

# September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918 [Day 72]

## Stix Ahead



### The Hindenburg System of Lines

What is often called the Hindenburg defensive system by the Allies is a series of German defensive lines (*'stellung'*) that are joined so as to create a wall behind the main trench system used throughout the war. These *stellung* serve as a place of withdrawal if things go bad.

The main lines that compose the whole system are: most ominous, the oldest and most elaborate, between Cambrai and St. Quentin, the famous

**Siegfried Stellung**, which is up to ten miles deep. To the north, the **Wotan** is called by the allies the Drocourt-Quéant Switch, which is to the front of the Canadians. Toward the south, the **Alberich** (St. Quentin to the west of Laon), the **Brunhild** in Champagne, and the **Kriemhilde**, behind the Argonne, as far as Metz. Each of these lines tend to be behind rivers or canals to improve their strength. Their names come from Wagner's dark symphonies **Der Ring des Nibelungen**.

This is why, with September, begins, for the advancing armies, what will be called the **Battle of the Canals**, before reaching the infernal **Stellungen**.

— The River Stix, before the Hades, was not more ominous to Ancient Greeks.

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●Terraine, To Win a War, p. 141.



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## September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1918 [Day 71]

### Hit in the wrong place



### **Achilles' Heel : the Drocourt-Quéant Switch**

On the morning of **2 September 1918**, First British Army accomplishes a feat that stands out as one of the most successful of the war.

Its Canadian Corps leading, it succeeds in breaching the Drocourt-Quéant Switch, this section of the defensive line that extends to the north of the Hindenburg Line, where railroad switches stand at the nexus of a supply system.

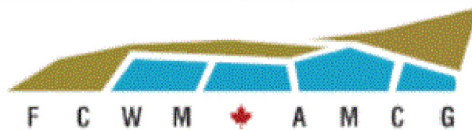
It allows the British to run around the end of the Hindenburg Line and threaten it from behind.

This happens at a moment when the Third and Fourth British armies and five French armies as well as the American First Army are converging in on the Hindenburg system of defensive lines and assaulting it up front along its whole length.

The success is key to the unravelling of the German defence. It is Achilles' heel cut at the moment when he needs to brace for the imminent impact.

This result was achieved by the use of tanks for the destruction of wire belts, and by magnificent coordination between advancing infantry, artillery, engineers and aircraft.

— This is a wound that will never heal.

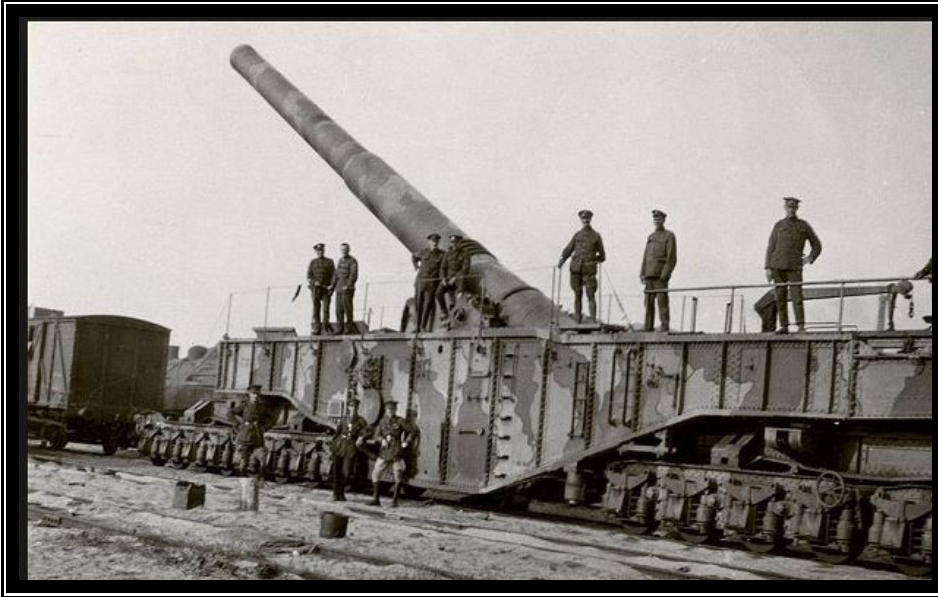


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## September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1918 [Day 70] A Giant On The Move



### «*Tout le monde à la bataille!*»

Marshal Foch meets General Pershing and plans with him what can be done in the forthcoming month.

The Generalissimo then issues orders on **3 September 1918** to coordinate the action of all armies involved in the fight.

His rallying cry is '*Tout le monde à la bataille!*' («All joined to the fight!»)

The plan foresees moving the Americans as soon as the battle of the Woëvre River (the

regaining of the St.Mihiel Salient) is over, so that the advance can renew in the direction of the southerly focus of operations, Mézières. This means that the very big First American Army will be involved in the Argonne, a wooded and hilly area marked by treacherous valleys and dominating hills.

Meanwhile, in the north with the Belgian Army Group (which includes one French army and one British army), in the center with the four-army British army-group, and in the center-south with two French army groups, everybody will drive forward to overcome canals, rivers and hills, in the aim of hitting the Germans everywhere where they stand, including in the last ditch Hindenburg Line.

— The logistics of preparing this massive simultaneous movement of all hands is made possible by the immense progress made by material, industry and transportation infrastructure.

— A giant is on the move!



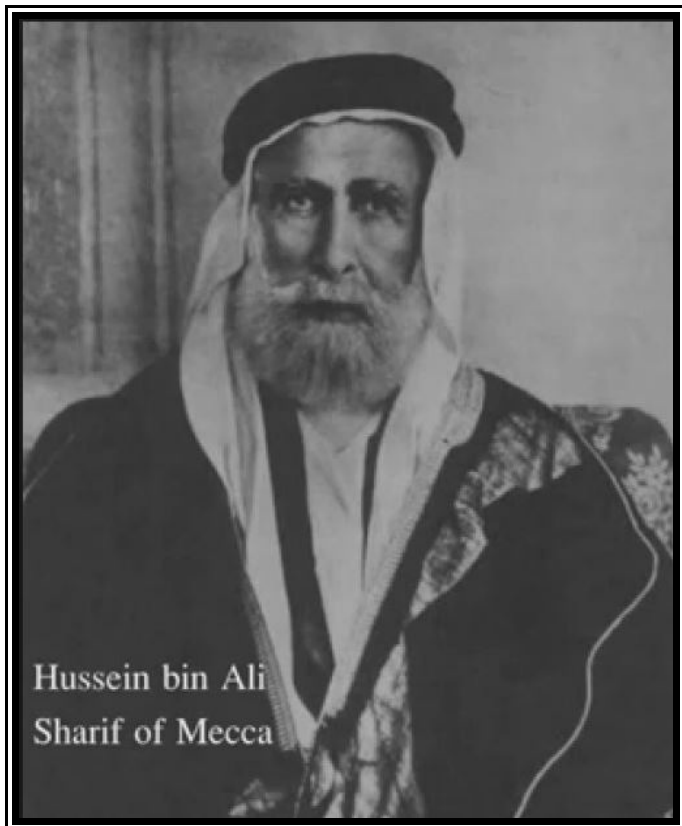
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## September 4, 1918 [Day 69]

### Working Around The Old King



#### Family Feud among the Arab

The Arab Army is poised to prepare an assault on Deraa, in Palestine, in conjunction with General Allenby's army. However, a difficulty arises with King Hussein, back in Mecca, who suddenly repudiates the Syrian commanders and orders his son Prince Feisal to fire them all.

Feisal is insulted as he has chosen these commanders himself. The feud becomes such that Feisal relinquishes his command of the army.

Major T.E. Lawrence is involved in the crisis and attempts to calm down the King who is jeopardizing the whole Deera operation.

At one point, Lawrence doctors a letter from the King so that it be construed by Feisal as an apology. Feisal resumes his position, reinstates the Syrian commanders who had resigned for the King's insults, and commands the operation against Deraa.

The bringing to an end of the Arab Revolt against the Turks opens up the great difficulties of post-war sharing of power. King Hussein wants the whole Middle East as kingdom. The power gained

by his sons and Syrian commanders make him fear eventual divisions.

— Once again, his plans will be doctored, and there won't be much that he will be able to do about it.

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●Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia, p. 539-41.



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# September 5, 1918 [Day 68]

## Saving the Furniture



### The ultimate German goal of securing the East

The withdrawal of the German forces in France to the Hindenburg Line is not without repercussions in Berlin. It becomes clear that the prospect of securing any ground in the West in an armistice negotiation is slim.

However, conservative political factions close to the Kaiser work hard to make sure that any negotiation will involve the protection of what was acquired by the Central powers in the East.

The suggestion that the resources of the European-Asian continent that can be prevented from being seized by the Bolsheviks will benefit to the whole of Europe is an argument that is believed likely to carry weight with President Wilson and his allied associates.

The German élite still believe that a strong Central German power with Poland as a bulkward against Bolshevik inroads is a protection that cannot be dismissed in a new European order.

•Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War, p. 631-2; map p. 547, mod.



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## September 6, 1918 [Day 67]

### Long Boomers from the Sea



#### US Navy Guns in France

The US Navy was tasked in April 1918, to use naval 14-inch guns that were meant to be put on board of US Dreadnought-types, to create railroad batteries to be brought to France for counter-bombardment of German long-range guns such as the Paris Guns.

Five one-gun batteries were created and shipped to France during the summer of 1918. These guns saw action during the period from **6 September 1918**, with the last shot fired at 10:57:30 am on 11 November,

so as to fall a few seconds before armistice.

The guns which were mounted on armoured trains could fire 1400-pound shell at distances from 30,000 to 40,000 yards (27-36 km), a range that exceeded any range possible by land-based Allied guns up to that point. The accuracy of these guns proved excellent, with test firing showing that a concentration of rounds would fall « a stone-throw» from a target at 18 miles (26 km). The guns were used for strategic purposes, on key railroad hubs and ammunition depots, particularly against the strategic Metz-Sedan railroad. The guns fired 1,106 rounds from Rethondes, Soissons, Flavy-le-Martel, Charny, and Thierville. They were credited for the removal of German « Paris guns» from fear of destruction.

— Each gun's life expectancy (acceptable accuracy) was 300 shells.

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● United States Naval Railway Batteries in France (Naval Historian Center, 1922, Rpt 1988)



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# September 7, 1918 [Day 66]

## Everywhere Not To Be Seen



### UBIQUE On the Move

It was said in the First World War that it took three months to train an infantryman, and twelve months to train a gunner. What was not said is that it took the same time to make a casualty of both...

In early September, however, the Canadian gunners and infantrymen are overworked. The last week's involvement in the fighting of the Drocourt-Quéant Switch has forced all artillery to provide support with very heavy loads of ammunition. This ammunition had to be moved from the rear to accompany the advancing infantry.

The trip to Amiens has forced the Corps artillery to pack up many times and reset in new places with their heavy equipment, transport and

logistics. This is a tremendous challenge. And the artillery, contrary to the infantry, does not go in reserve. «UBIQUE» – Everywhere. It stays in the fight as long as there is a fight.

The diary of Major Arthur Bick, Brigade Major of the First Division's Artillery, describes the work of the Canadian artillery in the days of **4-10 September 1918**, when guns had to be recalibrated on the go after having fired so much.

From SUN QUARRIES to CAGNICOURT, to WARLUS, the guns move night or day, spitting angrily to help gain the ground that the infantry can occupy.

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●Major Arthur H. Bick, DSO, and Peter H. Bick (Ed.), The Diary of an Artillery Officer: The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadia Divisional artillery on the Western Front (Dundurn Press, 2011), Excerpts from Esprit de Corps, Vol. 18, Issu 9, p. 34-6.



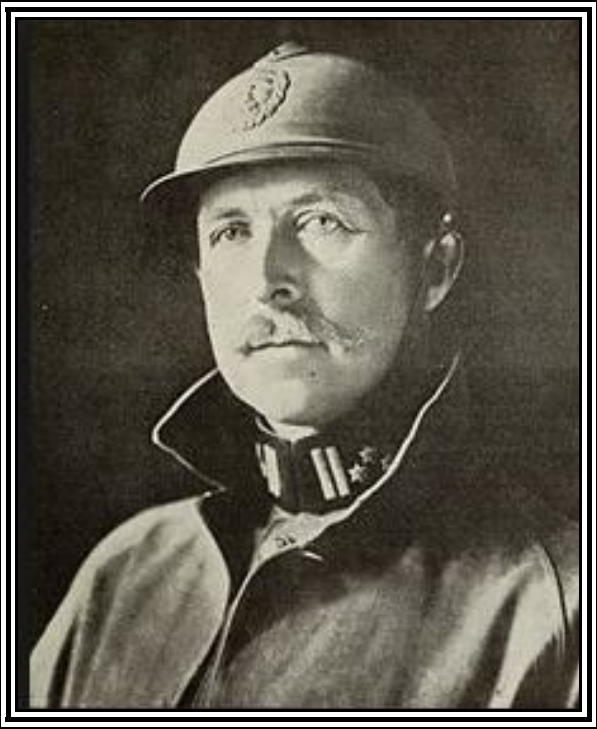
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## September 8, 1918 [Day 65]

### Stoking the Fires All Along the Line



#### Getting the thing done this year!

On 8 September 1918, Minister of Munitions Winston Churchill visits Marshal Haig at his Grand Headquarters. Winston, 'always drawn by the sound of guns,' wants to discuss the industrial production plans for 1919. Haig, however, is adamant that he wants the Allies to aim at «getting a decision as soon as possible.»<sup>1</sup>

In this view he is in full accord with Maréchal Foch, who, on this day, sends further instructions to those that he wrote on September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

This time, he wants **King Albert, Commander of the northern Belgian Army Group**, to prepare an all out offensive for September 20th to 25th to reach deep into Belgium and further destabilize the German defence plans.

Foch arranges for the *Sixième Armée* of Général Degoutte to send immediately its general staff to come help prepare for this all-out action. The army will follow in time.<sup>2</sup>

The Belgian army group in the north is now stronger than it ever was. It is facing retreating and depleted German divisions that cannot hope to get help from further south because the British armies are also going all out east of Arras, pounding at the gates of Cambrai.

— «*Tout le monde à la bataille*» means that the Allies can now afford to fight simultaneously on all army group fronts. The German Army, however, cannot concentrate everywhere at the same time.

<sup>1</sup>•Terraine, *To Win a War*, p. 144. <sup>2</sup>•Palat, *Le rôle de Foch dans la Victoire*, p. 204.





# September 9, 1918 [Day 64]

## Pushed Back



### Remaining Where We Are

On 9 September 1918, General Erich Ludendorff is at Spa, where he is being asked to explain what is going on at the front.

Politicians in Berlin are worried that the debacle in France is damaging the chances of success in negotiations for an armistice.

Ludendorff, dejected, does not find much to say. He explains tersely, that «**the general idea of the defence is to remain where we are.**»

Ludendorff is aware that since August 8<sup>th</sup>, one hundred thousand soldiers have gone into Allied prison camps, and, most disturbing to him, the number of «missing» is larger than the number of dead and wounded suffered in the same period.

This can only attest to surrenders of large groups caused by demoralization.

Instances of indiscipline and insubordination, with soldiers shouting «Stop prolonging the war!» to arriving relief troops, have been reported by shocked commanders.

On this day, Ludendorff issues orders for a further withdrawal on the Lys River, returning troops to where they were before the March offensive.

— They cannot remain where they are. Perhaps they will not even remain where they were...

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●Pitt, 1918, p. 238-9.



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# September 10, 1918 [Day 63]

## Beg and Borrow

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### «The beginning of the end»

On 10 September 1918, Marshal Haig is in London reporting to Cabinet on the progress of the campaign in France.

Before his arrival, the Chief of the Imperial Staff, General Henry Wilson, has told him that the Cabinet would be critical of any scheme that would foresee heavy losses before the end of 1918.

Nobody in London believes that the war can be ended in 1918, and manpower is in such dire straight that it is impossible to foresee that further draft will be effective. Eighteen-and-a-half-year-olds have been sent to the Front, and this represents the ultimate squeeze.

Haig, however, comes again with a testimony that the enemy is on the ropes and that all-out attacks now are likely to break him before the end of the year. He states bluntly

that the military situation stands at «the beginning of the end.»

This is hard to believe for politicians who have been briefed with overly optimistic outviews before the Dardanelles in 1915, the Somme in 1916, Arras and Passchendaele in 1917, and the *Kaiserschlacht* of 1918.

— What do you do with a gambler who wants to borrow more for the next turn of the table?

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●Hunter, Foch, p. 198.



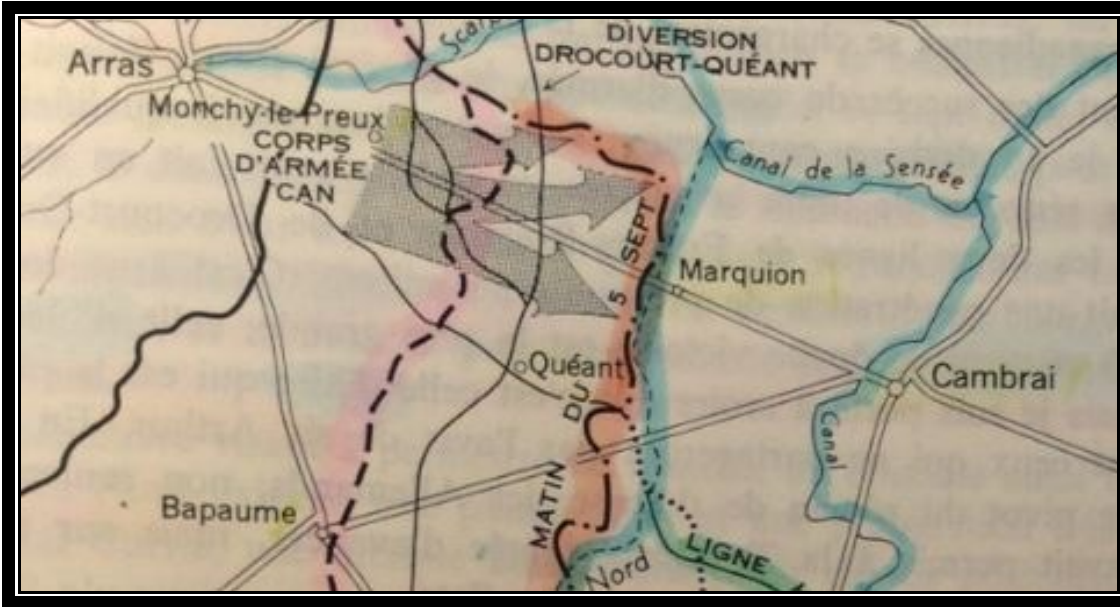
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# September 11, 1918 [Day 62]

## Consummate Magician



### The Magic of Sir Arthur

Before the battle of Arras was over, Sir Arthur Currie had already been planning for the crossing of the Canal du Nord. It stands ominous after the Drocourt-Quéant Switch.

On 11 September 1918, General Horne, Commander at First Army, speaks of

Currie's project to Marshal Haig at GHQ.

The crossing of the Canal under plunging fire, just before hitting the Hindenburg Line, is a challenge that the most experienced planners consider a nightmare.

GHQ sets a timetable where groups of armies to the south, and then to the north will hit the Hindenburg defences at the end of the month, with First Army attacking Canal du Nord when the strongest possible pressure will have been applied to draw German troops to other threatened areas.

The Canal du Nord operation, if successful, is recognized widely as «likely to be far-reaching.»

— But it calls for the deft sleight of hand of a magician. A consummate one.

•Nicholson, CEF, Chap. 14.



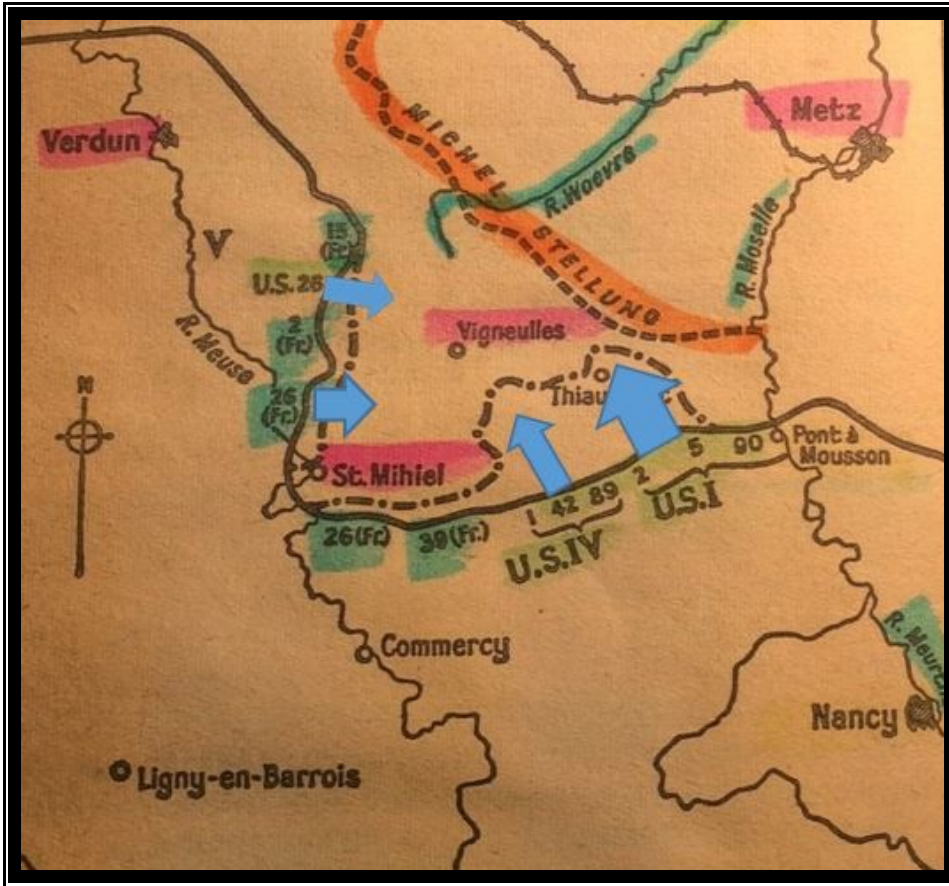
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# Le 12 septembre, 1918 [Jour 61]

## Les Américains à Saint-Mihiel



Le 12 septembre 1918, le Général Pershing commande la Première Armée des États-Unis avec six divisions américaines et cinq françaises, réparties en trois corps sur une ligne de départ à angle droit entre Pont à Mousson, Saint-Mihiel et l'est de la Meuse.

264,000 militaires sont ainsi jetés dans la bataille, dont 216,000 Américains. L'ensemble du contingent est appuyé par 1444 avions, 3100 canons et 267 chars légers français.

Face à ce dispositif, du côté allemand, 100,000 hommes sont retranchés dans plusieurs lignes de défense renforcées par quatre années de travail.

Le 14 septembre, les troupes américaines-françaises termineront la prise du saillant de Saint-Mihiel, sans pousser plus

loin puisque Foch les veut maintenant en Argonne.

Les pertes des Alliés s'élèveront à près de 8,000 hommes, mais 14,500 Allemands seront faits prisonniers avec 443 canons.

La bataille de Saint-Mihiel constitue un prélude au grand assaut des Alliés contre la ligne Hindenburg.

Sources : <http://horizon14-18.eu/saint-mihiel.html>

Pour en savoir plus : <https://acierettranchees.wordpress.com/2015/09/13/12-13-septembre-1918-victoire-franco-americaine-de-saint-mihiel-argonne/>



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# September 13, 1918 [Day 60]

## The Canadian Anti-Loafing Order



### Order-in-Council 1918-2252

On September 13, 1918 under the title *Enforcement of the Anti-loafing Order*, Order-in-Council 1918-2252 gives additional powers to the **Chief Commissioner of Dominion Police**, already charged with tracking and apprehending conscription dodgers, to name special officers

to apply the Military Service Act when local authorities fail in doing so.

This includes the charging of persons involved in activities that are judged to be non-productive. Productive activities are those which involve agriculture or primary industries such as lumbering and logging, forestry, fishing and trapping and of course the production of war materiel.

Earlier in May 1918, Order-in-Council 1918-754 transferred the officers and men of the Dominion Police to the Department of Militia and Defense where they became the civil branch of the **Canadian Military Police Corps** with a primary mandate to enforce the Conscription Act.

— Following the war, the Dominion Police will be amalgamated with the **Royal North West Mounted Police** and the new police force will be called the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police!**

References: • Djebabla-Brun, *Combattre avec les Vivres*, p. 174.

• <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/orders-council/Pages/list.aspx?OrderInCouncilNumb>



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Le 14 septembre, 1918 [59]

## Salonica - La Bombe à Retardement



### La Force expéditionnaire de Méditerranée et la bataille de la Vardar

La mi-septembre marque le début de l'offensive généralisée des forces alliées commandées par **le général français Louis Franchet d'Espèrey**, sur le front des Balkans. L'opération a l'effet surprise d'une bombe à retardement.

La Force expéditionnaire alliée de la Méditerranée, à Salonique (Grèce) comprend 650,000 Alliés (Français, Britanniques, Italiens, Grecs, Serbes). Elle est opposée à 45,000 Bulgares et quelques formations allemandes non retirées.

L'Armée Française d'Orient compte à elle seule 200,000 hommes. Deux armées serbes doivent prendre le massif de Dobro Polje, les Britanniques et les Grecs Doïran et Strumitza pour empêcher les Bulgares d'envoyer des renforts à Dobro Polje, et les Français et les Italiens passer la Cerna pour poursuivre vers l'Albanie.

Dans la nuit du **14 au 15 septembre 1918**, l'attaque débute par une percée foudroyante. Les Français et les Serbes progressent vite et le haut commandement des Empires centraux est pris au dépourvu. La brèche s'amplifie et dès le 17 septembre, elle s'étendra sur 7 km de profondeur et 25 km de large.

— La bataille de la Vadar mènera à la reddition des Bulgares, fin-septembre, et l'accès au Danube.

Sources : ● «Salonica Campaigns», *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Douzième Édition, 1922, Vol. 32, p. 345-57. ● <http://fracademic.com/dic.nsf/frwiki/190770>  
Pour en savoir plus : ● <http://dictionnaire.sensagent.leparisien.fr/Bataille%20de%20Dobro%20Polje/fr-fr/>



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# September 15, 1918 [Day 58]

## The Issue of Oil



### Turks succeed in taking Baku

The capture of the oil fields of the Azerbaijan, on the edge of the Caspian Sea, was always a part of the Central Powers' attempts to seize the resources of the Euro-Asian landmass defended by the Russians and later by the Bolsheviks.

The defence of this area, after the British-Indian forces succeeded in Mesopotamia, was improvised in early 1918 by the sending of a force from Basra to Azerbaijan under British General Dunsterville.

After a long defence of the key city of Baku, staged by the Dunsterville Force, the city is finally taken by the Ottomans on **15 September 1918**. The Allied Force has to withdraw out of the region.

However, Turkey will not be able to use the oil before the end of the War.

The defence of Baku has been successful insofar as it has achieved its aim of denying the Germans and Turks the oil resources of the Caspian, which they had both been striving to obtain.

•Lloyd George, *Memoirs*, VI, p. 3194.



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**September 16, 1918**  
**Bring It On!**

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# MATERIEL

«By mid-September», says Lieutenant Colonel T.M. Hunter, «the tide is turning steadily in the Allies favour.» The forces gathered in France are quite astonishing. Marshal Foch has under his command some 217 divisions, comprising 102 French, 60 British (including from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India), 39 American, 12 Belgian, 2 Italian, and 2 Portuguese divisions. Ludendorff, on his part, has 197 divisions: 93 German (many with ethnic diversity) and 4 Hungarian-Austrian.<sup>1</sup>

But the count of fighting divisions has now become a simplistic way of assessing military strength. Divisions can vary from 5,000 to 28,000 men at this time. Some German ones are so exhausted that they can barely sit awake. Some American ones are yet so young that they run faster than the artillery.

With the increased importance of material in the battlefield, corps and army logistics have to be factored into the balance.

The ability to efficiently transport unending artillery shells by train and trucks; to bring heavy equipment forward for engineering mobility tasks; to repair heavy tanks, locomotives, vehicles *in situ* through a network of second line workshops; and to bring food to thousands of liberated civilians, to prisoners, as well as to fighting troops, that is the true measure of power at this point.

—Foch has a much more impressive preponderance of strength in depth, where it now counts.

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<sup>1</sup>Hunter, FOCH, 197.



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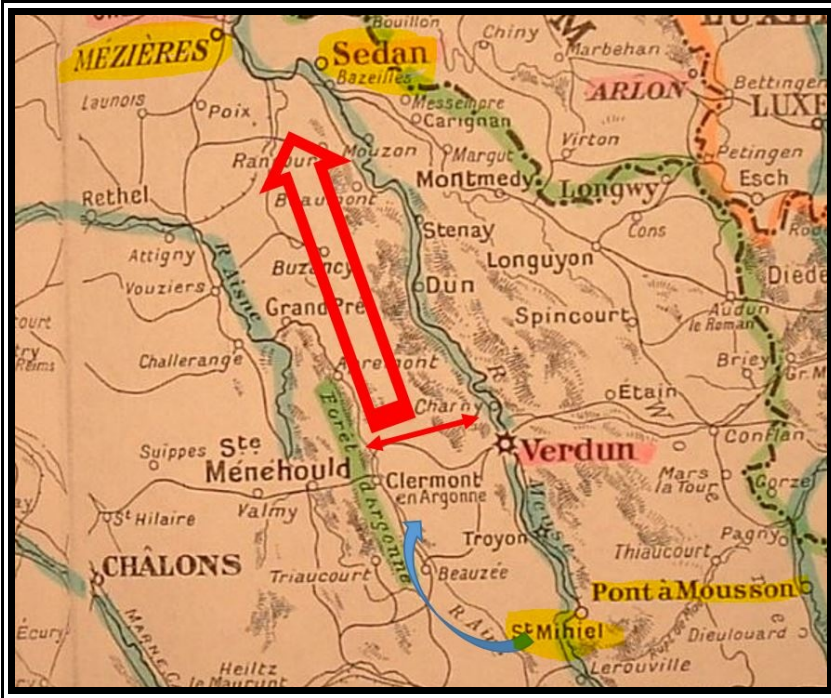
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# September 17, 1918 [Day 56]

## Clearing Out for a New Job



### Americans mopping up in St. Mihiel

The first battle of the First American Army as a field army which started five days ago comes to an end on **17 September 1918**.

Good progress was made, but the assault of the St. Mihiel Salient stops well short of the Michael Stellung, a line of defence that the Germans are still hectically building to the north of the Salient, not imagining that the Americans and French might completely abandon the assault and go somewhere else.

Foch has been adamant that he wants Pershing to move his enormous army to a new Start Line and begin a new assault between the Argonne Forest and the Meuse, driving toward SEDAN-

MÉZIÈRES, so as to start on 26 September. He wants Pershing to leave his present position to the French and move in the next ten days so as to be ready to take part on a front-wide campaign that will epitomize his rallying call: «*Tout le monde à la bataille!*»

Pershing has had his *avant-première* in St. Mihiel. Fighting was not easy but the Germans were only opposing their so skillful delaying action. They meant to really defend at the MICHAEL line, which they will now use against the French right wing.

— The last «mop-up» in St. Mihiel brings the challenge of moving an army, lock, stock and barrel, to the doorsteps of a very difficult new terrain. The US quarter-masters will be taking over for a while...

• Frank Freidel, Over There (1964), chap 113 and 15.



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# September 18, 1918 [Day 55]

## A Machine At Work



### Havrincourt and Épéhy

While the Americans and French were pushing in the St. Mihiel offensive, the British armies of the middle received orders to move forward to positions right up against the Hindenburg lines of defences, with focus on **Cambrai, Saint-Quentin and Mezières.**

**On 18 September 1918,** Third and Fourth British Armies do just that in advancing to **Havrincourt and Épéhy,** bringing them closer to Cambrai and St. Quentin.

Marshal Foch is placing his pieces on the chess board with a definite plan in mind: striking at the line in a manner so methodical that the pressure will burst out at the weak points.

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●Edmonds, Short History of WW1, «Conquest of the Outworks of the Hindenburg Position: The Battles of Havrincourt and Épéhy,» p. 359-61.



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# September 19, 1918 [Day 54]

## Checkmate in the Middle East



### The Battle of Megiddo, Allenby's Masterpiece

General Allenby, now commanding a refreshed and expanded Egyptian Expeditionary Force, employed elaborate deceptions to mask his intent to attack the western end of the Turkish position, along the coast.

**On 19 September 1918**, the sole heavy bomber in his air component, a Handley Page O/400 of the Australian Flying Corps, demolishes the Ottomans' key communications node in a night raid.

At 04:30, 385 guns bombard the Turkish trenches with British and Indian infantry following close behind.

The Turks are routed.

By 10:00, the Desert Mounted Corps - 94 squadrons of cavalry - moves along the coast and across the Plain of Sharon to encircle the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies, which disintegrates under bombing and cavalry attacks.

— Allenby's brilliant use of deception, mobility and all-arms integration crushes Turkish arms and hopes alike, and will be considered one of the outstanding offensives of the War.

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Further information: Anthony Bruce, [The Last Crusade: The Palestine Campaign in the First World War](#) (2002, 2013).



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## September 20, 1918 [Day 53]

### Checking Again and Again



American Troops in Vladivostok

### Siberia: The Allies Get Organized

The first allied contingent, 70,000 Japanese troops, arrived in Siberia in August; they quickly moved west on the Trans-Siberian Railway to link up with the embattled Czech Legion (which had fought with Imperial Russia against the Central Powers) and then assist them in being evacuated through Vladivostok.

The British, French, Italian and American contingents arrived piecemeal in August and September. The coalition was often at cross purposes and unity of effort was hard to accomplish.

Japanese forces were active against the Bolsheviks east of Lake Baikal while the Americans avoided combat and mostly guarded the railway and US interests. Mutual suspicion was the rule, especially on the part of the Americans regarding Japanese aims.

At the same time, the Canadian force under Major General Elmsley was being constituted at home. Efforts to form a completely volunteer force failed, so the 259th and 260th Canadian Rifles were largely made up of regulars with conscripts.

- Benjamin Isitt, [From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada's Siberian Expedition, 1917-19](#) (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).
- Wikipedia, «Siberian Intervention».



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# Le 21 septembre, 1918 [Jour 52]

## Une des opérations les plus difficiles



### Currie rend les commandants d'armées nerveux

Le plan du général canadien **Sir Arthur Currie** pour l'attaque qui doit franchir le Canal du Nord et saisir les positions dominantes de l'autre côté est si audacieux que les commandants des Première et Troisième armées britanniques le mettent en garde des conséquences d'un échec.

L'état-major du général Sir Henry Horne, le patron de Currie à la Première Armée, doit retenir Horne d'annuler son opération, prévue pour 5 jours plus tard.

**Le général Sir Julian Byng**, l'ancien commandant du Corps canadien et mentor de Currie, lui fait une visite pour le mettre en garde que le risque qu'il prend dans la manoeuvre absolument brillante qu'il entrevoit ne sera pas pardonné s'il essuie un échec. Il ne pourra qu'être démis de ses fonctions.

Currie se voit ainsi bien ramené à l'évidence qu'il porte toute la responsabilité pour cette opération très difficile, risquée et très importante.

La traversée du Canal du Nord, si elle est réussie comme Currie l'entrevoit, menacera l'objectif stratégique de Foch: Cambrai; elle ouvrira le chemin à une poursuite au delà des défenses Hindenburg, fatale pour les Allemands.

— Mais il faut le faire!

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●Beckett & Corvi (Eds), Haig's Generals, (Pen & Sword, 2006), p. 109-12.



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September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1918 [Day 51]

Canada – May the Gods of War Be With You!



### Currie gets the Go!

On 22 September 1918, First Army Headquarters sends out the set of operational orders that authorize General Currie to carry out his Corps attack against Canal du Nord and the dominating heights beyond.

Currie is at the spearhead of First Army and will receive an extra British division and a tank battalion for the task. XXII and VII British Corps will be feinting to the north in support of his daring operation.

The First Army Commander, **British General Sir Henry Horne**, very doubtful about Currie's 2-Phase operation, is now on board and behind the brilliant Canadian plan.

He is an artillery expert and will put all available behind the narrow push across the Canal and the subsequent fan out, up the hills, beyond it.

Currie has built himself a superb army corps with divisions that have been boosted with solid specialised troops and equipment to address the terrain problems. Field Engineers are everywhere, opening the way for assaulting infantry and tanks. Machine-guns and poison gas are front and center.

The second phase comprises a superb consolidation of communications and support on the move.

— Canada, May the Gods of War be with You!

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●Shane B. Schreiber, **Shock Army of the British Empire: The Canadian Corps in the Last 100 Days of the Great War** (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), p. 99-101.



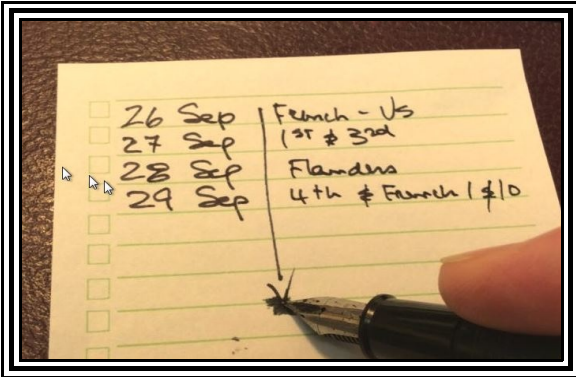
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# September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1918 [Day 50]

## Setting the Stage



### Foch Orders Four Days of Apocalypse

After having consulted with senior officers of all army groups along the front for the last month, Foch issues a set of orders on **23 September 1918** that confirms his plan to get everybody going at the same time for the same purpose: busting the Hindenburg Line and all other defensive lines attached to this ultimate stand.

His plan calls for the following attacks on consecutive days:

- ✓26 Sep A Franco-American attack between the SUIPPE R. (a tributary of the AISNE R., north of REIMS) and the MEUSE R., with First American Army in the ARGONNE.
- ✓27 Sep An attack by the British First and Third Armies in the general direction of CAMBRAI.
- ✓28 Sep An attack by the Flanders Group of Armies between the sea and the LYS R., under the command of the King of the Belgians.
- ✓29 Sep An attack by the British Fourth Army, supported by the French *Première Armée*, in the direction of BUSIGNY (six miles west of WASSIGNY and 13 miles south-east of CAMBRAI), and *Dixième Armée* in Aillette.<sup>1</sup>

These will be battles that will rage until success is achieved.

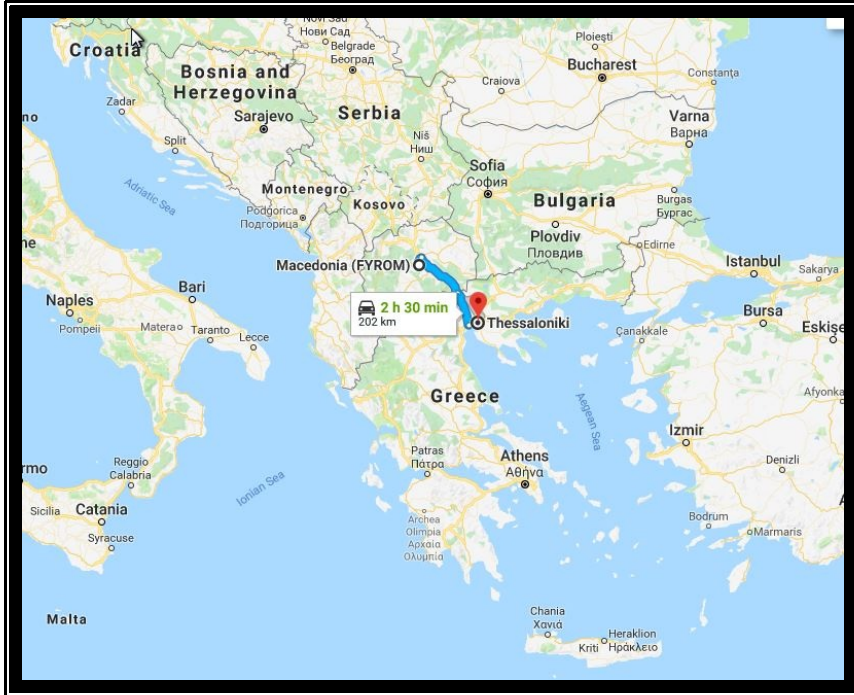
— « So », says John Terraine in To Win a War, « the stage was set.»<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>•Hunter, FOCH, p. 200; <sup>2</sup>•Terraine, To Win a War, p. 154.



# Le 24 septembre, 1918 [Jour 49]

## USKÜB: Cavalerie française



### Le dernier mot de la cavalerie française

Le 24 septembre 1918 commencera la manœuvre d'Usküb, dans le cadre de l'offensive de Franchet d'Espèrey du 15 septembre.

C'est un raid célèbre de la brigade à cheval des chasseurs d'Afrique du général Jouinot-Gambetta : 70 kilomètres de montagnes à près de 2.000 mètres d'altitude, sans routes, ni cartes, ni fantassins, ni batteries de 75 pour l'appuyer.

Les cavaliers français foncent de Salonika en direction d'Usküb (Skopje), capitale de l'ex-Macédoine serbe (aujourd'hui **FYROM**-Vardarska), prise par surprise le 29 septembre 1918.

— Cet épisode constitue la dernière charge de l'histoire de la cavalerie française.

Sources : ● <http://www.histoire-passy-montblanc.fr/histoire-de-passy/de-la-prehistoire-au-xxie-s/la-guerre-de-1914-1918/les-principaux-regiments-des-soldats-de-passy-en-14-18/les-passerands-dans-la-cavalerie-en-14-18/charges-heroiques-et-cavalerie-demontee-en-14-18/>  
Pour en savoir plus : ● <https://theatrum-belli.com/histoire-chronique-culturelle-du-29-septembre/>



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# September 25, 1918 [Day 48]

## Slaughterhouse Drill for Christmas



### Cutting the Balkan underbelly wide open

The Allies have left a sizeable force in the port city of Salonica, in Greece, since early in the War. Not much has been achieved there since. However, in 1918, with the full change of camp by the Greeks, and the renewed support of the Clemenceau government, Salonica is now a « sideshow » erupting just like that in Palestine.

The confident and battle-hardened **French General Franchet D'Esperey**, recently assigned to the command of the multi-national «*Armée d'Orient* », is now closing in on a weary and beleaguered Bulgarian Army. This engagement is known as the Vardar Offensive. The force, supported by aircraft, fights Austrian, German and Bulgarian troops through the high mountain passes to Ishtip and Veles.

**On 25 September 1918**, out-numbered and out-gunned, large groups of Bulgarian troops are suddenly deserting, starting a domino affect that will ultimately lead to the capitulation of the Bulgarian Army on September 29th. The following day the Bulgarians will sign an Armistice. This key victory will create momentum in the Balkans, and eventually clear the way to the Danube, and thereon toward Budapest and Vienna from the east side, and Constantinople from the west side.

While the Allies are reaching for the Central Powers' jugular in France and carving the hind legs in Palestine, this is a knife slicing through the «soft belly of Europe» which will soon reach the vitals.

— From this point, it's a slaughterhouse drill to quarter the animal before Christmas.

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•Hankey, Supreme Command, II, p. 238-9.



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# September 26, 1918 [Day 47]

## Too Big to Fail

### The Americans in the Argonne

On 26 September 1918, the first of the four daily army group attacks starts in the south. Under the impetus of Marshal Foch's overall plan for the «Grand Assault», the French-American group (1<sup>st</sup> US and 4<sup>th</sup> French) launches its attack between the Argonne Forest on the left and the Meuse River on the right.

The First American Army, in the last ten days, has been involved in moving from the St. Mihiel Salient to the Argonne sector, where Foch insisted he wanted it today for his début punch.

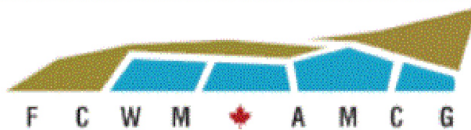
**Colonel George C. Marshal**, the Chief of Operations in General Pershing's HQ, was in charge of the move, a nightmare of transportation over up to 100 kilometers of bad roads. Trucks were used for ammunition, men walked.

This very big army found its way, on this day, on the northerly trek that will take it through some treacherous terrain for an advance to Mézières.

With too few roads snaking through heights and valleys, and perfect high cover for enemy delaying actions, Pershing will push relentlessly his 9 supersized divisions through the Valley of Death. Traffic jams, enormous casualties, lack of food at the front, and general lack of experience at all levels will continuously hamper this New World army until the end of the War.

— It has only one redeeming grace: it is simply too big to fail.

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●Frank Freidel, Over There, 237-56; ●Terraine, To Win a War, 154-7; ●Pitt, 1918, p. 252.

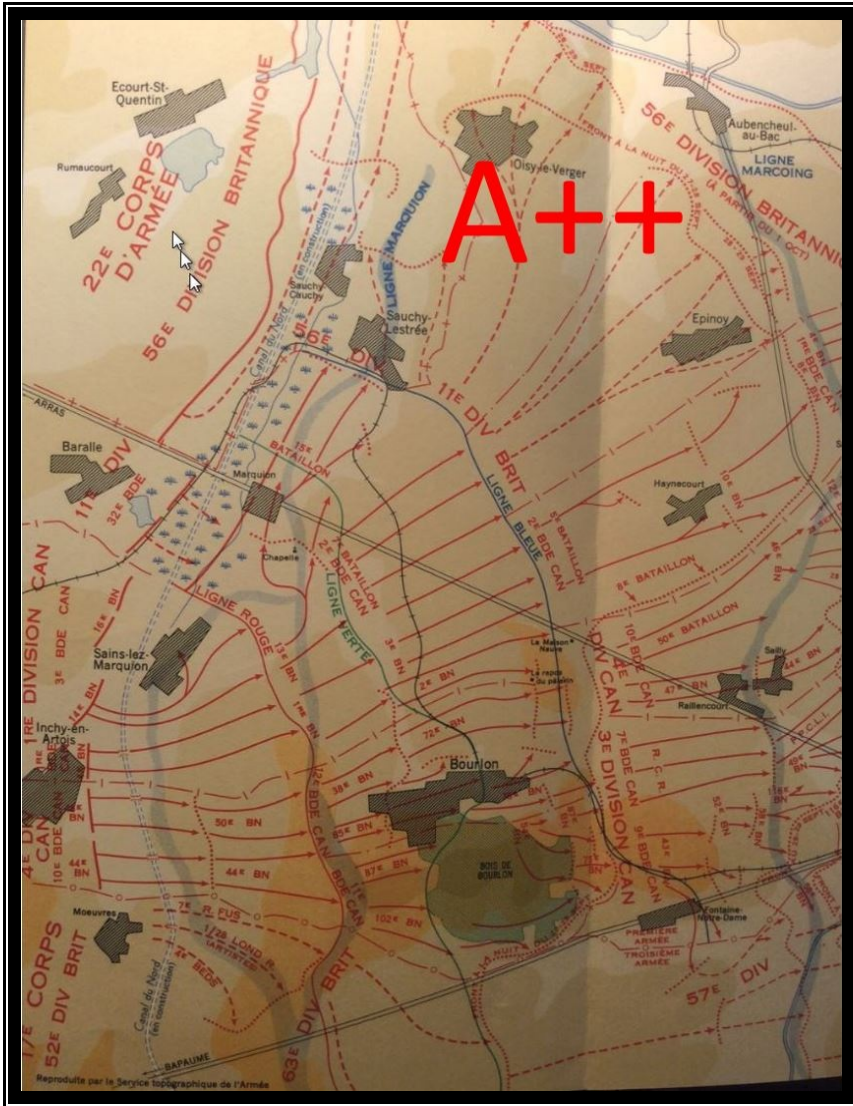


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# Le 27 septembre, 1918 [Jour 46] Les Canadiens se méritent un A+



## Le grand test canadien

Le 27 septembre 1918 est la deuxième journée du «Grand Assaut» du Maréchal Foch. Après avoir déclenché l'attaque du groupe d'armées français-américain en Argonne, hier, c'est aujourd'hui les Première et Troisième Armées britanniques qui s'élancent contre la Ligne de défense Hindenburg en direction de Cambrai.

Dans la Première Armée, le Corps canadien du général Arthur Currie mène l'avance avec une attaque qu'il a préparée en grand détail: **la traversée du Canal du Nord.**

Il s'agit d'une des opérations de Corps les plus complexes de toute la guerre. Il ose faire traverser une partie très étroite du Canal qui est sèche à toutes ses divisions attaquantes avant qu'elles se dispersent dans les hauteurs.

L'effet de surprise, ainsi que la minutie du plan d'artillerie et des manoeuvres des ingénieurs, fantassins, signaleurs, et chars d'assaut fait de cette attaque un exemple d'école.

— Il s'agit là de la plus grande bataille canadienne de la Première Guerre, sans exception.

•Nicholson, Corps Expéditionnaire canadien, chap. 14, carte, p. 496.

# September 28, 1918 [Day 45]

## Twice Lost, Twice Regained



### The Third Battle of La Malmaison

In April 1917, the French were involved in the disastrous Nivelle Offensive, in which their advance through the Chemin des Dames proved one of the worse blunders of the war.

The French Army had great difficulties in recovering from this reverse, and General Pétain dedicated a full year to the reconstruction of morale and structure to get back to a solid state, regaining Malmaison in October 1917.

The German Spring offensive of March 1918 was a great test of the resilience for the French Army, a test that it passed with success. But much ground was lost, including Fort Malmaison.

**On 29 September 1918**, the French armies are now steadily progressing against a retreating enemy. In the advance of the *Dixième Armée*, on this day, the French recover the symbolic Fort of Malmaison and the Chemin des Dames, between Soissons and Reims.

In the front-wide progress toward Foch's strategic objectives of St. Quentin and Mézières, Laon is next.



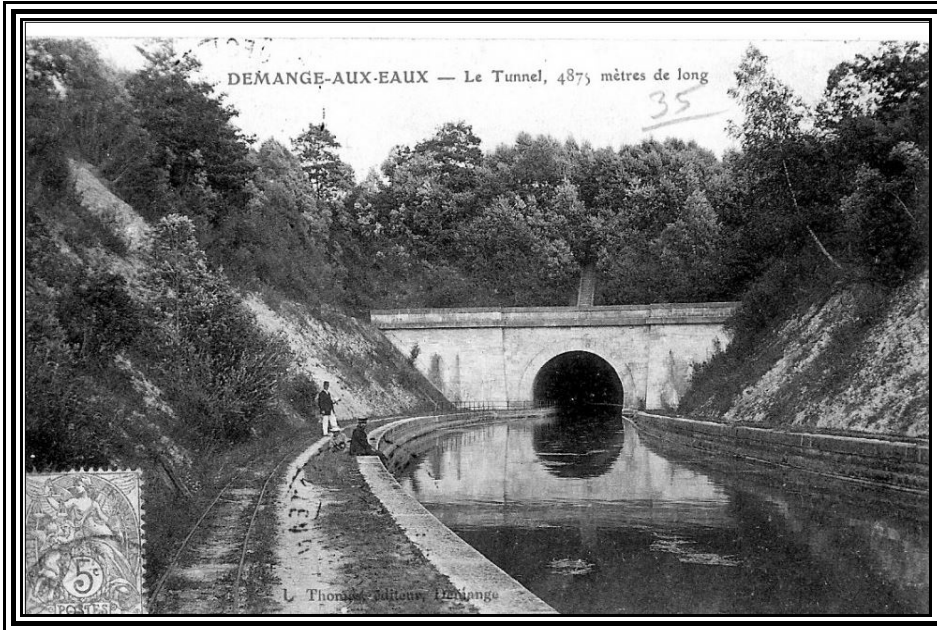
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# Le 29 septembre, 1918 [Jour 44]

## Quatrième Jour, Quatrième Armée



### Prise du Tunnel de Bellicourt

Sur le canal de Saint-Quentin, de Cambrai à Chauny, sous le règne de Napoléon Ier, un tunnel long de 6 km est creusé à Bellicourt pendant 8 ans par des milliers de prisonniers.

Un chantier titanesque, mais qui permet d'éviter la construction de plusieurs écluses.

Comme le tunnel est insuffisamment ventilé, impossible d'y faire traverser un bateau à moteur. Un treuil appelé «toueur», tracte donc les bateaux.

Pendant la Grande Guerre, les Allemands transforment le canal souterrain de Bellicourt en une véritable caserne avec des postes de secours creusés le long des berges. Des péniches servent de chambrées aux hommes.

Fin septembre 1918, la prise de ce tunnel constitue un des temps forts de la bataille de la ligne Hindenburg. L'assaut de la Quatrième Armée a lieu le **29 septembre 1918**. Les Américains (30e Division) et les Australiens, s'emparent du tunnel; les troupes britanniques (46<sup>e</sup> Midland) saisissent le pont de Riqueval, seul pont encore intact sur le canal. Ceci est un succès étonnant.

— Ces captures constituent une victoire capitale car elles vont permettre aux tanks de traverser le canal rapidement et de poursuivre leur offensive en direction de Montbrehain, au sud de Cambrai.

Sources : <https://www.aisne14-18.com/saint-quentin/l-assaut-de-la-ligne-hindenburg>

Pour en savoir plus : [http://www.histoireaisne.fr/memoires\\_numerises/chapitres/tome\\_27/Tome\\_027\\_page\\_043.pdf](http://www.histoireaisne.fr/memoires_numerises/chapitres/tome_27/Tome_027_page_043.pdf)



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# September 30, 1918 [Day 43]

## All Else Will Be Posturing



### Success! Success! At Last Success!

Yet unknown to the Allies, the combination of successes in France, in the Balkans and in Palestine has now won the War. The Armistice with Bulgaria is the death toll of the Central Powers.

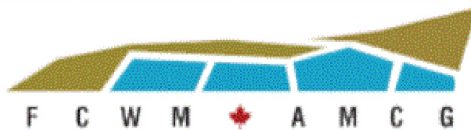
In the night of **29/30 September 1918**, Ludendorff and Hindenburg come to the conclusion that they must go to the civilian government of Germany and present their view that the war must be stopped as soon as possible as the losses incurred by the Central Powers' armies, and in particular by the German Army, are unsustainable and unredeemable.

The German High Command's aim is now to protect the Army from further damage by negotiating an Armistice and withdrawing «undefeated» to Germany.

They inform the representative of the Parliamentarians, **Foreign Minister, Paul von Hintze**, who wants an «unequivocal declaration of military possibilities.» He is himself faced with mounting unrest in Germany proper.

— Marshal Haig declared on 10 September that the War was at «the beginning of the end.» He does not know yet that today is the end of the end. All else will be posturing.

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●Pitt, 1918, 295-8. ●Fischer, Germanys Aims, p. 634-5.



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