

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

## Back to the Drawing Board



### Canadians get a break

After having held the front line position in the Lens region during March and April, the Canadian Corps is now sent to Reserve, where it can re-group and replenish.

This will be the long period of re-training that will prepare the Corps for its 1918 campaign.

Currie has learned very much from the experiences of the spring of 1918, including experiences of other formations, and that of the enemy on the offensive. He is now confident that the type of warfare will change and that the allies will shortly go on the offensive. He wants to improve on mobility.

The key to his reasoning is to use big divisions, but to concentrate on small unit tactics so that the infantry can be immediately assisted by specialist arms in its tasks. Platoon and company tactics will be modified to allow inter-arms cooperation, integrated firepower, and movement, movement, movement.

The role of artillery is again re-emphasized so as to be used more efficiently to precede the infantry. He insists that «Artillery conquers, infantry occupies.» The structure of the Field Engineers, Motor Machine Guns and Signalers is re-organized so that infantrymen can concentrate on combat skills.

The period of 1 May to 1 July 1918 will see a transformation in the Canadian Corps that will make it an outstanding fighting formation, ready for the swift offensive operations in the fall.

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●Nicholson, Le Corps expéditionnaire canadien, p. 415-7.



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# May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1918

## Decisions Big Time

### Second of May in Abbeville – A Summit in the field

On 1 and 2 May 1918, the high representatives of governments meet at Abbeville, in France, to discuss major outstanding issues. French President Clemenceau is there with Prime Minister Lloyd George, and Prime Minister Orlando of Italy.

For the fourth time, the status of General Foch is raised once again. It is now decided that he will become the overall commander of the whole of the Western Front, including the Italian Front. His powers will be limited in Italy to coordinating inter-allied action, but all allied operations there will fall under his strategic direction.

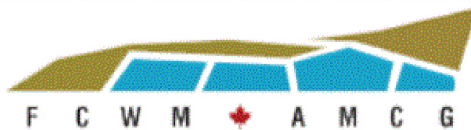
It is also decided then and there that the allied military planning staff kept in Versailles will be dismissed and that Foch will fill this void from his Headquarters in the field.

General Pershing, representing the United States, is brought to the idea that more infantry and machine gunners will be shipped in the summer to the detriment of other arms, and will be brought to the field more rapidly for training and integration to fighting divisions.

These are very important decisions that spell an invigorating rationalisation of resources management.



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●Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol. V, 2968-71; Vol. VI: 3060ff, 3178.



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May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918

## Undeclared War Against the Reds



### The Allies' interests in Russia

Since the beginning of the war, the Allies have been sending supplies to Russia to help the Russian Army fight the Central Germanic powers.

An accumulation of materiel built up in the ports of Murmansk and Archangel, where railroads were insufficient to move this supply as it arrived. Large stockpiles of millions of tons remained when the Bolcheviks called for an Armistice.

The Allies are worried that the Germans, established in Finland, can seize this materiel and use it to their own end. They are in fact worried that the Bolcheviks themselves can now use it against the pro-Allies factions which remain in Russia.

In December 1917, the Supreme Allied Council, in Paris, decided that action would be taken to secure these depots so as to ensure that they do not fall in enemy hands, or even non-friendly hands.

With the spring coming in the White Sea, Allied naval forces are sent to those ports to support friendly factions in the defence of such precious materiel.

With the help of the Japanese, inroads are also made by the Allies through Vladivostok, with the aim of progressing through Siberia so as to help such remaining non-Bolsheviks as Tartars and Mongols and Cossacks, remain opposed to both the Germanic coalition and the Red Moscow government.

•Lloyd George, VI, 3166-7.

**May 4, 1918**

## **Minister Kemp in London**



### **The Overseas Militia Council**

Last month, on 11 April, an Order in Council creating the **Overseas Militia Council** was signed by Prime Minister Borden. The Council parallels the civilian-led Militia Council in Ottawa and will exercise administrative control over the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Its administrative authority applies to the Canadian Corps in France, but also to the tens of thousands of Canadian servicemen undergoing training in England or posted in France outside the Canadian Corps (such as the numerous railroad and lumber troops).

Many elements of this Council begin to take effect in the month of **May 1918**, under the leadership of a full minister of the Crown, the Minister of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada (OMFC), **Albert Kemp**.

Minister Kemp has been in England since January working on this new Council. Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Turner VC, has been appointed Chief of Staff of the OMFC.

- Report of the Ministry: Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1918. (London: 1918)
- John A. Turley-Ewart and Robert Craig Brown, "Kemp, Sir Albert Edward," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 15, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/kemp\\_albert\\_edward\\_15E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/kemp_albert_edward_15E.html).
- Morton, A Peculiar Kind of Politics, p. 158-9.



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# Le 5 mai, 1918

## Du Sang partout!



### Pertes du printemps

En janvier 1918, tous les soldats des deux côtés savaient que dès que reviendrait le printemps, les assauts reprendraient.

On prévoyait partout que les pertes, encore une fois, seraient effroyables des deux cotés.

Mais peu appréhendaient que dès le début de mai, deux offensives grandioses des Allemands allaient empiler les cadavres et remplir les hôpitaux, comme il s'était passé pour la Somme ou pour Verdun, ou Passchendaele.

Les Britanniques ont déjà subi, pour l'offensive du Lys (9 au 29 avril) 76,000 pertes; les Français 53,000.

Entre le 21 mars et le 30 avril, les Allemands on subi 350,000 pertes dans leurs assauts.

Pour toute cette période, les Français ont perdu 92,000 hommes et les Britanniques 240,000.

Le total allié est donc de 332,000 contre celui des allemands, 350,000; un grand total de 682,000 hommes tués, blessés, fait prisonniers ou disparus, pour 41 jours de combat:

— 17,000 hommes par jour pour six semaines de printemps.

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●BGen Sir James Edmonds, A Short History of World War I (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Osford University Press, 1915), p. 315-6.



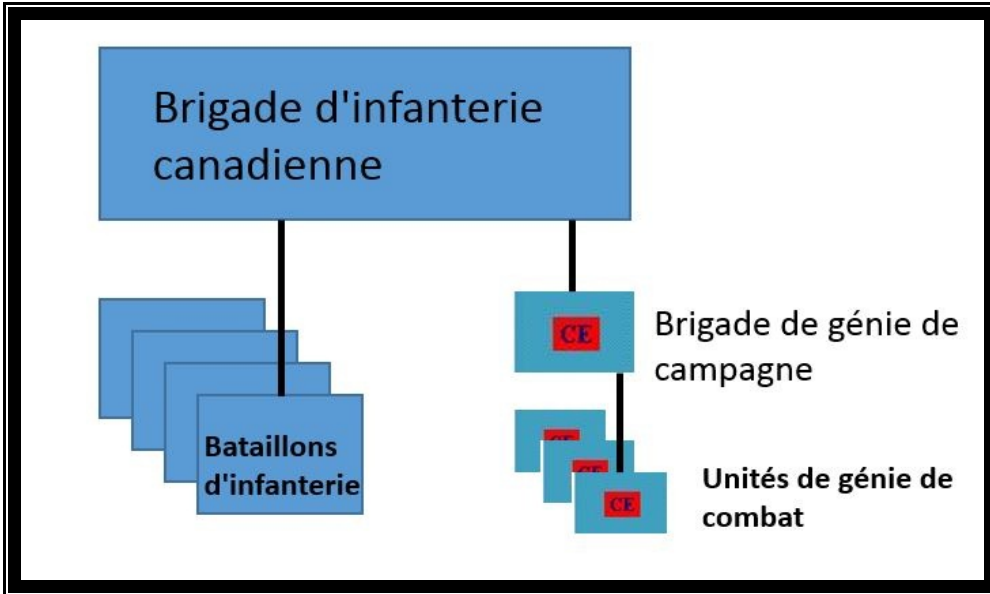
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Le 6 mai, 1918

## Mouvement, Mouvement, Mouvement



### Réorganisation du génie de combat

Dès que le Corps canadien est mis en réserve d'armée, **la première semaine de mai 1918**, le général Currie procède avec célérité à une réforme importante pour assurer une plus grande capacité de mobilité pour le Corps canadien.

Puisqu'il anticipe que la guerre des tranchées est sur le point de se terminer et que beaucoup plus de mouvement de grandes formations va

s'avérer nécessaire, il donne aux trois brigades de chacune des quatre divisions canadiennes (12) une brigade de génie de campagne, dont la spécialité est justement d'assurer la mobilité sur le terrain en créant des routes improvisées au besoin, des ponts de bateaux pour traverser canaux et rivières, et des abris de combat.

Cette brigade d'ingénieurs de combat compte un groupe de commandement et trois unités de mille sapeurs, ainsi qu'un élément d'installation et de transport de ponts de bateaux.

– Ceci a l'avantage précieux de libérer les fantassins, trop souvent accaparés par des travaux de pionniers qui les écartent de leur rôle offensif.

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●Nicholson, Le Corps expéditionnaire canadien, p. 415-7.



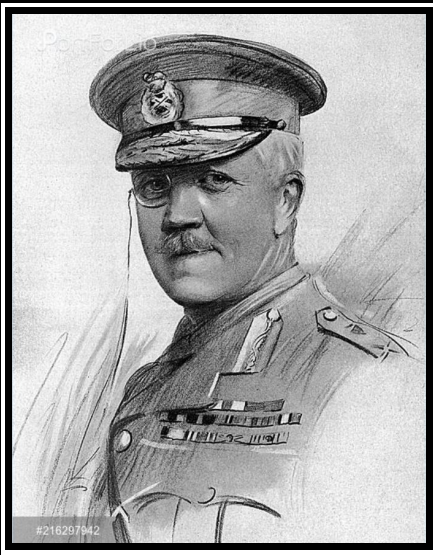
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May 7, 1918

## General Maurice in the Press



### The Maurice Affair

**Sir Major General Frederick Maurice** was Director of Military Operations (DMO) at the War Office in early 1918. Having sent a report to the Cabinet on troop numbers in France, he was shocked that these numbers were misrepresented by Minister Bonar Law in the House of Commons, reassuring MPs that troops in France had been increased over last year, which Maurice knew to be untrue.

Maurice resigned his position and, still in uniform, went to the Press to reveal that such a misrepresentation had been made by the Government.

The gravest political crisis of the war ensued, threatening the Lloyd George Government. Lloyd George himself went to Parliament to defend Bonar Law's statement.

The prime minister defended the statement so brilliantly that a vote of confidence gave him a victory of 203 to 106 in the House of Commons. His success was called a 'slight of hand' by historian A.J.P. Taylor.

General Maurice was cashiered and the issue never resurfaced. But the British Liberal party was broken forever. Former Liberal PM Asquith, who had raised a resolution against the coalition government, found himself isolated with 100 followers, and Lloyd George, also a Liberal, found himself carried by Conservatives and Irish Unionists.

They did not want any other prime minister than Lloyd George himself, whatever his failings.

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•A.J.P. Taylor, English History, p. 105; •Beaverbrook, Men and Power, Chap VIII 'The Lost Box', p. 64ff; •Hew Strachan, The Politics of the British Army, Ch. 6; •Lloyd George, Memoirs, Chapter 80 - « The Maurice Affair», p. 2972-95; Maurice, Lessons of Allied Co-operation (1942).



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May 8, 1918

## Another Jewel in the German Crown



Romanian Prime-Minister Alexandru Marghiloman signing the treaty

### The Treaty of Bucharest

The status of Rumania had remained uncertain since the Armistice of 9 December 1917 with the Central Powers, after the Russian troops had withdrawn from the east of the country, and no hope remained of a Rumanian resurgence by force of arms.

Rumania was occupied by German and Austrian-Hungarian troops in wait of a definite status within the context of the German plan for *Mitteleuropa* after the war.

**On 7 May 1918**, the Foreign Minister of Germany, Richard von Kühlmann, imposed the Treaty of Bucharest, (signed at Buftea, near Bucharest) on the new Rumanian Prime Minister Alexandru Marghiloman, after protracted 'negotiations for peace' in the previous months.

The important clauses of the Treaty were, however, contained in five secret annexes pertaining to oil, economics, shipping, finance and law, which gave control of Rumanian assets to Germany.

— King Ferdinand I of Rumania refused to sign this Treaty, which was nullified in Versailles in 1919.

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●Fischer, Germany's Aims in The First World War, p. 515-23; ●Wikipedia, «Treaty of Bucharest (1918)».



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# May 9, 1918

## Without Any Flying Circus



Rene Fonck with his SPAD Fighter

### René Fonck, French Ace of Aces

**René Fonck** began his military service in the combat engineers of the French army. After flight training in 1915, he flew observation aircraft, establishing himself as an excellent combat pilot.

In 1917, he was invited to join the Escadrille des Cigognes, the world's first fighter wing with four squadrons.

**On May 9, 1918**, Fonck made a friendly wager with two American pilots in the wing, as to who would shoot down the most aircraft that day.

In two missions, Fonck shot down six two-seater German observation aircraft.

He ended the war with the highest confirmed record of victories (75) among allied pilots.

Fonck avoided dogfights, preferring to stalk his victims in his SPAD fighters, engaging at close range.

He was an ascetic and withdrawn man and never developed a public following like other aces.

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Further information: Jon Guttman, [Spad XII / XIII: Aces of World War 1](#)



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# May 10, 1918

## Infantry Tactics 401



### General Igor Maxse and Lessons Learned

**Lieutenant General Igor Maxse** has been a keen observer of French infantry tactics since 1916. The relative success of his 18 Division in the battle of the Somme was due to his initiative in this regard.

He subsequently became the Commander of XVIII Corps, and in recognition of his talent, was given charge of training the large numbers of infantry that arrived in the late spring and summer of 1918. He will become Inspector General of Training in June.

Maxse was a level-headed field officer who took notice of practices that were successful for the French and the Germans. Both those armies had compulsory service before the war and a tradition of land warfare much more steeped in study than the British Army. Great Britain's military tradition was more naval.

**« Maxse introduced practices that, though old hat to the Germans and even the French, were revolutionary for the British Army. These included platoons à la Française, with two Lewis gun squads and two rifle squads (and thus the capability of independent maneuver) and the use of individual field guns for direct cooperation with the infantry.»<sup>1</sup>**

— This is exactly what General Currie has in mind to do since the end of the Somme.

<sup>1</sup>•John A. English, and Bruce I. Gudmundsson, On Infantry, (1994), p. 45. •<http://www.firstworldwar.com/bio/maxse.htm>



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# May 11, 1918

## The Belching Juggernaut



### The Corps of Canadian Railway Troops

Since 1915, nearly 13,000 Canadians, many of them experienced railwaymen from Canada's growing rail network, operate a large system of light (narrow gauge) railways bringing shells and supplies from the standard gauge French rail system to the front.

There, another network of tramways reaching further forward supplies the fighting units. On return trips, these trains carry wounded soldiers.

In the German spring offensive, the thirteen battalions of Canadian railwaymen were transferred to building emergency rear area trench systems. At one point, some organised Lewis gun teams defended their plant until relieved by New Zealand infantry.

As the allies began to look to the offensive, in late April and early May, the Canadians were re-organized into the **Corps of Canadian Railway Troops**, incorporating separate units specialising in railway construction, freight car building, and providing engine crews.

—Trains and tramways proved a juggernaut in lifting and pushing supplies to the business end of allied armies.

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Further information: Canadian Rail, No. 457, November 1993, accessed at [www.exporail.org](http://www.exporail.org) ; ●Photo: National Archives of Canada, Photo PA-2126 - Canadian Light Railway Locomotive A light Railway goods yard at Dixie Siding, behind Vimy Ridge, in October 1917. Steam locomotives were not usually used close to the front lines because their smoke would give away their position.



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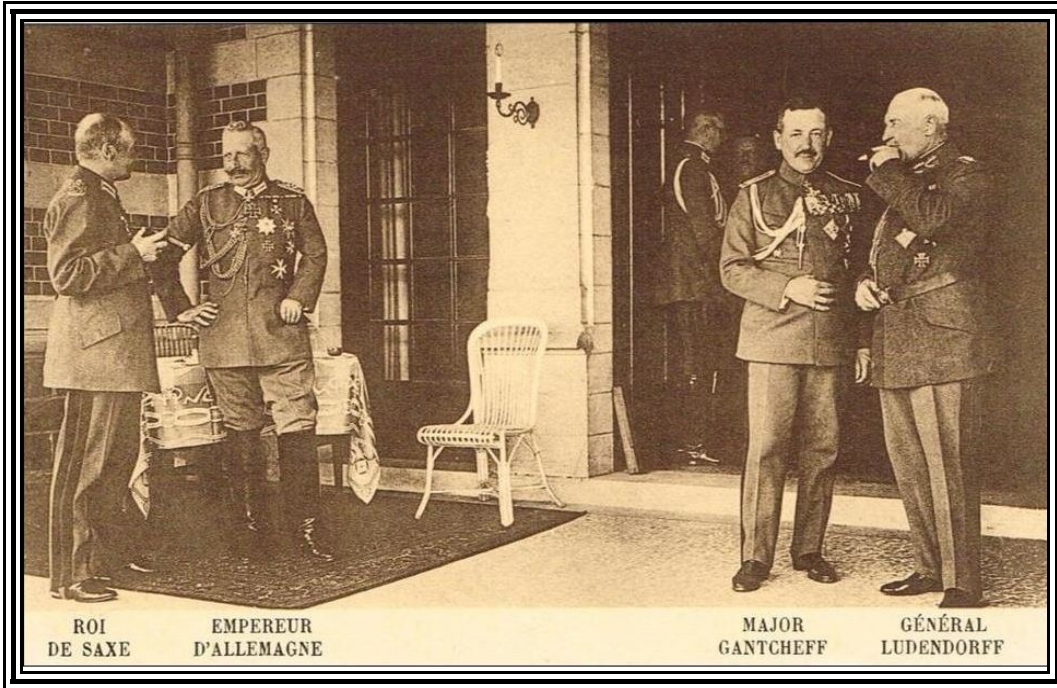
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# Le 12 mai, 1918

## Entre Amis au Spa



### Conférence de Spa: Tensions entre l'Allemagne et l'Autriche-Hongrie

La conférence de Spa est une rencontre, à la demande de l'Empereur allemand Guillaume II, des principaux responsables politiques du Reich et de la Double monarchie austro-hongroise.

Elle est organisée dans le contexte de l'éclatement d'un scandale austro-allemand, lié à la publication par les Français des échanges

entre des négociateurs français et austro-hongrois au cours de rencontres informelles en Suisse, au printemps 1917.

Utilisant habilement les conséquences de la divulgation récente de ces échanges, le Deuxième Reich parvient à mettre sous sa tutelle la Double monarchie, au terme d'une conférence au cours de laquelle l'empereur Guillaume II ne se prive pas de multiplier les humiliations à l'encontre de l'empereur Charles, notamment dans l'Entente sur la partition polonaise.

— À partir de ce moment, les Alliés soutiennent activement les comités nationaux que certains représentants en exil des minorités de la Double monarchie ont formés, au cours des mois précédents.

- Fischer, *Germany's Aims*, 528. • Sources : <http://www.sparealites.be/la-conference-diplomatique-de-spa>  
• Pour en savoir plus : <http://www.sparealites.be/la-conference-diplomatique-de-spa>



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## May 13, 1918 Pouring in in Droves



On 1 May 1918, the American Expeditionary Force was at 23,548 officers and 406,111 Other Ranks.

By the end of the month, 650,000 men will be divided into some 18 United States divisions.

«By agreement between General Pershing and Lord Milner, the new American divisions were bringing over only their infantry, machine-gunners, engineers and signal units. Artillery and transport would be provided by the British and French. Accordingly, the reinforcements grew from 64,200 in March and 93,128 in April to 206,287 in May, of whom 176,602 were combatants, 140,024 being infantry. It was thus a collection of some complete, some completing and some deliberately incomplete divisions that Pershing commanded, and his determination not to allow them to be committed to battle in this condition was absolute. His instructions, after all, were perfectly clear.»<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>•Terraine, *To Win a War*, 68. •Photo: American flag in 1917, with 48 states, from Kansapedia.  
<https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/victory-banner/10348>



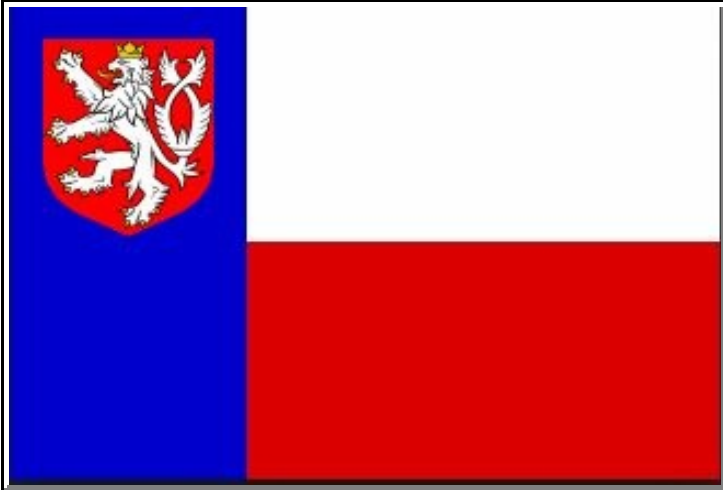
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**Le 14 mai, 1918**

## **Une Anabase Tchèque**



### **Les Tchécoslovaques en Russie**

Avec la signature du Traité de Paix de Brest-Litovsk, le 3 mars 1918, les Russes se sont retirés de l'Entente. La brigade russe qui avait été envoyée en France, pour marquer l'alliance, et les troupes russes qui avaient joint la force expéditionnaire multinationale de Salonique, ont donc cessé de combattre pour retourner chez elles.

En Russie, plusieurs contingents nationaux avaient joint l'Armée russe pour combattre les Allemands, les Autrichiens-Hongrois, ou les Ottomans, ainsi que leurs alliés (notamment les Bulgares).

Ce fut le cas des Tchécoslovaques, au nombre d'environ 30,000, qui désiraient continuer les combats pour des buts nationaux, principalement contre les Autrichiens-Hongrois.

Les Bolshéviques ont d'abord donné leur accord pour que les Tchécoslovaques soient retournés en Europe, mais lorsque ceux-ci se sont mis à aider les Russes opposés aux Communisme, leur statut a changé.

**Le 14 mai 1918**, le régime bolchévique s'est engagé à traquer et saisir les Tchèques sur le continent euro-asiatique, de sorte à ne pas être accusés de complicité par les envahisseurs de l'Alliance allemande.

Le sort des Tchèques, à partir de ce moment, a été comparé à la classique Anabase de Xénophon de la Grèce antique, puisqu'ils s'est agi d'une course surhumaine pour sortir du continent euro-asiatique par Vladivostok, à l'extrême Orient.

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● Histoire Universelle, Encyclopédie Pléiade (Gallimard, 1958), Vol. III, «Les Slaves Occidentaux», p. 913-7.



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# May 15, 1918

## A Spider's Web of Steel



### The nightmare of barbed wire

Invented in the 1860s in France and developed further in the United States in the 1870s and used by cattlemen in the American West to confine cattle in designated areas, barbed wire became a gruesome weapon of war first used widely during the Spanish-American War and in South Africa during the Boer War.

It is now used as a deadly obstacle by both the Allied and German forces, laid in front of the trenches that stretch nearly 2,100 kilometres along the Western Front. In **May 1918**, the output of British industry is of 1,200 tons per week, and orders are made in the United States<sup>1</sup>.

Meant to trap, maim, and channel assaulting troops toward killing zones, it is said that the two things that our soldiers feared most were shrapnel and barbed wire.

Millions of kilometres of barbed wire are laid by both sides by wiring parties working every night, one of the most dangerous and nerve-racking assignments soldiers must endure. The slightest noise as posts are inserted into the ground can alert the enemy who do not hesitate to use flares and open fire.

The use of barbed wire is without a doubt one of the most potent symbols of inhuman behaviour by supposedly civilized people.

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<sup>1</sup>Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, VI: 3075; For further information:

● [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/barbed\\_wire](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/barbed_wire);

● <https://militaryhistorynow.com/2014/01/08barbed-wire-war> ; ● <http://www.firstworldwar.com/photos/trenches.htm>



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**Le 16 mai, 1918**

## **Domination Industrielle de l'Est**

### **Rencontre des grands industriels allemands à Dusseldorf**

À la suite du traité de paix de Brest-Litovsk, le 3 mars 1918, et des traités subséquent rattachés aux arrangements de paix entre les Pouvoirs centraux et les pays limitrophes de la Russie, un concertium d'industriels allemands se réunit à Dusseldorf, **le 16 mai 1918**, pour émettre des recommandations au gouvernement de l'Allemagne sur l'exploitation industrielle des conquêtes de l'est.

Des représentants des grandes firmes d'industrie lourde s'inquiètent que les dispositions prises par le ministère des Affaires extérieures et par le Haut Commandement militaire ne favorisent pas adéquatement l'expansion industrielle et la création de marchés dans les pays où les Puissances Centrales ont gagné accès par la force des armes et par la pression diplomatique.

Ce que les industriels exigent du gouvernement est un appui financier considérable pour l'établissement d'infrastructures propices à l'exploitation, et une protection de marché de sorte à favoriser l'activité allemande contre la compétition d'après-guerre.

**Richard Bruhn**, représentant de la firme Krupp, créera, à la suite de cette première rencontre, le syndicat pour la pénétration économique de la Russie et de l'Ukraine.

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Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, p. 563-6.



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**May 17, 1918**

## **Flinging the Door Open in Manchuria**



Japanese Marines Parading in Vladivostok, Spring 1918

### **Japan Intervenes in Vladivostok**

The collapse of Imperial Russia threatened Vladivostok, Russia's strategic eastern port, with revolution. France asked Japan to intervene in February 1917 but the government declined.

However the Japanese Army General Staff established a Siberian Planning Committee which developed a plan to seize most of Russia as far as Lake Baikal, in Siberia, to create a subordinate buffer state.

In the spring of 1918, two Japanese battleships, and a British and American cruisers were stationed in Vladivostok to restore public order and bolster local anti-Bolshevik forces.

This proved impossible: a Bolshevik mob looted a Japanese-owned business, killing the

owner. Prime Minister Count Terauchi Masatake ordered marines ashore to protect Japanese property but they soon occupied the entire city.

Tensions over intervention in Russian Siberia proved to be the opening chapter in the fatal conflict between the civilian government and the military in postwar Japan, which led to the invasion of Chinese Manchuria, in the early 1930s.

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Further information: Peter Duus (ed.), [The Cambridge History of Japan: The Twentieth Century](#)



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# May 18, 1918

## Air Cover for London



### The Air Defence of London

German bombing raids against Britain peaked in 1917 with 341 aircraft and 30 Zeppelins raiding London, killing 650 people.

Initial defence efforts under the Admiralty proved ineffectual; a new system was established under the Army and then transferred to the Royal Air Force upon its formation.

Concentric rings of ground observers and searchlights now communicate with 26 sub-stations from which data is relayed rapidly by phone to a central plotting table in London. This central agency in turn alerts a ring of anti-aircraft guns and the fighters of nine squadrons which defend the city itself. By May 1918, over 60 bombers have been brought down.

The last and largest raid on London takes place on the night of **19-20 May 1918**, when the defences shoots down six of the 38 Gothas and 3 Staakens. This makes a real difference.

Britain's air defence in 1940 was based upon the 1918 system.

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Further information: Royal Observer Corps accessed at [www.roc.heritage.co.uk](http://www.roc.heritage.co.uk)



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# Le 19 mai, 1918 C'est la Guerre!



## The Canadian General Hospitals in Étapes bombarded

On 19 May 1918, German aircraft bombard the No. 1 and No. 7 Canadian General Hospitals in Étapes, France.

The wing of patients under tent that gets hit is the 'Femurs'; those patients with broken femurs, all brought together for specialist treatments, such as tractions and reconstruction surgery. These patients are mostly being prepared for further evacuation out of theatre. Sixty-six Canadians are killed and 73 wounded.

During the attack, three Canadian army nurses are killed. Many nurses remain with immobile patients throughout the raid. Nursing sisters Helene Hanson and Beatrice McNair are subsequently awarded Military Medals for their outstanding devotion to duty, making them the first Canadian women to be decorated for gallantry, as opposed to service.

— The work of Canada's army nurses was widely celebrated at home, and nursing as a whole enjoyed a new professional status in the post-war period.

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Morton. *When Your Number's Up*, p. 194. ●National Film Board, Film with original footage: Hospital Bombed by German Airplanes (Topical Film Company, 1918, 4min 38secs): <http://www3.nfb.ca/ww1/prologue.php>.

●<https://cdnhistorybits.wordpress.com/2015/06/02>.



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# Le 20 mai, 1918

## Reprendre le Poil de la Bête



### Foch prend l'offensive

Le 20 mai 1918, après avoir bien pris conscience de la faillite des opérations allemandes des dernières semaines, le **Général Ferdinand Foch**, devenu **Commandant-en-Chef des forces alliées du Front Ouest**, décide de reprendre l'initiative.

Il ordonne à Pétain de diriger ses armées vers l'espace entre l'Oise et la Somme, dans le but de dégager le chemin de fer Paris-Amiens ainsi que le centre de communications de Amiens.

Dans la région de la Lys, il ordonne au détachement français du nord et aux armées britanniques de forcer vers Béthune, au centre de la région des mines de charbon les plus riches de France.

Il déclare au général Wilson, le chef de l'état-major impérial britannique, qu'avec des réserves bien placées, il se sent en pleine confiance de pouvoir repousser toute contre-attaque que les Allemands pourraient lancer pendant ces manoeuvres.

— Foch personifie la confiance, l'énergie communicative, et la décision.

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● Hunter, Foch, p. 169.



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May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1918

## Washington Gaveling War Laws



### The US Congress in War Mood

The month of May 1918 marks important turning points in Washington. Congress passes a series of drastic laws that make it clear that the country is in a war mood.

**The Sedition Act**, an adjunct to the **Espionage Act** of 15 June 1917, is passed on 16 May.

It extends penalties for anyone found to use language 'disloyal or abusive' against the United States Constitution, government, the flag, recruiting, war bonds, or even military uniform.<sup>1</sup>

On 20 May, the **Overton Act** becomes the law of the land. This is the most extraordinary and potentially dangerous law ever passed by the United States Congress. The legislation introduced by Senator Lee Overton, a conservative Democrat from North Carolina, gives the president dictatorial powers for the duration of the war and for six months after. It permits Wilson to disband, add to, or reorganize any executive or administrative agency without the approval of Congress and it transformed the six existing war agencies – fuel, food, shipping, railroads, war trade, and war industries – into a virtual war cabinet. «Fortunately for the nation, Wilson used his great powers sparingly.»<sup>2</sup>

The **Overman Act** also establishes the full status of the General Staff in the US Army in Washington.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S.E. Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (OUP, 1965), p. 874. <sup>2</sup> Farwell, *US Army in the Great War*, p. 134. <sup>3</sup> Brian Neuman, « A Question of Authority: Reassessing the March-Pershing 'Feud' in the First World War », *The Journal of Military History*, 73 (October 2009), 1117-1142, fn 20.



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# Le 22 mai, 1918

## Renault en grève



### La grève des métallos

Comme une traînée de poudre, en France, le mouvement de grève s'est amplifié tout au long du mois de **mai 1918**.

Tout commence le 13, lorsque les salariés de chez Renault entament un mouvement de grève dans les usines d'armement.

Le lendemain, ce sont 100,000 personnes qui se joignent aux manifestants.

Plus tard, le 18, le mouvement gagne Saint-Étienne, dans le bassin de la Loire, devenu la principale région de fabrication du matériel de guerre. De là, il gagne Bourges et Lyon.

Le mouvement ne dura que quinze jours. Ces grèves sont restées largement ignorées en raison de la censure qui frappait les informations

de nature à inquiéter l'opinion.

Plus organisées, elles ont essentiellement touché les métallos qui manifestaient « pour la paix » et utilisaient un langage révolutionnaire avec de fréquentes allusions à la révolution bolchevique.

Redoutables parce qu'elles risquaient de mettre en danger les fournitures d'armes aux troupes, elles sont restées circonscrites à une seule catégorie d'ouvriers, les métallurgistes, ce qui explique leur arrêt rapide.

Sources : <http://blogs.lesechos.fr/echos-d-hier/13-mai-1918-debut-d-une-agitation-a10512.html>



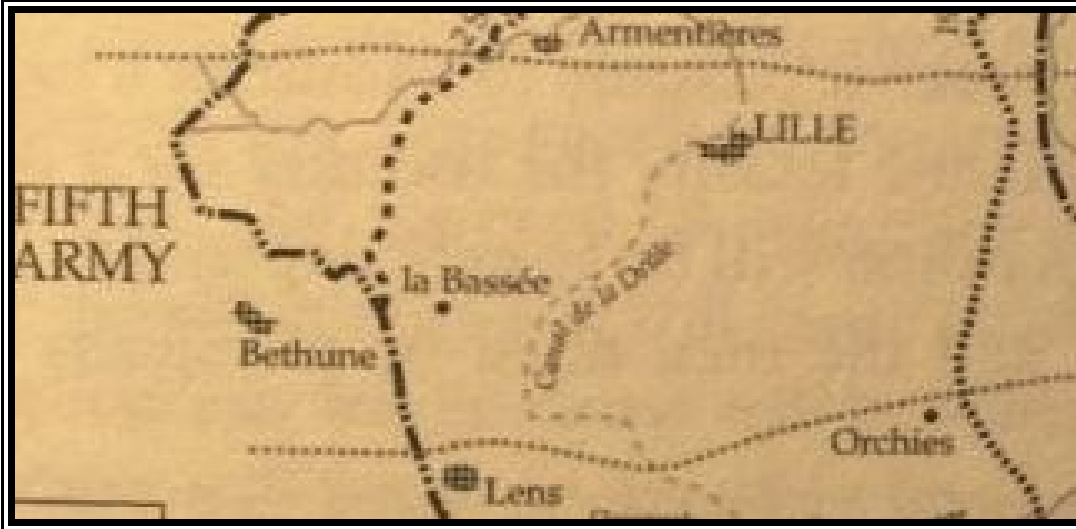
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# May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1918

## Old Fifth, New Fourth



### Birdwood Takes Fifth

**General William Birdwood** was as famous as British commander of Australians as General Byng was famous as British commander of Canadians.

Australians and New Zealanders loved Birdwood for his genuine concern and affinity with their fate,

—well proven at Gallipoli. Birdwood asked for nothing else but to remain with the ANZACs.

But in order to promote Australian officers to generalship, Birdwood is given command of the Fifth Army on **23 May 1918**, taking a section of the line between Second Army (Plumer) and First Army (Horne), from north of Lille to the north of Lens.

This marks the revival of Fifth Army after its mauling in the 21<sup>st</sup> of March German offensive. The commander of Fifth Army, General Gough, was then withdrawn from army command by Haig. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Fourth Army, in the north, was reduced to a corps, and its commander, General Rawlinson, with his own army headquarter, took command of the remnants of Fifth in the south with some new divisions, so as to rebuild a new Fourth Army in place, while Fifth Army Headquarters was withdrawn and rebuilt.

— The old Fifth in the center-north, and the new Fourth in the south mark a new alignment of the five British field armies for the rest of 1918.

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●John Lee, «William Birdwood» in Beckett and Corvi (Eds), *Haig's Generals* (Pen & Sword, 2006), p. 33-53, see full map p. 47.



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May 24, 1918

## A Big Shark Doesn't Get Caught



One of the U-151 Class Submarines in London After the War

### U-151: Blockade Runner Turned Hunter

U-151 was one of seven large submarines designed as commercial blockade runners to evade the Royal Navy noose and trade with the still neutral United States.

Britain formally complained to the USA that the submarines violated the neutrality protocols, since it was impossible to stop and inspect them for contraband military goods.

The complaint was rejected. But only the first two submarines of the class made trade voyages before the USA joined the war in April 1917.

U-151 was then converted into a long-range cruiser submarine.

In April 1918, it laid mines off the US Atlantic coast and cut the undersea cable

between New York and Halifax. On **24-25 May 1918**, it stopped and sunk three US schooners off Virginia, taking the crews prisoner.

– When U-151 returned to Germany in July, it had sunk 23 ships of 61,000 tonnes and captured several valuable cargoes.

It surrendered to France at the end of the War.

Further information: ●Wikipedia, SM U-151; ●Lieutenant Louis Guichard,, The Naval Blockade, Tr. and Ed. by Christopher R. Turner (New York: Appleton and Coy, 1930), Chap 3.



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**Le 25 mai, 1918**

## **Une Ponction Égyptienne Dououreuse**



### **Allenby perd des troupes précieuses**

Le transfert de troupes allemandes et autrichiennes-hongroises du front est vers le front ouest de France et d'Italie a inspiré le Haut Commandement militaire britannique à effectuer lui-même des transferts de troupes d'autres fronts.

C'est ainsi que le général Edmund Allenby, commandant de la Force expéditionnaire britannique en Égypte, reçoit des instructions du War Office de faire parvenir en France deux de ses divisions les plus précieuses, la 52e Division (Lowland) et la 74e Division, en plus de 23 bataillons d'infanterie d'autres divisions.

Il doit, à partir de ce moment, obtenir des troupes de l'Armée indienne, moins bien entraînées, et les préparer pour les opérations en Palestine. Ceci compromet les plans qu'il avait élaborés pour la prise de

Amman, prévue dans quelques semaines.

Pour le major T.E. Lawrence, la nouvelle est déplorable. Dix semaines de préparations sont ruinées. De plus, ajoute-t-il, «**Il va falloir dire à Feisal que la victoire prochaine que nous lui avions promise a été un mensonge.**»<sup>1</sup>

•<sup>1</sup>J. Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia, p. 501, Trad.. •Lloyd George, Memoirs, Book VI, Chap 84, p. 3221.



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# May 26, 1918

## Whiting the Reds



### The Murmansk Soviet

The port of Murmansk has received some one million tons of supplies from the Allies before the armistice between Russia and the Central Powers. Much of this supply is still in the port, owing to the difficulties of transport inland.

The allies are fearful that the Bolsheviks might very well sell the supplies to the Germans. There are large quantities of manganese that powerful German industrialists wish to obtain as needed ferroalloy.

The Germans in Finland look at these stocks as highly desirables and are in fact organizing an attack on Murmansk.

The War Office therefore decides, in **May 1918**, to send to Murmansk **General Sir Frederick C. Poole**, as **General Officer Commanding the North Russia Expedition Force** with a body of 500 troops, with a primary task to organize the local defence of Murmansk against German attacks.

Poole will be able to gather around Murmansk disaffected Polish and Czechoslovakian troops formerly serving with the Russian Imperial Army, intent on continuing to serve with the Allies against the Germans.

The Murmansk Soviet, disturbed by the German threat, also broke with the Bolsheviks so as to preserve Murmansk for the Allies. — White Russia and Red Russia are gradually separating.

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●Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, VI: 3168. ●*Wikipedia*, «Murmanzcycy»; «Frederick Poole», photo, «inspecting Polish troops in Murmansk».



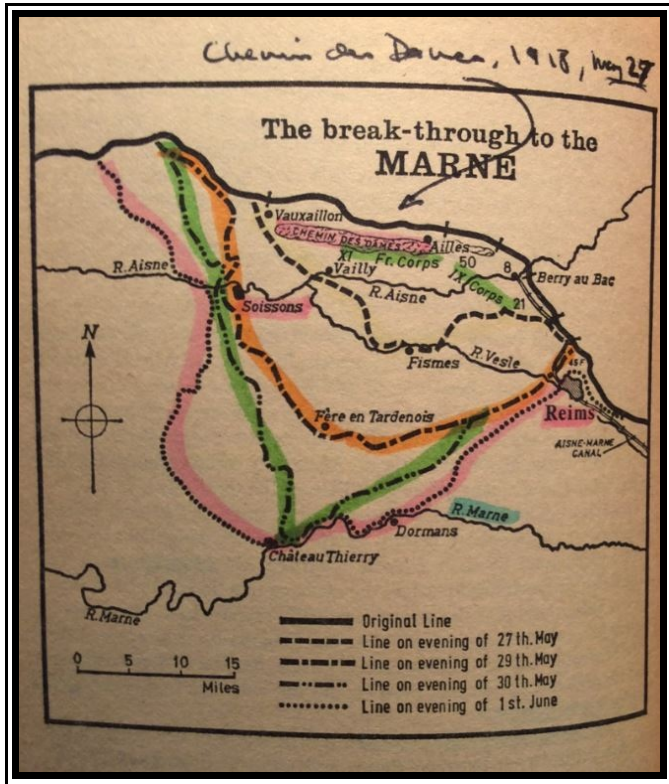
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May 27, 1918

## In the Quicksand of Champagne



### Opération BLÜCHER

Out of the blue, on **27 May 1918**, a German operation prepared in great secrecy is launched where it is little expected.

Ludendorff wants to draw to the south those reserve divisions that Foch has sent behind Arras so as to distance them from the north, where he wants to hit next.

The Champagne front, behind the Chemin des Dames – of sad memory to the French – is now occupied by French and British divisions that are not in top shape, and not particularly well prepared.

Général Duchêne, the Commander of the *Sixième Armée*, is proving more hard-headed than usual and has disposed his forces forward, making them vulnerable to the super-heavy bombardment that the star German artillerist, Brüchmuller, has prepared in absolute secrecy.

The progress of the German assault troops is much more rapid than Ludendorff anticipated.

But Champagne is a quicksand of delight. The defences are soft, the food is abundant and the wine inebriating to the famished German soldiers.

— Ludendorff will throw in his good money after his bad money, and lose all in the deal.

•Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War*, Chapter 8, Scene 3, «Breakthrough to the Marne», with map.



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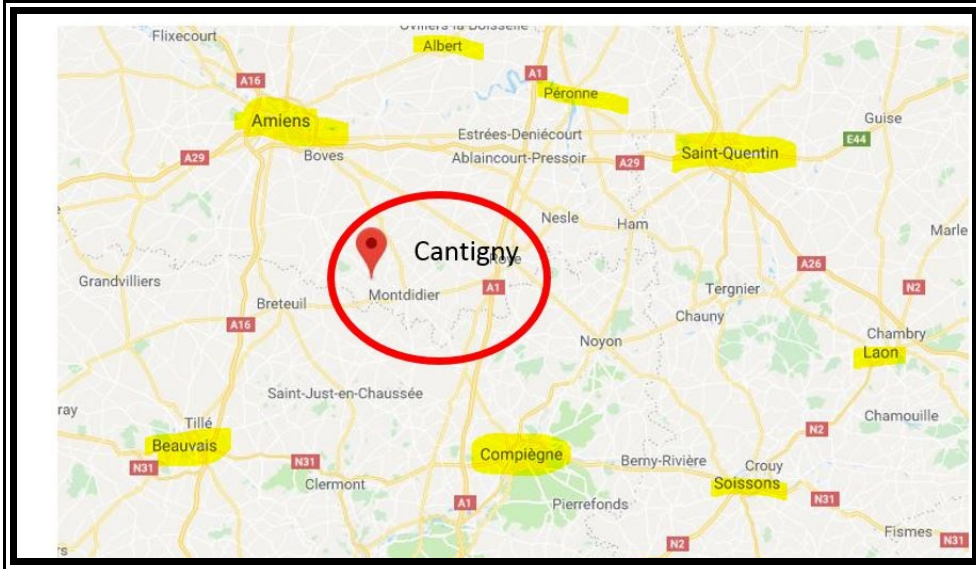
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# Le 28 mai, 1918

## Les «Sammies» Sortent de leur Trou



L'offensive BLÜCHER des Première et Septième Armées allemandes a traversé la rivière Aisne dès le premier jour de combat, le 27 mai, et s'est enfoncée dans la Sixième armée française de sorte à se retrouver devant la Marne, la fameuse dernière barrière devant Paris, avant la fin du premier jour.

Foch fait immédiatement appel à Pershing, qui peut intervenir avec trois divisions. La Première Division des États-Unis s'engage ainsi dans la première offensive américaine

de la guerre, contre le village de Cantigny.

**Le 28 mai 1918**, le 28<sup>e</sup> Régiment d'infanterie, et notamment son 2<sup>e</sup> Bataillon, y mènent un assaut de rue en rue avec des lance-flammes contre des positions allemandes creusées dans les décombres de l'artillerie.

C'est la contre-attaque de la Dix-huitième Armée du Général Hutier contre Cantigny qui s'avère la partie la plus difficile de cette bataille, où les Américains conservent le village au prix de 1000 hommes.

— Cette première contre-attaque américaine, bien que locale, a un effet moral important. Les Français en repli se sentent appuyés par les 'Sammies' finalement sortis de leur trou, dont le rôle n'est pas négligeable.

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● Farwell, US Army in Great War, 120; ● Liddell Hart, Reputations, 310; ● Dupuy & Dupuy, Encyclopedia of Military History (1977).



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May 29, 1918

## When the Saints Go Marching In

« Suddenly the roads between Provins and the front towards Meaux and towards Coulommiers began to be filled with endless streams of Americans. The impression made upon the hard-pressed French by this seemingly inexhaustible flood of gleaming youth in its first maturity of health and vigour was prodigious. None were under twenty, and few were over thirty. As crammed in their lorries they clattered along the roads, singing the songs of the new world at the tops of their voices, burning to reach the bloody field, the French Headquarters were thrilled with the impulse of new life. 'All felt,' says Pierrefeu, 'that they were present at the magical operation of the transfusion of blood. Life arrived in floods to reanimate the mangled body of a France bled white by the innumerable wounds of four years.' Indeed the reflection conformed with singular exactness to the fact. Half trained, half organized, with only their courage, their numbers and their magnificent youth behind their weapons, they were to buy their experience at a bitter price. But this they were quite ready to do.» **Winston Churchill, World Crisis, Chap 19, p.454.**

### Foch commits reserves

The reserves that Foch has fought so long to be able to keep in the background for the whole of the France theatre of operations now come in handy.

**On 29 May 1918**, Foch orders the *Dixième Armée* to get on the move to counter attack the German offensive started two days ago.

The Germans have now crossed the Aisne River and are pushing toward Paris, and the French *Sixième armée* is overwhelmed.

Three German armies are involved in the move along the Chemin des Dames, the place of the fateful Nivelle Offensive of one year ago. But this time the Germans are succeeding.

But three large and fresh divisions of the American Expeditionary Force are also involved in the blocking operation.

For Winston Churchill, the moment is of utmost historical importance. The United States are in the process of redeeming Europe.



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# Le 29 mai, 1918

## Vivent les Tirailleurs!



### Merfy

Le 29 mai 1918, les Allemands s'emparent du chemin des Dames et mettent le cap sur Reims, le dernier rempart de la route vers Paris.

Pour freiner leur avance, une section du 61<sup>ème</sup> bataillon de Tirailleurs sénégalais, composée de 35 hommes, se retranche alors à Merfy au nord de la ville. Face à eux, 1000 soldats du 127<sup>ième</sup> régiment d'infanterie.

Malgré le déséquilibre des forces, les 35 Sénégalais refusent de capituler. Au terme d'un combat acharné de deux jours, ils finissent tous par être tués aux abords du château de la ville.

Le château est lui aussi complètement détruit par les combats. Ce sacrifice laisse suffisamment de temps à l'État-major pour organiser la défense de

Reims et empêcher ainsi les Allemands d'arriver à Paris.

Aujourd'hui à Merfy, une stèle rend hommage à ces 35 tirailleurs sénégalais. Un cylindre de basalte noir où apparaissent en creux des portraits de soldats africains tombés au combat. Cette stèle est surmontée de l'ancre de marine, l'emblème des troupes coloniales.

— En 4 ans, au sein des unités d'Afrique noire, 40 000 soldats furent blessés et 28 000 perdirent la vie.

Sources : <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/233300/politique/marne-stele-en-hommage-aux-tirailleurs-senegalais-de-la-grande-guerre/>

Pour en savoir plus : <http://www.leparisien.fr/reims-51100/marne-une-stele-en-hommage-au-tirailleurs-senegalais-de-la-grande-guerre-30-05-2015-4817553.php>



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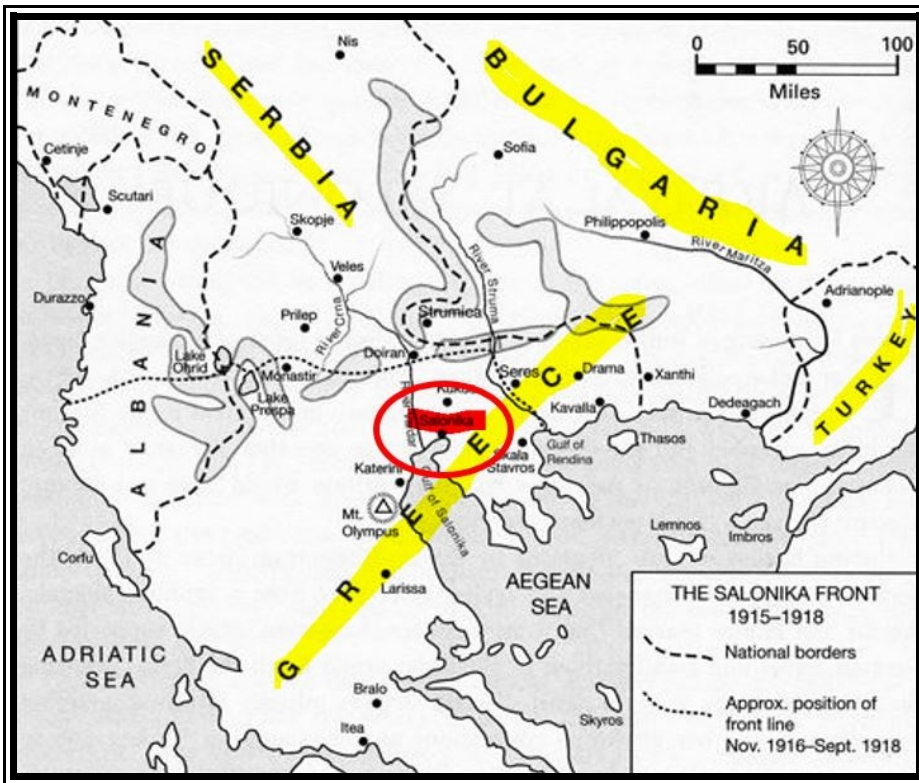
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May 30, 1918

## A Sideshow Draws Attention



### On the Salonika Front

French General Guillomat is now the Commander of the Allied Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. He is losing troops in Salonika as the French Government is recalling divisions to be used in France, now that the Germans are attacking without end on many fronts.

But the Germans are withdrawing troops from the Balkans as well. The Bulgars have now been left pretty well alone to defend themselves and occupy Serbia, and they have been considerably weakened by the forced exportation of food and other resources to Germany and Austria-Hungary. Morale there, therefore, is not high.

**On 30 May 1918**, the Hellenic Army attacks the Bulgarians in the vicinity of Skra di Legen, west of the Vardar River, where their success demonstrates that since Greece has resolved its political problems, her army is indeed efficient and constitutes a threat for the Bulgars.

With the arrival of the Americans in the battle in France, the Allies are thinking that withdrawing troops from Salonika may very well not be a good idea.

— With the Greeks there now ready to fight for the Allies, perhaps this «sideshow» might be helpful.

•Lloyd George, Memoirs, VI: 3208-9.



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# May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1918

## Czechoslovakian Grit



Czechoslovaks with Armoured train, Russia 1918

### The Czech Legion Fights the Bolsheviks

The Czechoslovak Legion was a body of troops organized to fight alongside the Imperial Russian armies against the Central Powers. By 1918, they were numbered 40,000, organised in two divisions, and had established a solid reputation as a fighting force.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Chairman of the Czechoslovak National Council, Thomas Masaryk, negotiated with the Bolsheviks for their transfer from Ukraine to Vladivostok (the only open port) via the Trans-Siberian Railway, to join the Czechoslovak Legion of France to fight Austrians-Hungarians.

By May, the Legion was strung out along the Trans-Siberian, making slow progress as the railway was overburdened. A clash with Magyar troops caused the People's Commissar for War, Leon Trotsky, to order the disarmament and arrest of the Legion, which resisted and revolted.

— Fighting broke out along the Trans-Siberian and on **31 May 1918**, the Czechoslovak Legion helped seize Vladivostok, ousting the Bolsheviks.

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Further information: •David Bullock, The Czech Legion 1914-1920; •Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, «Czechoslovakia», Encyclopaedia Britannica, Twelfth Ed., 1922, XXX: 785-92, see 787.



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