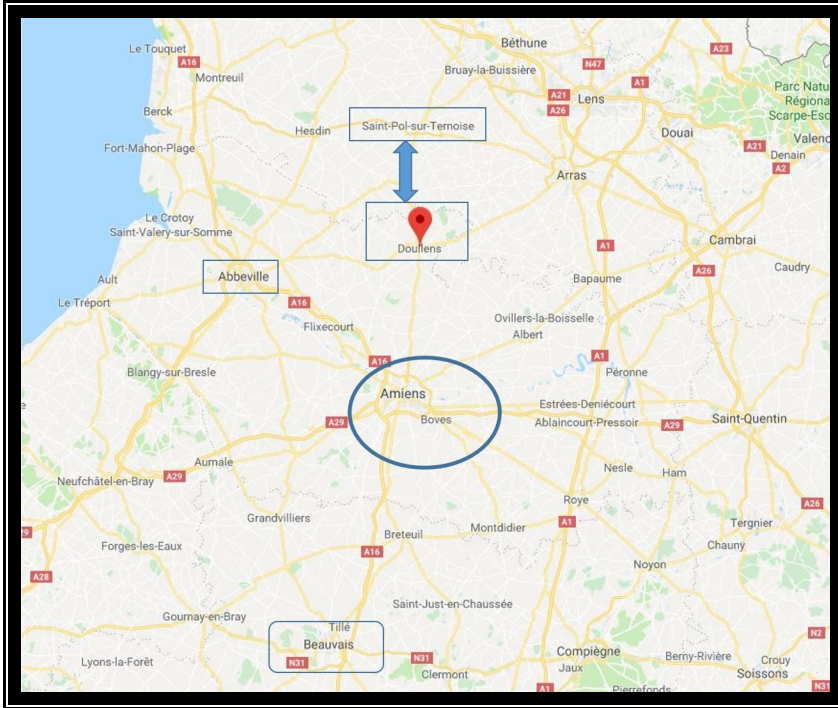
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Le 27 avril, 1918

## Foch Bouge Son Cavalier



### Foch bouge la 10ème Armée

Au cours des deux dernières opérations allemandes, les Britanniques ont perdu 300,000 hommes de 60 divisions, alors que les Français ont perdu 70,000 de 100 divisions.

Il s'agit de pertes 4 fois plus grandes (*per capita* 7 fois).

Foch reconnaît le besoin des Britanniques pour du renfort et permet que sa Dixième Armée de quatre divisions, en réserve stratégique, soit bougée vers le nord entre Doullens et Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise.

Pétain fait aussi bouger des divisions françaises vers le nord.

•Hunter, Foch, 164-6.



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## April 28, 1918

### Ukraine, Phase II



### The German-backed coup d'État in the Ukraine.

«On April 28<sup>th</sup> the Rada was surrounded and summoned to yield. The members of the government were arrested and the legislature dissolved. The next day an assemblage of great landlords, meeting in a circus, again under military 'protection' proclaimed Skoropadsky Metman of the Ukraine. Two days later again, Skoropadsky produced a list of ministers which had been agreed with the Germans.

«Thus, under the transparent disguise of an internal Ukrainian counter-revolution, Germany had

set aside the parliamentary socialist regime in the Ukraine and put in a government which had even less roots in the people than the Rada, but being, unlike the other, quasi-monarchic, was better fitted to cover the fact that Germany had now entered on a second phase of her Ukrainian policy, in which her purpose was to make the Ukraine a relatively stable state, orderly and peaceful in its internal conditions and completely dependent on Germany. The complaints voiced in the Reichstag against the crude behaviour of the military and the violation of a parliament's immunity did not alter by a hair's breadth the policy actually followed by Germany.»

• Fischer, Germany's Aims, 540.



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# Le 29 avril 1918

## Georgette est Morte



### Fin de GEORGETTE

L'attaque allemande dans le nord, en direction de Ypres, a commencé le 9 avril, dans le but de pousser les forces britanniques vers les ports de la Manche, et de les séparer des armées françaises.

D'abord conçue comme SAINT-GEORGE I et SAINT-GEORGE II, la résultante a été GEORGETTE, qui a impliqué deux armées dans une poussée à l'emporte-pièce.

Toutefois cette poussée n'a pas réussi à atteindre des résultats stratégiques.

Les Britanniques sont toujours en défense et viennent tout juste d'être appuyés par des renforts français. Bien qu'ils aient reculé sur du terrain sacré acquis au prix de centaines de milliers de vies, depuis le début de la guerre, ils restent maîtres de leur ligne de

défense et les attaquants sont épuisés.

Le général Ludendorff est complètement déçu des résultats acquis dans les dernières deux semaines. Cette déception s'ajoute à celle de MICHEL, en Picardie, commencée le 23 mars, dont les résultats fulgurants au début n'ont pas donné non plus d'avantage stratégique réel.

—Ludendorff garde peu de cartes dans son jeu. Il se donne un mois pour la prochaine grande bataille.

•Terrain, *To Win a War*, p. 67; •Carte: Tony Noyse: <http://www.worldwar1.com/tripwire/smtw0408.htm>



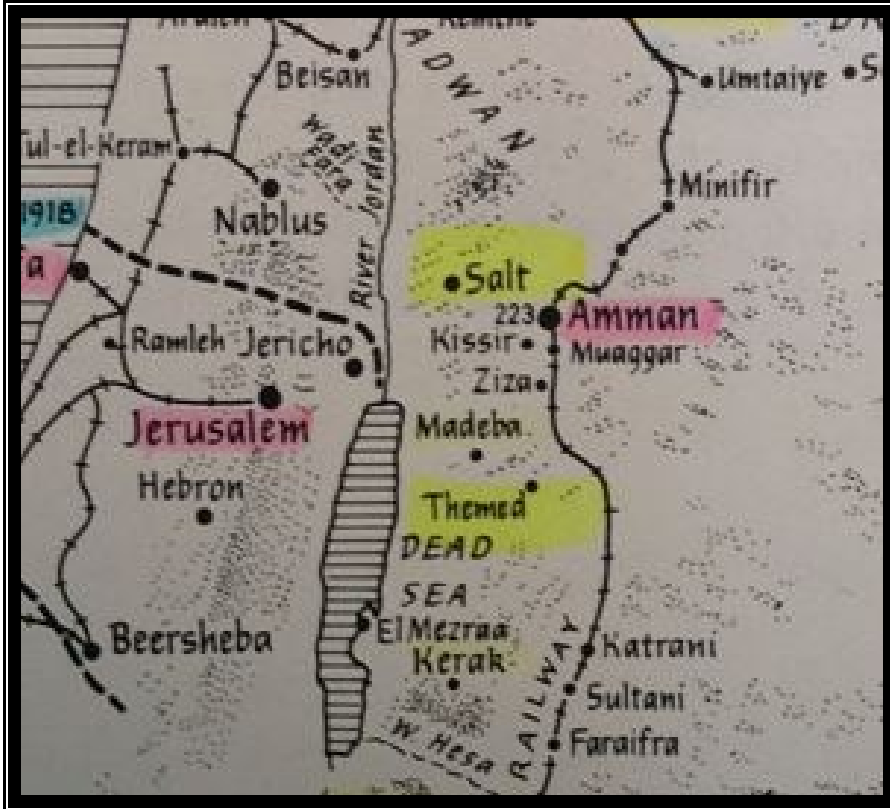
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# Le 30 avril, 1918

## Un Revers pour Allenby



### Liman von Sanders en Palestine

En Palestine, où les Britanniques font face aux troupes ottomanes et allemandes, la date du **30 avril 1918** marque une victoire à leur dépens.

Lorsque le général allemand Liman von Sanders, architecte de la victoire des Dardanelles, en 1915, a vent d'une attaque imminente contre Amman par les forces conventionnelles de Allenby, à l'est du Jourdain, il décide immédiatement de mettre sur pied une riposte, notamment avec des renforts récents et secrets venus du Caucase.

Il réussit à semer la confusion par la construction d'un pont flottant pour traverser le Jourdain et porter appui aux défenseurs d'Amman,

infligeant des pertes lourdes à la cavalerie du général Chauvel, temporairement isolé autour de Salt, près d'Amman.

Allenby est totalement surpris par le geste adroit et doit abandonner les opérations britanniques dirigées à l'est du Jourdain contre le chemin de fer Damas-Amman-Maan, un artère qui continue toutefois d'être visé par les attaques répétées des tribus arabes.

•Eugene Rogan, The Fall of the Ottomans (2015), p. 369; •Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence, p. 499-500, map p. 440.



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