

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915

## American Shipping Double-Blockaded



### The United States does not succeed in negotiating through the European blockades

President Woodrow Wilson of the United States sent to Europe his personal representative for discussions on American interests in the war. **‘Colonel’ Edward M. House**, arrived in London on 7 February. He then met with representatives of the British and German governments so as to convey the desire of the United States to be recognized as a neutral power in terms of international maritime law in the question of the European war’s maritime blockades.

But the German decision to raise its stance to Unlimited Submarine Warfare, starting on 18 February, triggered a British and French reaction for the tightening of the blockade to include all «free goods» as well as ‘conditional and absolute contraband» carried by neutrals, starting on 15 March 1915. They condemned Germany for ‘unprecedented methods, repugnant to all law and morality.’<sup>1</sup>

**On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1915**, Colonel House learned that the United States President’s proposal for negotiations for the ‘freedom of the sea’ for neutrals had indeed failed. None of the belligerents were ready, given their new positions in the conflict, to concede that status to the United States. Britain and France were going to seize and escort American ships to port, and Germany was going to sink them at sight.

Colonel House remarked:

**«The British have gone as far as they possibly could  
in violating neutral rights,  
though they have done it in the most courteous way.»<sup>2</sup>**

The defeat of President Wilson’s demands did not go down well in America, and public opinion was poised to see if any of the belligerents would go to the extent of actually putting these threats into deeds.

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<sup>1</sup> Hankey, Supreme Command, p. 369. <sup>2</sup> Cruttwell, The Great War, p. 191.



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March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1915

## The Food Problem in Belgium



### The Commission of Relief in Belgium

In occupied Belgium, the problem of obtaining sufficient food for the local population became critical before the winter of 1914-1915. Belgium does not have sufficient agricultural land to provide for its own needs. It had to trade manufactured goods against food products to ensure its welfare during time of peace. With the seizure of the railroads by the German armies, and the blockading of ports, even the most active port of Europe, Antwerp, had been reduced to threadbare activities. The starvation of the Belgian people soon became an international concern.

The United States was at the forefront of an immense humanitarian effort to prevent starvation in

Belgium. **Herbert C. Hoover**, a future President of the United States (1929-1933) was appointed Chairman of the **Commission of Relief in Belgium**. This Commission established a network of food production, transport and distribution, with the help of the Belgian **Comité national de Secours et d'Alimentation** under the patronage of the American and Spanish Ministers in Brussels. With the consent of the occupying forces, ships were given rights of passage to the neutral port of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, to bring in every month approximately 80,000 tons of foodstuff from various sources in the world. These shipments were then distributed throughout Belgium and occupied France via the existing water canal systems. The cost of overhead in this relief effort was evaluated at half of one per cent.

This Commission continued to exist after the United States entered the war, in April 1917, and because of the recognition that Mr. Hoover had acquired as a neutral party, he remained as chairman of the Commission before becoming U.S. Federal Food Administrator, in August 1917.

In a twelve-month period in 1918-1919, the United States distributed 18.5 million tons of food to Allies and starving areas of Europe, in a program that covered 30 European countries and amounted to 100 million 1918-dollars.

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- TIMES History of the War, «Belgium under the German yoke: The Food Problem», IV:441-56.
  - Gilbert C. Scoggin, «Hoover, Herbert Clark», Encyclopaedia Britannica (Twelfth Edition, 1922) XXXI:382-3.



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# March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1915

## First day on the job



### First Canadian Division in the front line at Fleurbaix, France

On 3 March 1915, the First Canadian Division took its position at Fleurbaix, directly west of the occupied city of Lille.

At 1100 hours, **Major General Alderson**, in command of the division, assumed the responsibility for 6,400 yards (5.8 km) of front.

The division was assigned to IV Corps (**Lieut. Gen. H.S. Rawlinson**) of the First British Army (**Gen. Douglas Haig**).

This followed a week of training for each of the three Canadian brigades (**BGen M.S. Mercer**, **BGen A.W. Currie**, **BGen R.E.W. Turner**) with British formations.

The Division Headquarters and staff were located at Sully-sur-la-Lys.

At this point, the First British Army (I and IV Corps) was on the right of the British Expeditionary Force (commanded by **Field Marshall Sir John French**), and the Second Army (**Gen Horace Smith-Dorrien**, with II, III and V Corps) was on the left, extending north over 27 kilometers to the French *Huitième armée*, which covered the Ypres salient.

The Canadians were thus on the left of the left hand side Corps of the First Army.

From this point, the three brigades took position in the front trenches, each having two of its four battalions up, with one battalion in depth and one in reserve. Three of the four field artillery batteries were set up at 2 km to the rear, and one was kept in reserve. Each brigade had a Field Engineer Company and a Field Ambulance.

### First day on the Job!

Nicholson, *The Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 50, 54-5.



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**March 4, 1915**

## **Constantinople Feels the Heat**



### **The bleak prospects at Constantinople**

With the recent success of the bombardment of the outer forts of the Dardanelles and the almost unopposed landing of the British and French Marines on successive days, Admiral Carden has made it clear to the Admiralty, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, that he thinks that the crossing of the Straits by the Allied gunships will be possible.

Immediately, the Prime Minister of Greece, the pro-Allies Venezelos, at the risk of a cleavage between royalist and government factions of the Greek society, has offered to the Allies two divisions to land around the Dardanelles. But the Russians who are also preparing forces to assist in the siege, are opposed to any employment of Greek soldiers in the operation. They are afraid that Greece will then lay claim to the city that they have desired for hundreds of years. Foreign Minister Sazonov of Russia has informed the British and French governments that Russia was adamant that no Greek troops could enter Constantinople. Otherwise it would be war. Bulgaria and Roumania are also poised to attack the Ottoman authorities as soon as a sign of success can be had in the defeat of the Sultanate of Constantinople.

**On 4 March 1915, Sultan Husayn Kamil** feels the full pressure of the imminent demise of the Ottoman capital of Istanbul/Constantinople. Large numbers of citizens are abandoning the city and taking to the roads. The government of the Young Turks has made no solid plans for the defence of the city and improvisations are being made with the help of German staffs for moving troops to the peninsula and manning the ramparts. The bombardment of the great port of Izmyr/Smyrna, in the Aegean sea, is imminent. Each hour counts.

On this day, the history of the Ottoman Empire appears to be nearing its end. And the enemies of the regime are arguing over the spoils.

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●Moorehead, Gallipoli, 72.

●Joe H. Kirchberger, The First World War : An Eyewitness to History (Oxford: Facts on File, 1992), p. 88.



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**Le 5 mars, 1915**

## **La Crise des Munitions de Guerre**



### **Conférence du Cabinet britannique au sujet des munitions de guerre**

Le général Kitchener est informé que le Parlement a donné son accord pour que le recrutement continue. Mais ce développement n'avait pas été prévu par l'industrie des armes et munitions de guerre. Il faut maintenant armer trois millions d'hommes avec chacun leur fusil Lee Enfield .303 et des munitions en quantité suffisante. On produit maintenant 40,000 fusils par mois, mais on recrute 60,000 hommes.

Le War Office se heurte maintenant à des problèmes de main d'œuvres industrielle. Les propriétaires et les unions de travailleurs s'opposent à ce que des travailleurs expérimentés soient enrôlés volontairement et remplacés par des apprentis.

Les politiciens sont aussi mis au fait que ce genre de problème se propage dans la production d'autres engins de guerre tels que les munitions de canons. Il se pointe donc, **le 5 mars 1915**, un problème politique d'envergure, en Grande Bretagne, qui va nécessiter des remèdes rapides. Une des solutions est l'importation. Le Canada sera consulté pour augmenter la production de guerre, en particulier des obus.

Mais une crise est imminente. Personne ne réalise encore combien les combats des prochains mois vont vider toutes les réserves de munitions. Le Gouvernement ne fait aujourd'hui que soulever le couvercle sur un problème énorme qui va révolutionner l'industrie dans toutes ses facettes.

La guerre totale va maintenant engouffrer tous les secteurs de la population et toutes les ressources des Empires.

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•Hankey, Supreme Command, I, 310.



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## March 6, 1915

### A Big Mistake



#### Venizelos' government falls.

Offered to advance on the Gallipoli with two divisions, **King Constantine V of Greece** had refused initially in early February; but seeing the successful Allied bombardments of the forts, he decided, on 1 March, that he agreed.

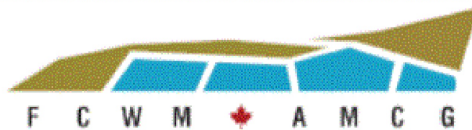
However, Czar Nicholas of Russia was adamant that he did not want King Constantine to be seen near Constantinople. Russia did not want the Greeks there.

Venizelos' government fell on **6 March 1915**, when his offer was refused by the Allies. He was replaced by the pro-German Dimitrios Gounaris.

«All hopes of Greek co-operation against Turkey had been dashed to the ground. Russia, the nation which had most to gain from the co-operation of Greece; Russia, who through the mouth of her Foreign Minister Sazonoff (on March 5<sup>th</sup>) was speaking to our ambassador with enthusiasm of the British and French forces in the Straits, who was gaining by the withdrawal of large Turkish forces from the Caucasus, had deliberately, and without proper consultation with her Allies, done her utmost to destroy one of the most promising combinations of the war. And at the very moment when by her veto on Greek co-operation, she was thus wrecking the whole of the grand strategy of the Allies in the Near East, she was actually presenting grandiose demands for the possession of Constantinople and the Straits. *Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.*»<sup>1</sup>

This episode can be taken as evidence that the Eastern Question, that had been rife during at least the whole of the second half of the Nineteenth Century, was at the heart of the First World War. The division of the spoils of the Ottoman Empire was at the core of what the conflict was about, and how its alliances were shaped and undone.

<sup>1</sup> Hankey, Supreme Command, I, p. 287. Tr. «*God first makes crazy those he wants to destroy.*».



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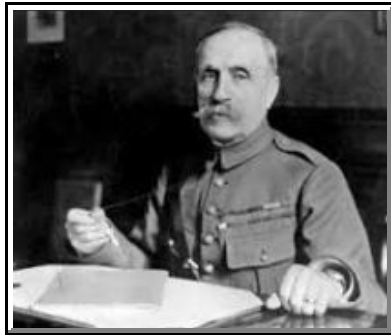
# Le 7 mars, 1915

## Stratégie à Trois



### Les relations militaires franco-Britanniques sur le Front ouest

Le général **Joseph Joffre** continue ses attaques en Champagne dans le but de, selon ses propres mots, 'grignoter' la ligne de défense allemande du saillant de Rheims. Son but serait de couper les lignes de chemin de fer qui alimentent les Allemands derrière leur positions creusées. Joffre compte sur son groupe d'armées du nord, sous le commandement du général **Ferdinand Foch**, pour pousser dans l'Artois, près d'Arras.



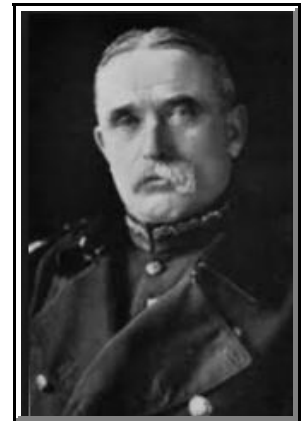
Foch sait qu'il y a une armée française qui reste toujours dans la région de Ypres, au nord des positions anglaises. Il aimerait que le général **John French** reste sur la défensive et couvre en Flandres avec sa force expéditionnaire britannique, pour que la Dixième Armée française puisse lui revenir en Artois, pour mieux aider Joffre.

Mais French n'aime pas l'idée de perdre cette armée française sur son flanc et devoir étendre ses deux armées britanniques plus loin vers le nord. La proposition de Foch, bien vue de Joffre, lui paraît humiliante.

De plus, les représentants de Londres se succèdent à son quartier-général pour essayer de lui faire comprendre les avantages de l'offensive des Dardanelles, en Turquie, et l'importance d'y laisser aller la 29e Division, une division régulière, dont il attend l'arrivée avec impatience.

Entêté et isolé, le général French décide, **le 7 mars 1915**, de passer à l'action indépendamment des Français, et démontrer qu'une attaque dans le Nord et Pas-de-Calais n'a rien d'inférieure aux campagnes françaises.

Sur ce coup de tête, il attaquera à Neuve-Chapelle, dans trois jours.



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●Lieutenant-colonel T.M. Hunter, Foch, p. 87; ●Liddell Hart, Foch, (Penguin 1937). I:179.



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# March 8, 1915

## DORA Dims the Lights

The Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.) is a multi-faceted law (it would now be called an *omnibus bill*) which was prepared ahead of time by the British Government for a crisis situation or for war. It was part of the provisions of a secret « **War Book** » that had been drafted over some years by the Committee of Imperial Defence, containing listings of actions that would prove necessary for the Government to undertake, in order to exercise control over crucial aspects of national defence.

### The Defence of the Realm Act (1914)

DORA was passed immediately upon declaration of war, in August 1914. Once voted by Parliament, it gave war powers to the Government so that further necessary subsidiary Laws and Regulations could be implemented by resort to Orders-in-Council authorized by the King in Council, by the Prime Minister, or by the Ministers in the sphere of their own Departments, without Parliamentary vote. These executive laws authorized series of Regulations that pertained to the daily life of all individuals of the British Isles, which could be implemented and directed most notably by the Secretary of the Interior through the creation of a Special Constabulary.

DORA was particularly innovative in several spheres. For instance, all private resources in the field of mining and railways fell under Government control. Food rationing, including the selling of alcoholic beverages, became increasingly restricted by tight Regulations. The curtailment of light, at night, so as to prevent accurate aerial and naval navigation and bombardment by the enemy, became drastic, especially in cities and ports. The dissemination of information, and freedom of speech, became restricted by civic regulations applying to the preservation of *morale*. Even Big Ben was reset with 'Summer Time' so as to afford more work time during daylight.

This law, **on 8 March 1915**, was amended in Parliament for a third time. It will be amended a total of six times during the War.

Canada was kept well informed of these legislative expedients and used the British experience to enact its own laws for the more efficient prosecution of the war. The Canadian War Measures Act, War Appropriation Act, Finance Act and Canadian Patriotic Fund Act of 21 August 1914 ensued.

The Defence of the Realm Act was the main, but not the only, mechanism by which the civilian population was submitted to what was later called the «dimming of the light of democracy.»

- «British Administration in War Time», The TIMES History of the War, Vol. VIII: 41-76.
- Duguid, Canadian Forces in the Great War (1938), App. 1 and 2.



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**March 9, 1915**

**Canadian Division Ready for Tomorrow**

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**Operation Order No. 5, Lieut.-General E.A.H. Alderson, C.B., 9 March 1915.**

1. The 4<sup>th</sup> Corps will attack to-morrow March 10<sup>th</sup>. The first stage is the capture of NEUVE CHAPELLE. An artillery bombardment will begin at 7.30 a.m. and at 8.30 a.m. the 8<sup>th</sup> Division will assault the enemy's trenches.

After the capture of NEUVE CHAPELLE the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Division will attack towards the high ground on the approximate line AUBERS-LIGNY LE GRAND. The left of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division will be directed at first on PIETRE and, after that place has been taken, on ROUGES BANCS.

2. The Canadian Division will assist in this attack by making a demonstration by fire along its entire front with a view to preventing the enemy from sending reinforcements from the neighbourhood of FROMELLES to AUBERS. It will, moreover, be prepared to take the offensive when ordered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Army.

3. The C.R.A. will make arrangements to open an artillery bombardment at 7.30 a.m. [...]

4. The infantry in the trenches will at 8 a.m. open a heavy fire both from rifles and machine guns. This fire should be continued at intervals throughout the day, with due regard to the necessity for keeping a supply of small arms ammunition to repel a counter-attack. Steps will be taken to see that the reserve of hand grenades in the trenches is made up to-night. [...] C.F. Romer, Colonel, General Staff

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Duguid's Appendice 285, p. 211-2.



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# March 10, 1915

## Baptism of Fire at Neuve Chapelle



**The Battle of Neuve Chapelle is the first offensive action in which a Canadian Division takes part.**

Since its arrival in the trenches at Fleurbaix, the First Canadian Division has been attached to the First Army (Haig), IV Corps (Rawlinson). On the morning of 10 March 1915, the IV Corps and the Indian Corps are committed to an Army attack against the village of Neuve Chapelle to take the heights beyond it at Fromelles and Aubers. Two British divisions of IV Corps (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) and two divisions of the Indian Corps are slated to attack. The Canadian Division on the extreme left of IV Corps is tasked with providing flanking fire from the NW as the assault is taking place from the SW and W.

The operation of Neuve Chapelle is the Canadian Division's baptism of fire, but it does not have to 'go over the top'. The forty-eight British and Indian infantry battalions who do, succeed in advancing against the three German battalions in defence of Neuve Chapelle before enemy reinforcements can be brought to the scene. But the coordination of the attack suffers by the end of the day. Bad communications prevent the two Corps commanders from launching Phase 2 of the attack, the progress from the far edge of the village to the heights beyond. This allows the Germans to recuperate and rush their reserves.

By the end of the day, the four divisions involved are pinned to the ground. The flanking fire provided on their left by the Canadians is insufficient to effectively neutralize the Germans, mainly due to shortages of artillery munitions. The 13<sup>th</sup> German Division uses the night to reorganize its defences and bring machine guns to bear over the open fields. The night of 10-11 March is a nightmare for approximately 50,000 men who find themselves half-way between their trenches and their objective. The battle of Neuve-Chapelle will not be a one-day affair, as it was hoped.

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●Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force, Chapter III.



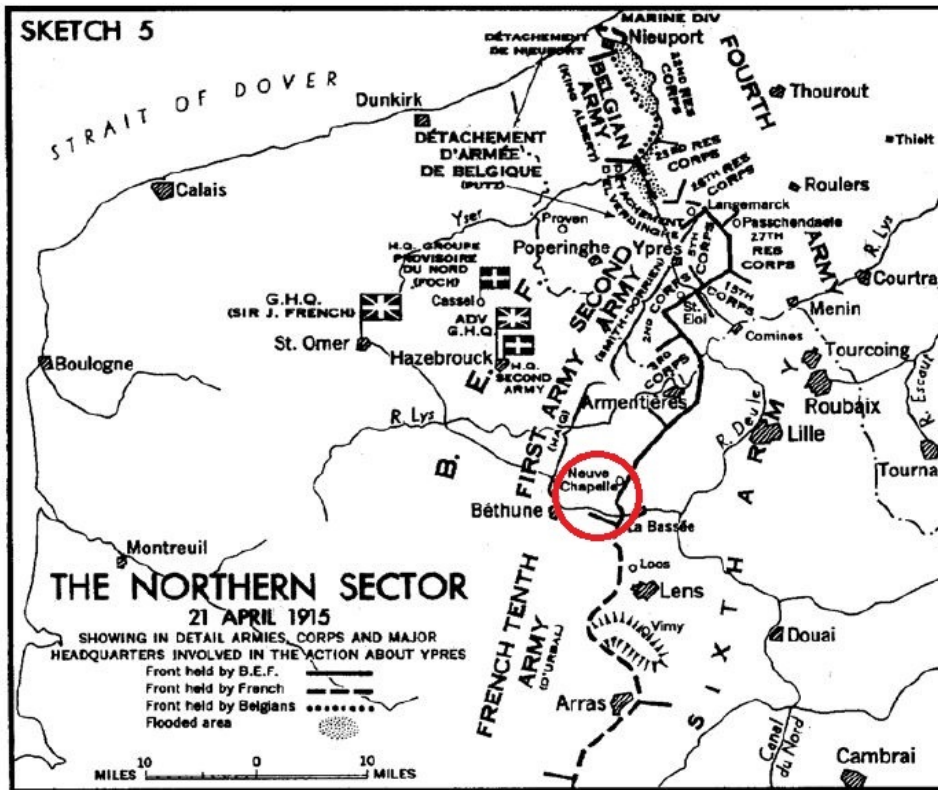
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# March 11, 1915

## Without the Benefit of Surprise



The second day of the battle of Neuve Chapelle, on 11 March 1915, was a complete failure. The British artillery could not find the German batteries which had been moved overnight.

Its own shortage of shells prevented any sort of surprise or shock effect.

The infantry assault, started from the eastern edge of the village, was immediately covered by crossing machine gun fire and artillery. It was stopped almost immediately.

The attempt was renewed in the afternoon and stopped again with heavy casualties.

Throughout the day, the Canadians poured fire uphill into the German positions, trying to

support the British 7<sup>th</sup> Division in its progress. But the day ended without any gain.

Without the benefit of surprise, the defence could not be outmatched.

•Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force, Chapter 3.



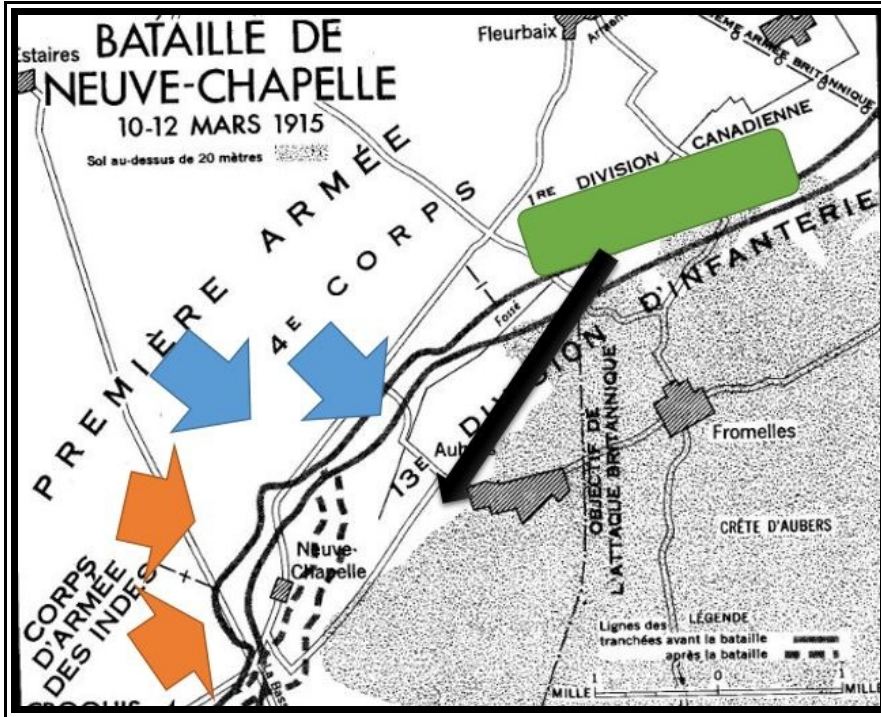
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# Le 12 mars, 1915

## Troisième Jour à Neuve Chapelle



La troisième journée de la bataille de Neuve Chapelle se solde par l'occupation du village, mais l'incapacité, pour les quatre divisions britanniques et indiennes, de progresser au delà de la limite est du village vers les hauteurs de Fromelles et Aubers. Le feu d'appui des Canadiens ne réussit pas à permettre à la Septième Division britannique, à leur gauche, d'avancer plus loin. La bataille est arrêtée en après-midi avec 13,000 hommes hors de combat.

Neuve Chapelle demeure mémorable pour son succès initial, affirmant l'importance de la surprise. Mais la difficulté à communiquer

une fois la bataille commencée rend presque impossible la coordination des mouvements des grandes formations. Le manque de munitions commence aussi à devenir évident.

•Nicholson, Le Corps expéditionnaire canadien, Chapitre 3.



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**March 13, 1915**

## **Hamilton's the Man for 29 Div**



### **General Ian Hamilton takes over in Gallipoli**

General Birdwood, in charge of the Anzacs in Egypt, had been sent to the Dardanelles at the beginning of March to assess that situation from an army point of view. Three days after Amiral Carden said that he believed that the crossing of the Dardanelles could be done with the Navy alone, Birdwood contradicted him by reporting to Kitchener that it couldn't be done without army troops assisting on the shores.

In London the politicians and Generals are now confused. But, as Winston Churchill later commented, 'Everybody's blood was up.' Historian Alan Moorehead in his famous Gallipoli adds:

'The excitement of a naval battle, the sudden vision of spectacular success it had conjured up, the historic ground, the daring of the enterprise—all these things had captivated people's minds, and Kitchener himself at last fell under the Gallipoli spell. On March 10 he announced that the 29<sup>th</sup> Division was to go after all, and that he had arranged for the French to send a division as well. This meant that, with the Anzac divisions, there would be an Army Corps of some seventy thousand men in the field.»<sup>1</sup>

With this decision to enlarge considerably the land force that will accompany the naval force, Kitchener informs **General Ian Hamilton**, in London, that he will take command of the «Mediterranean Expeditionary Force».

Hamilton gets a few instructions under a big seal, thirteen staff officers to accompany him, and leaves for Marseilles on **March 13, 1915**, where a fast armoured cruiser, HMS Phaeton, is waiting to rush them to the end of the Mediterranean.

If Admiral Jellicoe, the Commander of the Grand Fleet, is, in the famous words, «the only man who could loose the war in one afternoon», Hamilton is, on that day, the only man who can win it in a week— as long as it is in the next one...

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<sup>1</sup> Moorehead, Gallipoli, 84.

• Hankey, Supreme Command, I:290.



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**March 14, 1915**

## ***Dresden Out of the Game***

**German light cruiser SMS Dresden is cornered in a Chilean island and sunk.**

The German cruiser Dresden escaped from the devastating battle of the Falklands, where the Scharnhorst, the Gneisenau and the Leipsig found, to their ultimate despair, that two Royal Navy heavy battleships, Inflexible and Invincible, had been sent in all haste to intercept them. Dresden was the only capital ship not sunk in the one-day pursuit of 7-8 December 1914.



But the Dresden had a survival reprieve of just under a hundred days. On **14 March 1915**, it gets caught in the little island of Mas a Tierra, belonging to neutral Chile.

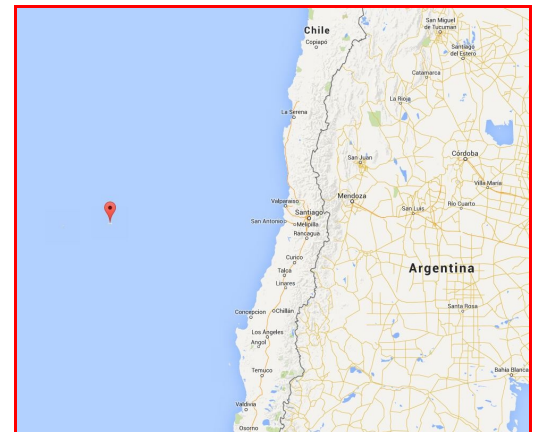
As it is picking up coal from the neutral port, the British fleet surrounds the ship and gives it an ultimatum. Captain Lüdeke issues the order to abandon the Dresden and his crew takes refuge on the island.

The Dresden goes up in flames and sinks. It is not clear if the worse of the damage was done by charges ignited by the crew to scuttle the ship, or by naval gun fire.

After diplomatic conflicts, the crew of the Dresden will be kept in the custody of the Chilean government until the end of the war.

Only one officer famously will rejoin Germany to continue in the war, but he will be even more famous in the next war as the man reputed to have been the most effective spy for the Allies against the Nazi regime– Canaris.

The destruction of the Dresden marks the end of the naval campaign against German commerce raiders in the Pacific. It is a great victory for the British Admiralty under Churchill and Fisher.



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# March 15, 1915

## War and Labour Relations



### British Government gets involved in Labour relations

The War throughout Europe is becoming an industrial contest. Material is taking a greater part in military success. Mass production of metals, chemicals, fuels, textiles, mechanical power and rubber becomes so many challenges through which survival can be enhanced, and destructive powers unleashed.

**On 15 March 1915**, Kitchener delivers a speech in the House of Lords, promoting the provisions of a proposed amendment to the Defence of the Realm Act (1914) on the question of Labour and War.

**«Labour may very rightly ask that their patriotic work should not be used to inflate the profits of the directors and shareholders of the various great industrial and armament firms, and we are therefore arranging a system under which the important armament firms will come under Government control, and we hope that workmen who work regularly by keeping good time shall reap some of the benefits which the war automatically confers on these great companies.»<sup>1</sup>**

Meanwhile, David Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour are meeting labour leaders and laying out some of the rules that will apply in war in regard to industrial investment and profits. Government will become a partner to industry, but will ensure that all contribute, each to his own capacity, to the aims of war. Unskilled labour and women will have to become a greater part of the industrial landscape in an unprecedented way.

The Government is thus ensuring, through the Treasury Agreement that capitalists do not extract undue profit from the war, and that labourers do not become slaves.

The shaping of industry to the needs of the war will not emerge whole from these meetings, but a war policy is being blueprinted. Government cannot but be involved in industrial planning and its role will surpass anything imagined in a non-communist society.

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- Sir Hedley Le Bas (Ed.), The Lord Kitchener Memorial Book (London, 1917).
  - Lloyd George, Memoirs, I, 297.



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# March 16, 1915

## Hankey as Cassandra



### The one real strategic brain in the lot

One of the greatest analysts of military affairs in his generation, Basil Liddell Hart was gassed in France in the First World War and evacuated as a Captain. It is only later that he turned his formidable intellect to the study of the War and identified the greatest lessons to be drawn from the experiences of 1914-1918.

One of the great statements that he made was about the Gallipoli landing. «**Sired by strategic confusion and dammed by naval negation, the landing on Gallipoli was born - and marred in delivery by muddled midwifery.**» However, after having studied the operation thoroughly, he drew the attention to a memorandum that had been drafted by the Secretary of the War Committee in London, **Maurice Hankey**. Hankey was a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Royal Marines who had been identified as a particularly smart

thinker. His extraction from the Corps to become the long-term Secretary of Lord Esher's Imperial Defence Committee, in 1912, was a placement that had a great deal of influence on the organization of decision-making in the British Government during the War and well after. But Hankey, with his status of lowly staff secretary, could only exercise influence indirectly with the ministers through the medium of briefings that showed so much logical brilliance that they could, sometime, influence policy in the right direction.

Hankey's memorandum, «one of the most prescient papers he ever wrote» was the one that he presented on **16 March 1915**, as a thinking piece to the members of the Cabinet on the strategic difficulties of Gallipoli. In it Hankey suggested a list of items that should be considered in preparation for a landing on the beaches under fire, a rather untried type of operation. His checklist of things for the Cabinet to ascertain before giving the go is a classic of brainpower. «Unless details such as these...are fully thought out before the landing takes place... a serious disaster may occur.»

«**It may occur to the historian, said Liddell Hart, well after the war, that Hankey was the only expert adviser of the British government who had thought out the foundations of strategy.**»

When presented with the checklist, the Secretary for War, Lord Kitchener, replied, very unwisely: «**that must be left to the commander on the spot.**»

•Liddell Hart, History of the First World War, Chapter Five, Scene 1: «The Birth of a 'Plan' – the Dardanelles». •S.W. Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secret, (1970), Vol. 1, p. 162-4. Hankey, Supreme Command.



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# March 17, 1915

## The Killing of Armenians



### The battle of the Dardanelles

created such a sense of emergency in the Ottoman leadership that rash decisions were taken to eradicate a threat of «fifth column» in Turkey.

The culmination of the naval battle of the Straits, on **18 March 1915**, marked the start of the planning of the campaign of mass deportation of the Armenian population in the eastern and southern Anatolia.

In the following months of 1915, whole series of villages and farmland will be depopulated, with forced deportations toward Aleppo, Syria, in the aim of preventing

Armenian collaboration with Russian Armenian enemies. Their dwellings will be taken over by the Turks previously expelled from the Balkans.

Many hundred of thousand of persons of all status will be pushed into death marches, falling by the wayside from dehydration, starvation and exhaustion, in addition to multifarious killings of all manner.

The massive eradication of Armenians, purported by some authorities to have aimed at genocide, is one of the more sorrowful stories of the First World War.

- W. L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), p. 142.
- *The TIMES History of the War*, Vol. VIII, Chap 133 –«The Extermination of the Armenians», p. 353-93.



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# Le 18 mars, 1915

## Réservations et Récompenses



### L'Accord de Constantinople

Pour s'assurer de la participation continue de la Russie à la guerre contre les pays de la Triple Alliance, la France et l'Angleterre ont donné leur consentement secret, **le 18 mars 1915**, à l'**Accord de Constantinople**, qui a fait promesse à la Russie que lorsque la guerre sera terminée, elle aura contrôle de Constantinople et du Déroit des Dardanelles.

Il s'agit d'un engagement qui renverse plus de cent ans de politique étrangère, tant pour la France que pour l'Angleterre.

Mais cet accord arrive à un moment fatidique.

Puisque la Grèce a récemment décidé d'opter pour le côté de la Triple Alliance, et que cette décision laisse dorénavant prévoir qu'il sera difficile d'influencer la Roumanie, l'Albanie et l'Italie à se joindre à l'Entente des Alliés, il est important de raffermir la détermination de la Russie à ne pas abandonner la guerre, alors qu'elle devra faire face à l'isolement dans l'est.

La promesse du lieu stratégique tant convoité par les Tsars successifs du XIXe siècle va inciter les Russes à donner tout ce qu'ils peuvent pour l'effort de guerre.

Il s'agit de la première de plusieurs grandes promesses que les puissances Alliées vont faire à leur amis et dont ils devront s'acquitter après la guerre. Les Arabes, les Juifs et les Italiens seront convaincus de se joindre aux grandes puissances démocratiques par des ententes semblables où ils retireront des engagements à long terme d'acquisition de territoires toujours en possession de l'ennemi.

Ces promesses seront un sujet important des négociations de 1919 à Versailles.

Pour ce qui est des Russes, même la promesse de Constantinople comme récompense n'empêchera pas les Communistes de rendre les armes en 1917.

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●William L. Cleveland, History of the Middle East (Westview Press, 1994), p. 153.



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## March 19, 1915

### Not so Fast!



#### The Dardanelles Fleet stopped in its wake

On 17 March, Admiral Sackville Carden handed over the command of the Dardanelles Fleet to Admiral John de Robeck. Carden was sick with a severe case of the nerves.

Yesterday, 18 March 1915, Robeck resolutely ordered the penetration into the

Straits in the aim of rushing through it, taking on the middle forts one by one with gunfire, and emerging at the other end victorious.

But things did not go well. He did not know that a few nights before, the Turks had layed ribbons of mines in the Channel, and three ships, one by one, were blown up.

The Ocean and Irresistible were sunk and the French Bouvet was blown sky high when its ammunition exploded, losing all 639 men on board. Suffren, Inflexible and Gaulois were also damaged out of the fight.

On the morning of **19 March 1915**, de Robeck hears that he will not be fired, as he expected. But his heart is out of the fight. He will delay until April 22<sup>nd</sup> before throwing in the towel.

The sight of Bouvet being blown to bits has given him a visceral fear of the mines. He can't believe any more that there is any chance for the Fleet of a dozen remaining ships to emerge at the other end in such form as to be able to force the surrender of Constantinople.

He wants to call in the Infantry.

•Churchill, World Crisis, Vol. II, Chap XI - «The 18th of March».

•Robert Rhodes James, Gallipoli: Grand Strategy (B.T. Batsford, 1965; Pan Books, 1984), Chap 3: «Naval Prelude».



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## March 20, 1915

### A Grievous Loss



#### Death of PPCLI Commanding Officer

**Colonel Francis Farquhar, DSO**, was killed by a sniper on **March 20, 1915** in the trenches at St-Eloi. During the night of March 19-20 he was hit by a chance bullet while showing the Commanding Officer of the relieving battalion the new line of defence which he had planned. He was carried back past Shelley Farm, but the wound was mortal and he died before morning.

Colonel Farquhar was in fact a British officer of the Coldstream Guards who was serving as Aide-de-Camp to the Royal Highness, Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, Governor General of Canada.

When Hamilton Gault founded the PPCLI, he turned to Farquhar to command the unit in which Gault, too old for command, served as a company officer.

Ten weeks after having taken the unit to the front lines within a British division, Farquhar is replaced temporarily by Gault.

The PPCLI is at an awkward position. Its reinforcements are being sent through the Canadian Expeditionary Force, but authorities of the CEF do not like to send soldiers outside the Canadian Division. Lieutenant General Alderson does not agree with the cameo role that the PPCLI has given itself, independently of the Division. Alderson wants the PPCLI to be reunited with the Division and his reluctance to give any slack is creating problems for the unit.

Sam Hugues, who was happy, in August, to see Gault raise a unit in record time with the view of arriving in England days after the call to arms, has now somewhat changed his tune. Farquhar, when training in Lévis, refused to join the Canadians in Valcartier. He also rejected the Ross rifle for the PPCLI and arranged for the unit to be issued with Lee Enfields on the pretext that the PPCLI would be attached to a British division.

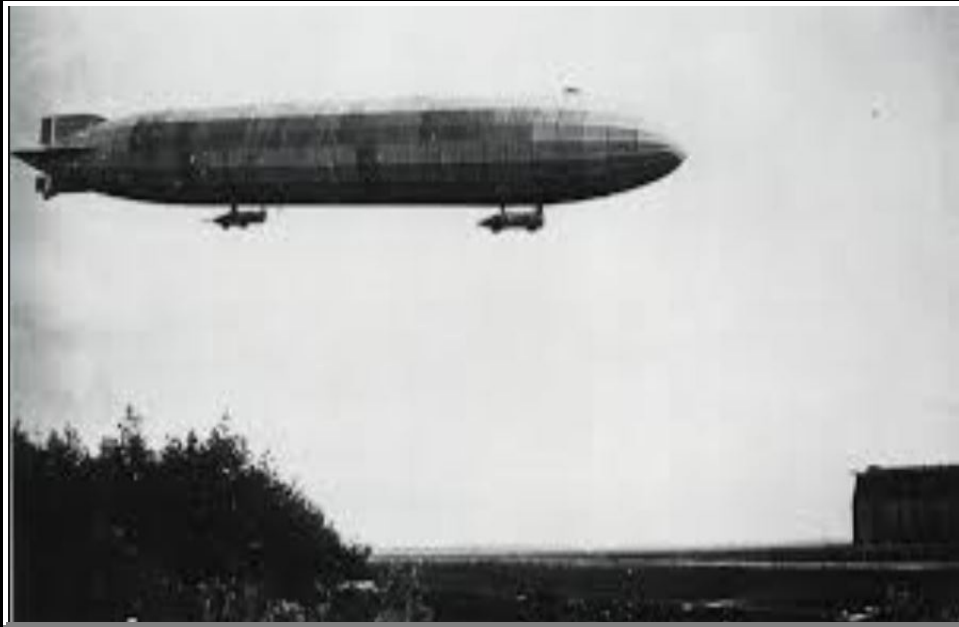
The losses of the PPCLI are now difficult to make good. The unit will have to fight for new recruits to be directed to them. Hamilton Gault's intent of having an elite Canadian unit join the British forces is now increasingly perceived as a somewhat Britophile venture.

From this point much pressure will be applied to get the unit to be joined to the Second Canadian Division when it arrives in France.

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●Hodder Williams, PPCLI, p. 43. ●Sandra Gwyn, Tapestry of War, 143-157.

**Le 21 mars, 1915**

## **Zeppelinins et Opérations françaises en Artois**



### **Zeppelinins à Paris**

Le soir du **20 au 21 mars 1915**, des Zeppelinins vus à Compiègne se dirigent vers Paris. Deux retournent avant d'arriver, mais deux lâchent 50 bombes dans la nuit sur des usines du nord-ouest de Paris. Plusieurs victimes feront l'objet de funérailles nationales.

### **Opérations en Artois**

Le jour même, Joffre informe le gouvernement de Paris des opérations en Artois qui sont en préparation.

Malgré le peu de succès obtenu à date dans les opérations en Champagne, Joffre est extrêmement confiant lorsqu'il rencontre le Cabinet, le **21 mars 1915**. Il donne des détails sur sa campagne imminente près de Arras et de Lens, pour laquelle il anticipe le succès au mois de mai.

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●Liddell Hart, Man of Orleans, p. 180.

●Verney & Pecnard, La Guerre de 1914-1918 en relief, 42.



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# March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1915

## The Fall of Przemysl



### Fall of the Austrian Citadel of PRZEMYSL, on the River San

On 22 March 1915, the Russians succeeded in storming a strong point of the Germanic forces in the east.

The great fortress of Przemysl had a garrison of 120,000 soldiers of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, equivalent to two corps, who were taken prisoner after a Russian siege that started in October 1914.

**«The fall of Przemysl rendered available for further operations in the Carpathians a Russian army more than 100,000 men strong; and what meant still more, it secured for the Russians full freedom in using excellent system of railways and roads which covers the quadrangle between Lwow, Stryj, Jaslo and Rzeszow.»**

-----  
•TIMES' History of the War, Vol. IV, Chap 69–«The Last Phases of the Russian Winter Campaign», pp. 161-200.

# March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1915

## Dardanelles — No Go!!



### The end of the naval spearhead in the Dardanelles

On 22 March, **Admiral John de Robeck** had a meeting on board of HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, for the commanders and senior staff of the Dardanelles campaign. The result of the meeting was that de Robeck lost hope that the naval element could breach the Dardanelles defences without the help of the army. General Ian Hamilton proposed from this point to lead the army landing operation.

**On 23 March 1915**, the War Cabinet is appraised of the decision. However, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, does not approve. He is convinced that further attacks by the Navy now will succeed in breaching the defences and has already sent replacement ships.

However Churchill has to face an «unsurmountable mental barrier». Admiral John Fisher, the First Lord of the Sea, opposes his recommendations. Not only Fisher himself, but the two other senior Lords next in line in the Royal Navy, Wilson and Jackson, oppose it as well. The Prime Minister and the War Cabinet cannot support Winston when his recommendations are opposed by the three senior admirals.

There is no amount of cajoling or fuming that Winston can do to change their minds. The London admirals cannot believe that more naval pressure alone will result in success. Churchill finds himself isolated. No other minister will support him. He chooses not to resign as he assesses that this would not convince the Cabinet, «now that they had dug their toes in.»

This is Churchill's great decision of his life. He will have to live with it forever. With the failure of the Antwerp campaign that he has personally led in Belgium, last October, his stocks have now gone down in the Government.

Asquith and Kitchener agree to de Robeck's proposition. From this point on General Ian Hamilton will be the lead in the land part of the campaign. Hamilton's first decision is to delay by three weeks. Ships have to go back to Alexandria to be reloaded properly for landing three divisions under fire.

Fisher himself dismissed his own original admonitions to Churchill:

**«Celerity – Without it Failure!»**

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●Churchill, Memoirs Vol. II, Chap 13: «The Case for Perseverance and decision», p. 254-73. ●Robert Rhodes James, Gallipoli, Chap 4 «Preparations for battle», p. 71-97.



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## Le 24 mars, 1915

### Manque de Munitions sur le Front Ouest



#### Début de la pénurie d'obus

Les rapports qui ont suivi la bataille de Neuve Chapelle ont été décourageants au chapitre des pertes pour les quatre divisions britanniques qui ont participé à l'assaut du village. Dans leur ensemble elles ont perdu 11,500 soldats dont 544 officiers, soit presque l'équivalent d'une division complète, sans résultats compensatoires.

Mais, –s'il est possible de parler de la sorte de vies humaines – la pire conclusion des rapports touchent au matériel. Le bombardement très court qui a précédé l'assaut et qui a fourni, justement, l'avantage de la surprise, et les cannonades qui ont accompagné les assauts, notamment du côté canadien, ont dépensé des sommes impressionnantes de munitions.

**Le 24 mars 1915**, l'artillerie de campagne de la Division canadienne se voit réduire d'une autorisation de 15 obus par canon par jour à trois. Le tir des canons de campagne est presque réduit au silence, sans parler des pièces lourdes semblablement touchées.

Le Maréchal French a rencontré le Maréchal Kitchener la veille à Dover, et le sujet a été des munitions, que French réclame à grands cris. Mais Kitchener considère que French a été trop impétueux dans la dépense et n'hésite à le blâmer devant le Premier ministre. Par contre, dans une visite qu'il fera le 29 mars au Grand quartier général français de Chantilly, près de Paris, Kitchener réalisera que les Français ne considèrent pas le plan d'artillerie de French exagérée. Ils ont eux mêmes été plus dépensiers dans les batailles récentes, en Artois et en Champagne. L'assaut de positions tellement bien creusées après un hiver de travail par les Allemands, impose sur l'explosif. Joffre parle d'ailleurs de certains plans pour l'Artois, bientôt, où les calculs montrent bien que l'industrie française dépasse de beaucoup en production proportionnelle ce que les Anglais fournissent à leur unique armée.

Kitchener se trouve alors en mauvaise position en rapport aux organisations ouvrières pour qui la production de matériel de guerre ouvre la porte à ce qu'ils considèrent des abus. Évidemment, les ouvriers anglais n'entendent les canons que de loin.

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Magnus, Kitchener, 394.



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March 25, 1915

## Canadian Division Goes in Reserve



### Relief for the Canadians at Fleurbaix

The Canadian Division has been in front line at Fleurbaix for twenty-four days, including the three days of the battle of Neuve Chapelle.

Its flank support was not as taxing as the assault role of its four neighbouring divisions. Out of its 18,000 men the division lost 278 casualties in comparison to their 3,000 a piece

During that time its units have rotated among themselves to

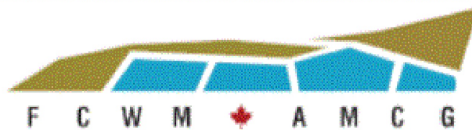
divisional reserve. But rotation has come for the division itself to move to Corps Reserve.

**On 25 March 1915**, the Division Headquarters moves back some 10 kilometers to Estaires. But it receives a warning that when it will go up again to the front line, there will be assault operations for the Canadians to perform. Reserve time will have to be taken for planning and rehearsing. 3 Brigade is told that it will spearhead the operation, whenever it comes.

Expectations are that reserve will last 12 days. Time enough to take a bath, rub your feet with whale oil, and eat a little better.

But the next job will be similar to that undertaken on 10-13 March by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> British Divisions and the Lahore and Meerut Indian Divisions, who lost one fifth of all those who went over the top.

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●Duguid, The Canadian Army in the Great War, 1914-1919, p. 215.



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# March 26, 1915

## Von Sanders Needs Time for Digging



### A German Commander takes hold of the Gallipoli defences

The German Kaiser has already sent, years ago, German officers to act as advisers to the Ottoman army leadership.

But on **26 March 2015**, with further British reinforcements arriving in Lemnos, the Turks know that an overwhelming offensive is imminent, including landings all along the Gallipoli peninsula. The situation is desperate. The War Minister, Enver Pasha, gives **German General Otto Liman von Sanders** full command of the Ottoman forces that can be mustered for a defence.

Von Sanders makes an inspection of the situation. He is hoping for eight days before an attack to set up his defensive dispositions over the Gallipoli peninsula. — He will get a month!

Von Sanders has six divisions to place for 80 miles of peninsula. He will set up two along the spine of the peninsula (9 and 19 Div), one of which is Colonel Mustafa Kemal's 19<sup>th</sup> Division, which he places at Maidon with three possible reactions depending on the place of landing.

He will then place two divisions on the Asiatic side (3 and 11 Divs), covering the line of forts there, near Besika Bay, which he considers the most dangerous assault point.

And then two divisions to cover the north-west side (5 and 7 Div). Sanders's headquarter will be in Gallipoli town.

Now what he needs is time for digging...

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Moorehead, Gallipoli, p. 104.



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# March 27, 1915

## Courting Labour

### Leaning on Queen Anne's Chair

Kitchener's speech at the House of Lords on 15 March to extoll the advantages of dealing with industry through emergency laws was paralleled by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's efforts at negotiation with labour representatives a fortnight later.

Lloyd George finds himself in an unprecedented situation which he has described in his Memoirs<sup>1</sup>, but which historian A.J.P. Taylor immortalized in the following quote:



«Until August 1914 the British people played a negative part in public life. Their only duties were to pay their taxes and not to cause trouble for the governing class. Suddenly their position changed. It was not enough to keep them quiet; they had to cooperate actively. Lloyd George was the chief instrument in industrial mobilization, thanks to his previous successes with the trade unions, and this even before he became minister of munitions. **On 27 March 1915** he met the leaders of the engineering unions at the Treasury: they agreed to drop restrictive practices for the duration and received in return some rather vague promise of industrial partnership. This was a date of historic importance: the moment when the trade unions ceased to be merely instruments of resistance and stepped, however half-heartedly, into a share of control. It was the most significant event in the history of British trade unions, and hence of the British working class, since the repeal of the combination Acts. And it was all Lloyd George's doing. He has left a vivid account of the scene – the union leaders leaning casually against a chair which Queen Anne was reputed to have used when she attended the Treasury Board, and A. J. Balfour, appropriate representative of the governing class, regarding them with tolerant surprise.»<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> David Lloyd George, Memoirs, I, 295.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from «Lloyd George: Rise and Fall: The Leslie Stephen Lecture for 1961, given on 21 April in the Senate House of Cambridge University», in A.J.P. Taylor: From the Boer War to the Cold War: Essays on Twentieth-Century Europe, Edited with an Introduction by Chris Wrigley (Hamish Hamilton, 1995; Penguin Books, 1996), p. 240.

Note: The Queen Anne-style chair shown is not the actual Treasury's chair.



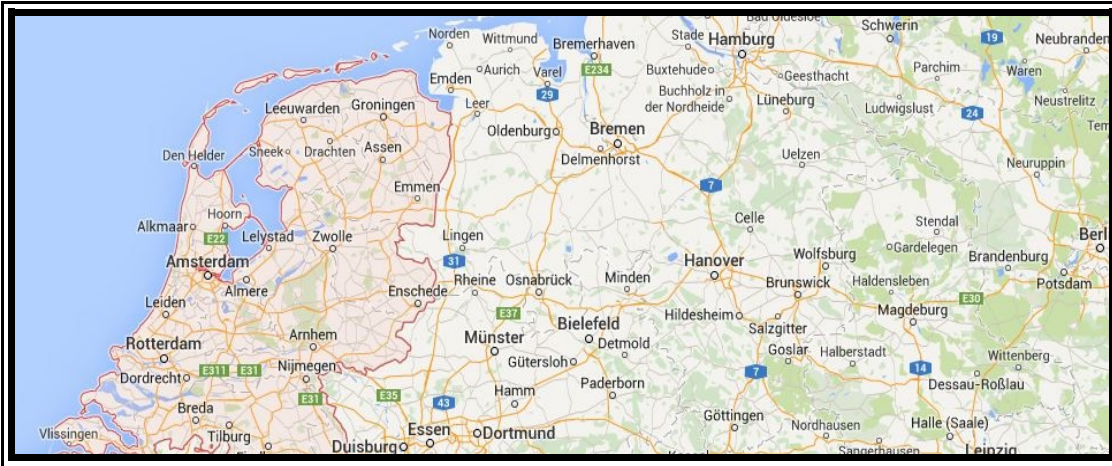
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# Le 28 mars, 1918

## Les Projets d'Invasion de la Hollande



### La Hollande en danger

Lors de leurs premières opérations, en août 1914, les Allemands ont évité de susciter l'animosité des Hollandais et n'ont pas pénétré leur territoire.

Ils espéraient que les Pays-Bas

pourraient être reconnus comme neutres par les deux côtés, permettant ainsi à l'Allemagne de continuer le commerce avec cette nation productrice d'agriculture, et de pouvoir jouir indirectement de ses ports, qui demeureraient ouverts pendant le conflit.

Mais les mesures récentes pour enrayer le commerce qui ont été mises sur pied par les puissances de l'Entente, ont maintenant grandement réduit les activités des ports, notamment de Amsterdam et Rotterdam.

Les navires des États-Unis qui avaient continué le commerce avec la Hollande, et qui contenaient souvent des denrées classées «contrebande conditionnelle» qui pouvaient se rendre jusqu'à l'Allemagne par des voies intérieures, ont été interrompus par le blocus renforcé, en réponse à la guerre sous-marine sans restrictions que les Allemands ont déclarée en février.

**Le 28 mars 1915**, il semble maintenant aux puissances de l'Entente que les avantages que retiraient les Allemands de la neutralité de la Hollande ont grandement diminué et qu'il est devenu très plausible qu'une intervention de leur part saisisse le pays pour empêcher que les Alliés eux-mêmes le fassent d'abord. C'est un fait qu'à l'Amirauté britannique, la carte géographique offre des options intéressantes de débarquement.

•Hankey, Supreme Command, I:300.



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## Le 29 mars, 1915

### U-124 tue 104 personnes



#### S.S. Falaba

Le navire anglais S.S. *Falaba* partit de Liverpool avec 145 passagers et 95 personnes d'équipage.

À une cinquantaine de milles du Pays de Galle, il fut torpillé dans l'après midi du **28 mars 1915** par le sous-marin allemand U-28. Cent quatre personnes y trouvèrent la mort.

Cette attaque fut la première que les sous-marins allemands effectuèrent sous

les termes de leur guerre 'sans restrictions' contre un navire passager qui osait s'aventurer dans les eaux britanniques. Le navire transportait certains passagers américains, ce qui souleva les cris au meurtre de la Presse des États-Unis.

The English passenger ship S.S. *Falaba* left Liverpool with 145 passengers and 95 crew. At about fifty miles from Wales, it was torpedoed by U-28, in the afternoon of **28 March 1915**. One hundred and four persons were killed.

This attack was the first that the German submarines made under the terms of their 'unrestricted submarine warfare' against a passenger ship which dared cross British waters. Some travellers were Americans, which raised a Press uproar of 'murder' in the United States.

• The TIMES History of the War, 1914-1919, V:274; VII: 140, 417-8.

• <http://www.jeffreygreen.co.uk/065-the-sinking-of-the-falaba-march-1915>



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**March 30, 1915**

## **The Second Canadian Contingent**



### **The follow-on troops**

The second Canadian contingent is being prepared in Canada in a quite different manner than the first contingent was in the fall of 1914.

This time soldiers will not be gathered in Valcartier. The winter prevents so many men from living under tent, and the training for the contingent is given in a more systematic way in the various bases.

This contingent will comprise 20,000 men; less than the first one as there is practically no artillery guns left in Canada.

But the decision also comprises the further recruitment of 30,000 to be trained and kept in Canada for reinforcements as necessary, as well as the formation of a 50,000-man training contingent to remain scattered as needed throughout Canada.

Recruiting is therefore continuous and successful, and men stay in their military districts to train before departing.

**By the end of March 1915**, soldiers slated to be sent with the Second Canadian Infantry Division are informed that

their departure will be on or around the First of May 1915.

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Nicholson, Canadian Expeditionary Force, p. 109.



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# March 31st, 1915

## A Friends' Volunteer Project

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### Friends of the Canadian War Museum

The Friends of the Canadian War Museum is a voluntary organization which is dedicated to support the activities of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

Friends organize fund drives and volunteer so as to facilitate Museum projects and initiatives that cater to the remembrance and history of the Canadian involvement in national defence and war.

This program of daily research notes disseminated through Twitter marks the Centennial of the First World War.

It informs on what was going on in the first World War, day-by-day, one hundred years ago.

Volunteers researchers of the FCWM are involved in preparing these notes.

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Les Amis du Musée canadien de la guerre est une organisation bénévole qui se donne pour but de supporter le Musée canadien de la Guerre d'Ottawa.

Les Amis organisent des cueillettes de fonds et se portent volontaires pour faciliter des projets et initiatives du Musée qui visent à perpétuer la mémoire et l'histoire de la participation canadienne à la défense nationale et à la guerre.

Ce programme de notes de recherche quotidiennes disséminées par Twitter marque le Centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale.

Il informe sur ce qui s'est passé au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale, de jour en jour, il y a cent ans.

Des recherchistes bénévoles sont impliqués dans la préparation de ces notes.

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