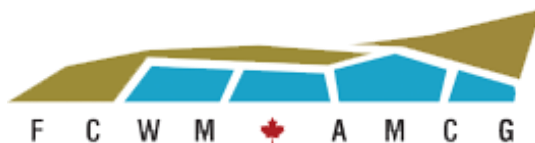


World War I
Day-by-Day
1914 – 1918

January 1917

Janvier 1917

La première guerre mondiale
De jour en jour
1914 – 1918



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1 January 1917

Douglas Haig becomes Field Marshal



Douglas Haig has now been the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force for one year. His main achievements in that year were the British battles of the Somme, a strategic move that he had not wanted at the beginning of 1916, but that the desperate position of the French in the battle of Verdun imposed on him as a vital relief.

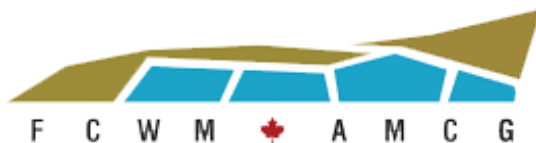
The new Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, does not like Douglas Haig. He thinks that Haig is lacking in vision and proved by the immense losses of life of the Somme that he could not plan anything but repeated straight forward attacks, with no genius for the key element of the tactician, surprise. He sees Haig as a pedestrian general with the added shortcomings of a retarded cavalry dreamer.

But King George V likes Haig a lot more than he likes Lloyd George. Haig represents the aristocratic class of the House of Lords that Lloyd George has checkmated when he was the

Radical Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the elections of December 1910.

On First January 1917, Haig is named Field Marshal by the King in his New Years' List, – without recommendation from the Prime Minister.

John Terraine, Douglas Haig (1963), p. 245.



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2 January 1917

Senior Officers pay a visit to Verdun



Senior Officers of the BEF go visit Verdun and get briefed on the detail of what happened there while they were engaged in the Somme.

The Commander of First Division, **Major General Arthur Currie**, heads the Canadian delegation.

Between **2 January 1916** and 10 January, Currie will prove himself to be the inveterate questioner. Someone at GHQ said of this Canadian: «He pumped everyone dry.¹»

Currie is a big man who does not go unnoticed. Soldiers have started to call him «**Old Guts and Gaters**²», when they see him sniffing around for the devil hiding in the detail.

But Currie is getting recognition as a superb brain. A methodical and forward-thinking planner, he is an innovator in training techniques. And someone else said of him that he had «an almost fanatical hatred of unnecessary casualties.³»

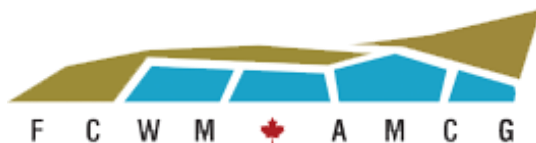
It will not be a month before Byng says of him, as Command material: «In his case there are no ‘ifs’.⁴»

¹ Urquhart, *Currie*, p. 142;

² Greenhouse and Harris, *Vimy*, p. 54

³ Hyatt, *Currie*, p. 66;

⁴ Urquhart, p. 139.



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3 January 1917

Nivelle: The Man of the Hour



The Man who was promoted to replace General Joffre did not take Joffre's title of Commander-in-Chief of all the French Armies.

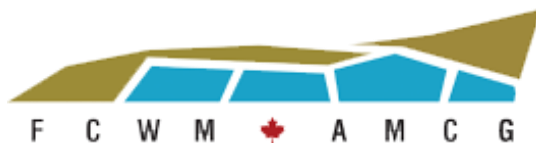
General Robert Nivelle has in fact become the «**Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies of the North and North-West**». This means that he commands, to all practical purposes, all the French armies involved in the «Western Front. »

Nivelle, who was the Commander of Second Army of Verdun, a few days ago, has therefore passed ahead of all other seven army commanders and all three army group commanders, as well as staff generals senior to him. This includes Pétain and Foch, the later having been 'reassigned' out of army group command before Joffre was replaced.

Nivelle is «*L'Homme de l'Heure*» because his counter-attacks in Verdun were finally successful in regaining all the ground lost since February 1916 and some more. This was a December gift to the French nation in answer to prayers in all hearts.

On 3 January 1917, Nivelle is receiving the delegation of British officers who are visiting Verdun to learn from the Hero. Nivelle speaks English well and is highly articulate in describing the method that he and General Mangin developed in Verdun. His confidence is communicative.

The year 1917 is looking promising.



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4 January 1917

The Canadian National Service Board's Mail Out

Recruitment has taken a slump in the second half of 1916. Since March 1916, results have declined by 85%. With 160,000 men overseas, there must be a steady flow of 10,000 men a month to refill the ranks of those repatriated for all reasons. This is the double of what was achieved in December.

In October 1916, the Borden Cabinet appointed **R.B. Bennett**, an ambitious and energetic Conservative MP from Calgary, as Director General of a new National Service Board.

The NSB is responsible to provide the Government with the necessary information to decide on a manpower policy to solve the problem. **On 4 January 1917**, it launches a Registration campaign by which all males of service age are asked to send personal information.



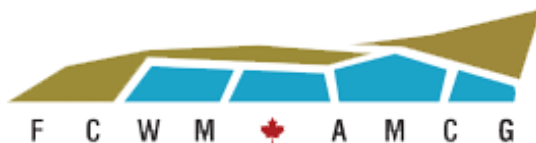
Bennett gets the Government to state clearly that the Registration Cards are not meant to be used in a conscription, as conscription is not contemplated for Canada.

But the example of Great Britain, a year ago, using the same stratagem to introduce compulsory service there, does not go unnoticed.

These two million cards mailed out from sea to sea are launching the debate that will rage throughout 1917 in Canada:

— What to do to support the CEF when nobody wants to join it voluntarily anymore?

Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, Chap. 2: «The Great War: Manpower Problems 1914-1917», p. 22-59.



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5 January 1917

Allied Conference of Rome, 6 -7 January 1917



David Lloyd George has now been the Prime Minister of Great Britain for 30 days. In that period he was able to convince the Heads of Government of France and Italy to meet in Rome and to review the plans that had been developed in the Paris Conference in November last.

Indeed, Lloyd George has challenged Asquith and toppled his government so as to be able to influence allied strategy for 1917.

The new Prime Minister of Great Britain is convinced that the focus must be taken away from France, where the Germans are too strong on the defensive, and that some other strategy must be commonly designed so as to assault the German in some other way.

His inclination is to reinforce the Italians with British and French forces and launch a sudden, unexpected and very powerful offensive against the Austrians so as to kick them out of the war. Their recent secret overture for peace has already hinted that they are feeling the strain. They are the Achilles' heel of the Germanic Alliance.

Lloyd George will stop at nothing to try to convince the civilian leaders of allied governments to take a hold of their generals and dictate a new strategy that the military strategists do not seem to be able to grasp.

David Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol. III: Chap 47 - «The Rome Conference», p. 1413-42.



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6 January 1917

American Ambassador in Berlin scolds Entente allies

The American Ambassador in Berlin, **Mr. James W. Gerard**, in post since 1913, was involved in many interventions between the belligerent nations. America stood as the predominant neutral and was used as such in many negotiations in regard to the fate of foreign nationals, neutral commerce, and third-party diplomatic consultations.



But President Wilson is growing nervous over the lack of success of his *démarches* to get the two sides around a peace table. The recent rejection by the British Government, calling for a war to the ‘knock out,’ comes as a somewhat trenchant brush-off.

Wilson therefore sends instructions for Gerard to make a statement that would show sympathy to the Germans, although he is not any more pleased with their aloofness.

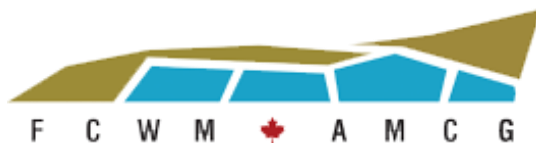
On 6 January 1917, Gerard gives the Allies ‘a public rap over the knuckles’ for their lack of receptivity. His speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Berlin is in fact a diplomatic long pole extended to the Germanic Alliance over a river of bad blood:

«Our relations have never been bitter, and their continuance is guaranteed so long as men like Bethmann-Hollweg, Helfferich, and Zimmermann, Hindenburg and Ludendorff remain.»

This is the Golden Opportunity that Wilson is extending to the Germans.

— They be damned if they don’t take it!

Cowles, *The Kaiser*, 376.



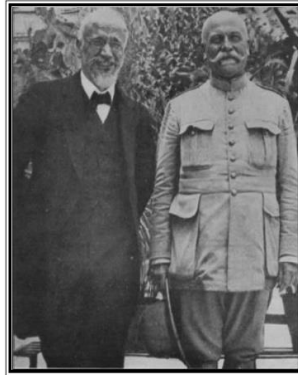
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7 janvier 1917

Consultations sur la question Grecque



La conférence de Rome, les **6 et 7 janvier 1917**, a réuni les chefs des gouvernements de la Grande-Bretagne, de la France et de l'Italie, ainsi que les représentants politiques des autres puissances sympathiques à l'Entente.

Ceux-ci sont accompagnés par leurs chefs des états-majors pour des consultations aux niveaux tant politique que militaire.

Il s'agit de revoir les plans stratégiques pour 1917, maintenant que la Grande-Bretagne a changé de gouvernement et que la France a remplacé le grand Maréchal Joffre.

Une des questions soulevées est celle de la Grèce, toujours officiellement neutre, mais dont une faction s'est détachée du Roi pour former un gouvernement provisoire. **Le général Maurice Sarrail**, commandant du Corps expéditionnaire allié de Méditerranée, désire supporter l'ex-premier ministre grec **Eleftherios Venizelos** dans sa campagne pour ré-aligner la Grèce du côté de l'Entente.

Il ressort toutefois des délibérations qu'il serait inapproprié, pour le moment, de choquer une population grecque influente aux États-Unis, alors même qu'il devient de la plus haute importance de ménager l'opinion publique américaine. Tous ressentent qu'un grand poids est sur le point d'entrer dans la balance. —Le général Sarrail devra se limiter à protéger ses flancs de Salonica.

Hankey, Supreme Command, II: 612



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8 January 1917

The Crown Council meeting of Pless



While the Entente allies are in international conference in Rome, the Kaiser is holding a meeting of his Crown Council at the Supreme Headquarters, in Pless.

The meeting is about the supremely important decision of having or not having unrestricted submarine warfare.

Wilhelm II has been exercising his prerogative as «Supreme War Lord» for eighteen months, and holding back his Admirals from throwing the two

hundred submarines in a wild dog chase against all shipping.

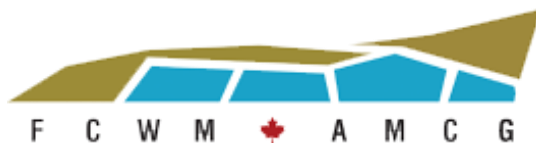
But on **8 January 1918**, the ‘Caesar’s power’ has already slipped from his hands. The Admirals are now supported by the all-powerful General Paul Hindenburg, who has, in the last weeks, leashed together all the necessary ties to dominate the High Command.

The results of Verdun and the Somme, and the first evidence of the ugly ‘Turnip Winter’ for the German populace give him the authority to advocate extreme measures.

In the second most fateful German decision of the war (the first was to launch the Schlieffen Plan), Wilhelm is once again overwhelmed by circumstances. He will be bound to allow USW on 1 February.

—He is henceforth a Nietzschean strawman.

Craig, Germany, 380;
Cowles, Wilhelm II, 378.



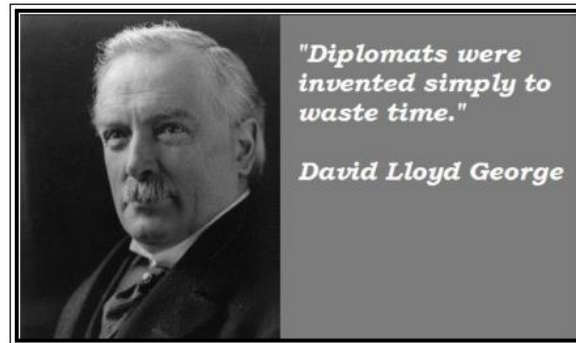
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9 January 1917

In Rome do as the Romans do... but not in London



Prime Minister **David Lloyd George** called the Rome Conference (6 - 7 Jan) to deal directly with the heads of governments so as to get them to understand that the best strategy for 1917 is not to continue ramming walls in France.

But the conference does not go as he had hoped. The Italian government was not impressed by his Italian plan. General Cadorna had reservations, knowing that General Haig and General Nivelle had other ideas of their own and would not be very enthusiastic in sending their best artillery beyond the Alps. And the French government is now behind Nivelle, who brings hope of a new method tried and tested in Verdun.

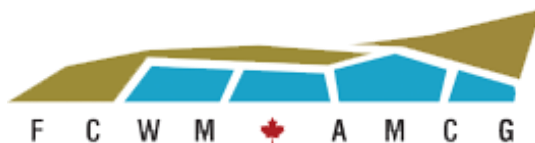
Lloyd George therefore comes back to London, on **9 January 1917**, with a big problem. The very men that he meant to diminish and direct have been re-energized by the outcome of the conference, where «Westerners» have again prevailed. General Haig and Robertson are back, high in the saddle.

This is a big lump for LG, who was counting on logic and personal magnetism to re-orient the strategy of the Entente, and diminish Haig as a major influence in Empire decision-making.

He does not have much of a choice, now, but to support this Nivelle man...

But his bag of tricks is not empty... —Perhaps an Imperial Conference would help...

David Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol. III, Chap 47: The Rome Conference, p. 1413-52. Urquhart, p. 139.



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10 January 1917

A reply with no hope



The President of the United States has been involved for over a month in trying to get the two sides of the War to state their War Aims and see if there are not compromises to be made so as to avoid further carnage and destruction.

On 10 January 1917 the allies of the Entente give their reply to his invitation in a manner that leaves no hope for a resolution of the conflict by peaceful means.

This reply is termed by Cruttwell as « **one of the most interesting and important diplomatic documents of the war.**¹»

In fact, in the words of historian **Hans W. Gatzke**, the communiqué is a renewed declaration of war: The Allies expressed their exigencies as:

« **... the evacuation and restoration of the countries occupied by the Central Powers, and hinted at the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France and the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. They furthermore refused to deal with the Central Powers on a basis of equality.**²»

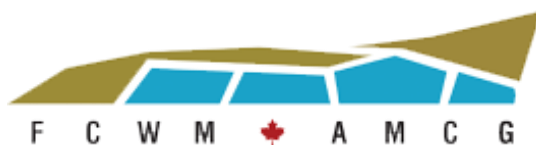
He adds:

«**The growing conviction that the only alternative from now on was victory or complete and utter defeat became one of the most powerful arguments of annexationist propagandists.**³»

¹ Cruttwell, *The Great War*, p. 364;

² Gatzke, *Germany's Drive to the West* (1950, 1966), p. 151;

³ Gatzke, p. 151.



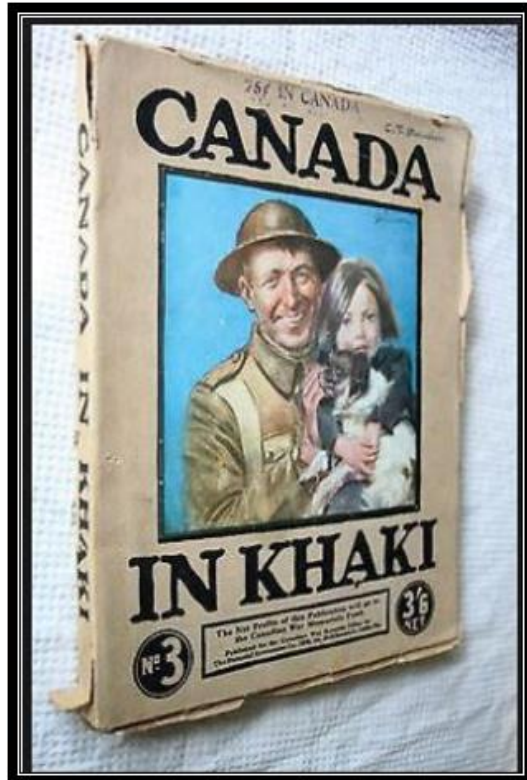
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11 January 1917

Canada in Khaki (January 1917)



Lord Beaverbrook is indeed a brilliant and hard-working man. His many projects do not go unnoticed.

The publication of *In Flanders Fields*, a literary success, will shortly be followed by a much-awaited second volume.

Beaverbrook's Canadian War Records Office in London is also behind the publication of *Canada in Khaki*,¹ a series of books that deal with Canada's effort in the War. It first comes out in London in January 1917 and sells so well there that copies will become available for Canada only after the first batch immediately sells out overseas.

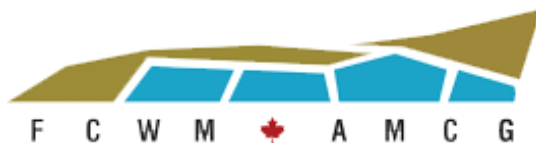
It is unashamed propaganda and people eat it right up. But it is very good quality propaganda for the time, with superb illustrations, good comics and good writing. It is instrumental in shaping the image of the Canadian soldier as different from the British Tommy.

The proceeds go to the **Canadian War Memorial Fund**.

¹ Canada in Khaki: A Tribute to the officers and men now serving in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, (The Canadian War Records Office, Picorial Newspaper Co., London, England).

www.google.ca/?gws_rd=ssl#q=canada+in+khaki

Tim Cook, "Documenting War & Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken, the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War", *War in History*, 10:3 (Jul 03), pp. 265-95.



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12 January 1917

Joseph Mackay takes hold of new British Ministry of Shipping

The new Lloyd George Government in Great Britain did not take long in bringing resolution to a problem that had found no solution under the Asquith administration.

Civilian merchant shipping was controlled from the beginning of the War by the Director of Shipping at the Admiralty. But the Admiralty did not have enough expertise in civilian shipping to cater to the problems adequately.

The Government created a civilian Shipping Controller to assist in the administration of this control, but it soon became evident that the Shipping Controller and the Admiralty could not work together.

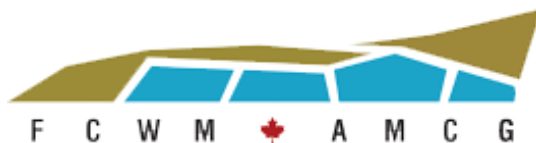


The Government thus resorted, on **12 January 1917**, to creating a new Shipping Ministry, for which the Shipping Controller, **Joseph Mackay**, became Minister of the Crown. This gave him the authority to deal equally with the Admiralty and make sure that the requirements for a well-functioning shipping program were protected by civilian officers with a great deal of expertise in commercial shipping and trade practices.

Mackay will wage great battles with the Admiralty, forcing the Royal Navy into procedures that it will not like.

But these civilian shipowners and mariners drafted into government for the War know their stuff.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, p. 1226.



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13 January 1917

A singularly dangerous policy

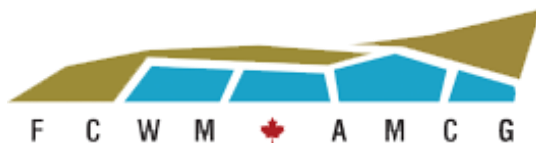


In January 1917, the German still abide by the ‘restricted’ submarine warfare by which they follow international rules for the targetting of trade shipping.

The British Admiralty is clear on what it wants merchant ships to do to minimize the threat: Go It Alone:

«Whenever possible, vessels should sail singly, escorted as considered necessary. The system of several ships sailing together in a convoy is not recommended in any area where submarine attack is a possibility. It is evident that the larger the number of ships forming the convoy, the greater is the chance of a submarine being enabled to attack successfully, the greater is the difficulty of the escort in preventing such an attack.»

Admiralty statement quoted in Lloyd George, Memoirs, III: 1142.



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14 janvier 1917

Le canon de l'espoir



Le général Robert Nivelle est plein d'espoirs pour l'offensive qu'il a imaginée pour le printemps, tôt en 1917.

Ce qui anime son enthousiasme si communicatif, c'est le fait que l'industrie française a maintenant atteint un niveau de productivité qui se manifeste en première ligne.

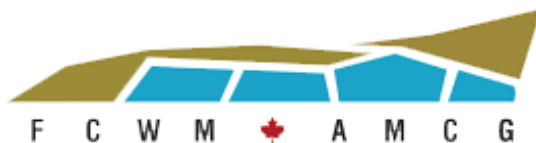
En particulier, les Français étaient, tout comme les Anglais, particulièrement faibles en artillerie lourde.

Mais la production d'un nouveau canon conçu par le colonel L. J. F. Filloux, le **155mm GPF (Grande Puissance Filloux)** peut maintenant sortir des usines au rythme de 48 par mois. Ce canon moyen long donne une portée supérieure à celle des canons allemands et permet le tir contre-batterie sans riposte.

Leur rapidité de tir permet aussi de former des 'zones battues' mobiles pour protéger les troupes dans leur progression vers les positions ennemies. Il s'agit là d'un instrument parfait pour les «barrages roulants», que Nivelle a développés à Verdun et qui ont prouvé leur efficacité.

Nivelle est donc convainquant lorsqu'il parle, le **14 janvier 1917**, d'attaquer très tôt dans l'année avec une soudaineté et une puissance de frappe dévastatrices qui produiront une brèche en 24 ou 48 heures.

Winter, Haig's Command, p. 76.



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15 janvier 1917

Nivelle présente son plan à Londres



Le **15 janvier 1917**, le **Général Robert Nivelle**, le nouveau Commandant-en-Chef des Armées françaises en France se rend à Londres pour rencontrer le Cabinet britannique et exposer son plan pour l'année 1917.

Nivelle a l'avantage de très bien parler anglais, sa langue maternelle, ce qui a toujours été un problème pour Joffre, qui était souvent mal compris.

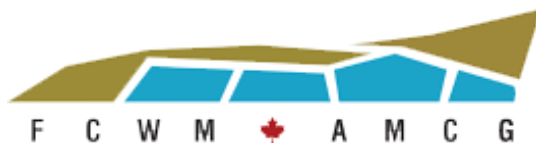
Le premier ministre David Lloyd George a dû accepter, à la conférence de Rome, il y a quelques jours, qu'il n'avait plus le choix d'une stratégie pour 1917. Nivelle est appuyé d'emblée par son gouvernement et il ne reste qu'à décider du rôle que jouera l'armée britannique dans son plan.

Nivelle offre aux Anglais de prolonger leur ligne de défense vers le sud ou de prendre part à l'offensive française qu'il prévoit en Champagne dès mi-février.

Le gouvernement anglais est satisfait des plans de Nivelle et Lloyd George décide que l'armée britannique va participer activement à la grande opération de Nivelle. Il est donc décidé qu'il y aura une offensive conjointe. Ce qui reste à décider, c'est si cette offensive aura un commandant unique. Lloyd George opte immédiatement pour donner à Nivelle autorité sur Haig, de sorte que la stratégie française proposée soit unifiée et dominante. —Pas si facile! — Haig n'est pas d'accord!

Winter, Haig's Command, p. 85.

http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Robert_Nivelle



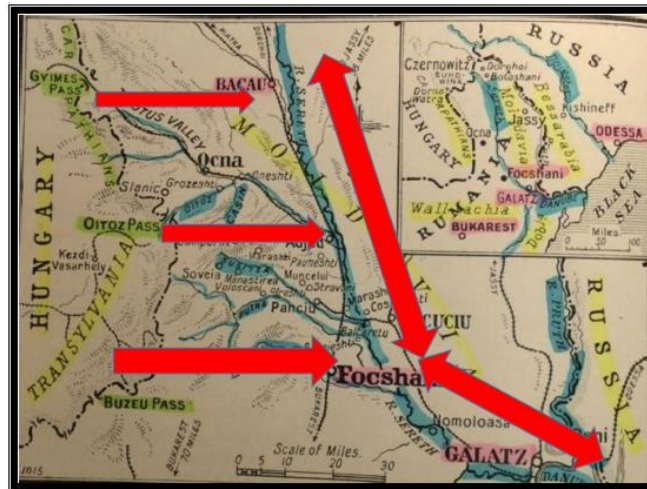
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16 January 1917

The harsh Rumanian winter 1916-1917



Since the loss of Bucharest, on 6 December 1916, the Rumanian armies have been on the withdrawal.

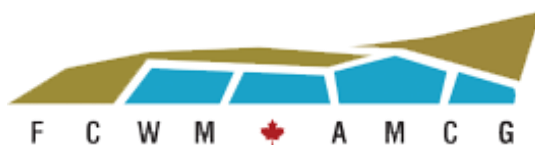
Pushed out of the Transylvania, to the north of their country, and Wallachia, to the south of it, they have crossed the Carpathian passes at Gyimes, in the north, Oitoz in the center and Buzeu, in the south, to flee behind the Sereth River and establish a defensive position there with the help of the Russians.

But the winter is the worse known in forty years and the harshness is such that whole divisions and whole village populations are dying of sickness and hunger.

The medical services are often non-existent in remote areas, and the few hospitals are completely inadequate to fight the typhus that spreads among suffering soldiers and villagers. The reorganization of the army after a rout is extremely difficult with scarce communications and transport.

The full price of defeat is being paid by the Rumanians: — It is relentless Hell.

TIMES History of the War, Vol. XVII (1918), Chap 249: «The Conquest of Rumania», p. 19-36.



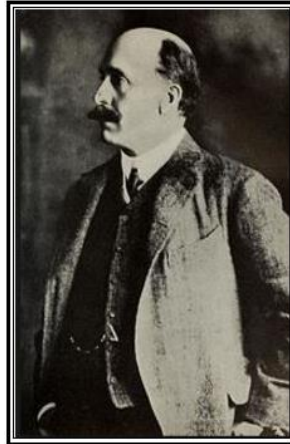
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17 January 1917

Lord Cowdray at the Air Board



Since taking power, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George has named many civilian entrepreneurs to take over government posts. Lloyd George recognizes that during time of war, self-made men have a method that gets things done. Rather than operate through normal departmental channels, the Prime Minister likes to set up special boards or committee with appointees that override red tape and get to the business-end of their mandate.

The Air Board is now losing its Chair as George Curzon (Earl Curzon of Kedleston) is joining Lloyd George's small War Cabinet.

The Air Board has been a thorn on the side of Government since its creation because of the relentless competition for separate air services, the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) for the Army and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). The fierce disputes for resources between the Army and Navy are detrimental to overall aviation progress.

Lloyd George now appoints **Weetman D. Pearson, Viscount Cowdray**, a successful British oilman in Mexico and elected MP to take hold of the Air Board.

His mandate is clear: put some order in the Air Board and get both the War Office and Admiralty to fall in line with a joint air service that will be efficient and at peace with itself.

David Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol. IV, Chap 57 - «Creating the Air Ministry», p.1854-80



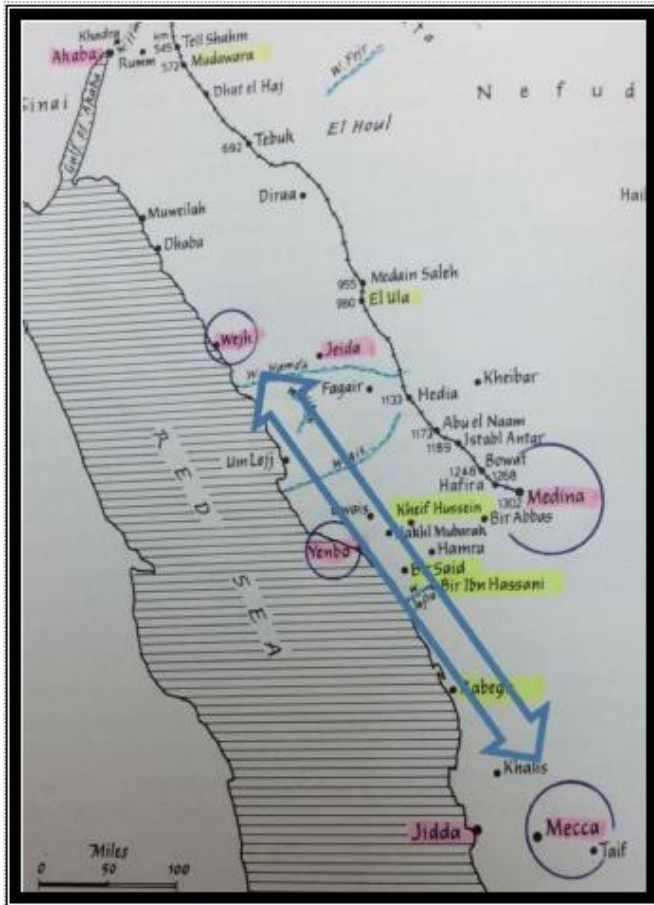
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18 janvier 1917

La Révolte arabe prend position



Les Turcs peuvent exercer leur contrôle de la péninsule arabe grâce au chemin de fer unique qui relie la Turquie à Médine, le grand centre de la religion musulmane. La Mecque est toutefois au delà de leur portée puisque les troupes du Chérif Hussein l'occupent.

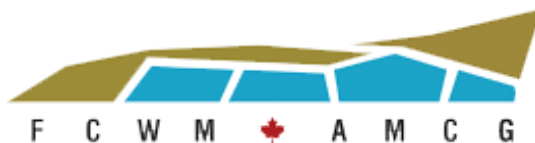
Au cours de novembre et décembre 1916, les Turcs ont effectué des sorties de Médine pour tenter de reprendre le sud de la péninsule. Ils ont tôt fait de devoir reconnaître que grâce à la patrouille navale britannique sur la Mer Rouge, les Arabes peuvent être protégés par le feu des canonnières dans leurs mouvements le long du littoral.

C'est ainsi que sans beaucoup d'efforts, et sans que des troupes chrétiennes dussent occuper le territoire sacré musulman du Hedjaz, le Prince Faisal a pu progresser de Yanbou (Yenbo) à Al Wajh (Wejh) et aller menacer le chemin de fer qui alimente Médine.

À partir du **18 janvier 1917**, les Turcs à Médine se replient dans une étroite position défensive, vulnérables par leur seul cordon ombilical.

T.E. Lawrence Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (1935), p. 135-6.

Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia, Chap 14 - «The Revolt Begins», p. 279-305 (carte p. 155).



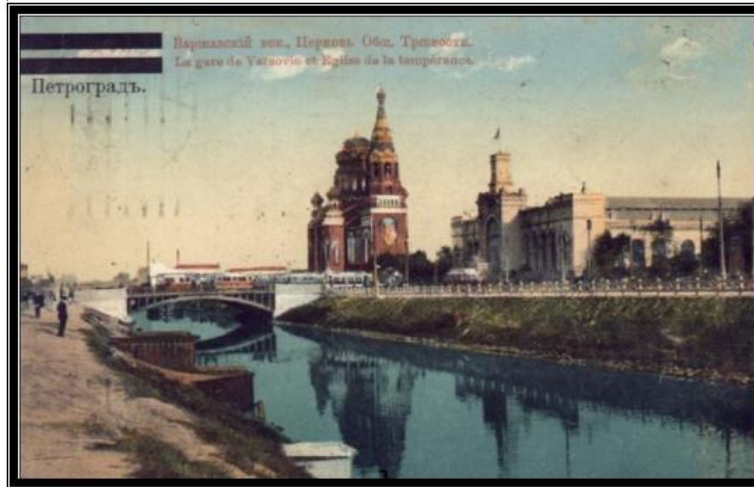
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19 January 1917

The Conference of Petrograd



The allied countries of the Entente have resolved in the recent conference in Rome that all efforts should be made to help Russia regain her position and continue to oppose the Germans on the Eastern Front.

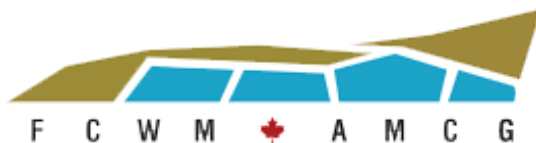
A Conference in Petrograd is called, with each country of the Entente sending high-status representatives, ready to make offers to strengthen the Russian Government and re-supply, re-train or re-organize the Russian Army.

The British Government sends Lord Milner and General Henry Wilson; the French send former Premier (and future President) Doumergue and General de Castelnau; Italy is represented by Signor Scialoja. These emissaries are authorized to commit to important contracts with the Russian Government to coordinate strategies that will eventually lead to renewed cooperation in military operations.

But Petrograd is under turmoil when the delegates arrive. The recent assassination of Rasputin has dramatized the pre-existing polarization of political factions. The Tsar is increasingly isolated.

This is definitely a country that needs a shot in the arm.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, Chap 52 - The Petrograd Conference, p. 1563-1903.



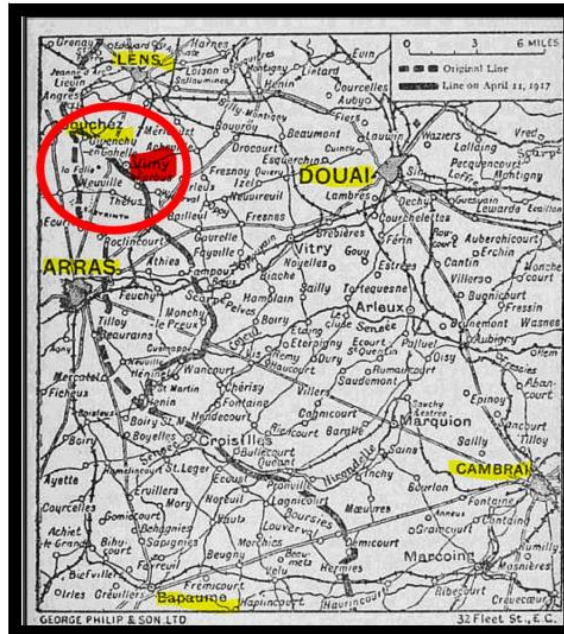
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20 January 1917

Vimy: Now a Canadian bet



On 21 November 1916, General Byng was forewarned that the Canadian Corps would be involved in the spring in a two-corps assault of the Vimy Ridge, a formidable high ground already tried by French and British armies.

But on **19 January 1917**, the plans at First Army are changed so that only the Canadian Corps will be involved in the attack, with attachments.

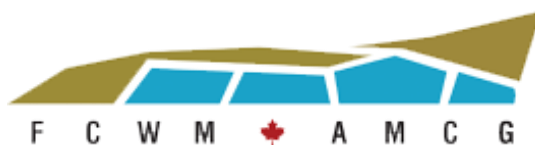
The Corps will get extra artillery from Army, and 5th British Division, to keep in reserve.

But the Corps can now use its four divisions in line on the attack, and the north part of the ridge, the «Pimple», can be taken later.

Third Army, immediately to the south, will simultaneously be busy with the Arras sector.

Dominating the Ridge will secure its flank and provide support from the heights for its progression.

General Byng now has a big gamble before him, and less than three months to set his chips on the table.



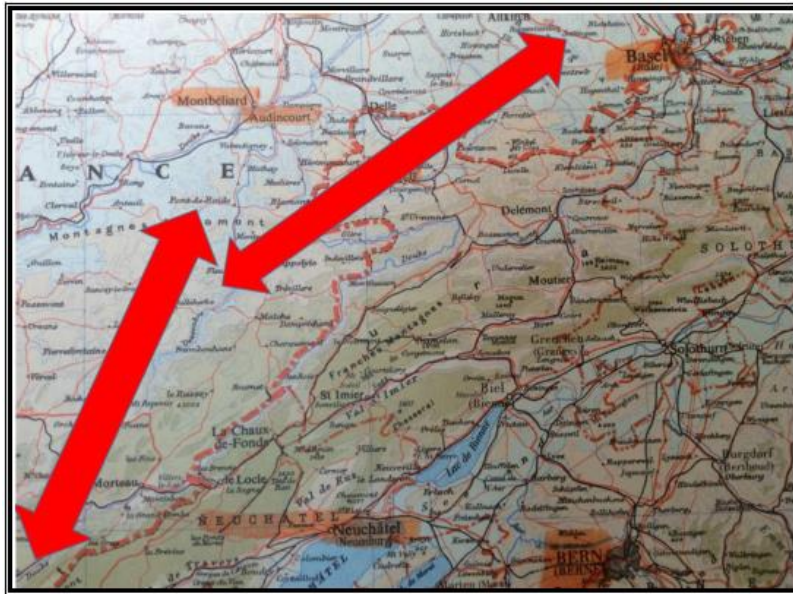
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21 janvier 1917

Le Général Foch et le Plan H



Depuis qu'il a laissé le Groupe d'Armée du Nord, en décembre, le général Foch a été mis à la tâche au Sud.

Il a dû préparer en toute hâte avec un état-major spécial, au Quartier général de Senlis, un plan d'opération pour faire face à toute violation de la part des Allemands de la neutralité suisse.

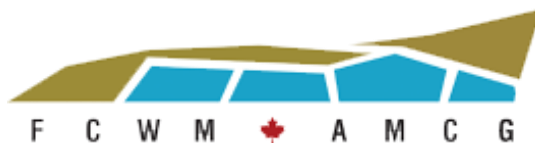
On craint cette option illicite de l'ennemi dans le but d'en profiter contre l'Italie.

Le Plan H (Helvète) couvre les Septième et Huitième Armées du groupe d'armées du général de Castelnau, qui vient de partir pour la conférence de St. Petersburg.

Celles-ci tombent donc sous un commandement temporaire, le **22 janvier 1917**, pour devenir « **Groupe Foch** ».

Foch doit rapidement mettre sur pied les dispositions nécessaires de ce Plan pour assurer l'efficacité d'une défense, si elle devenait nécessaire.

Hunter, FOCH, 125.



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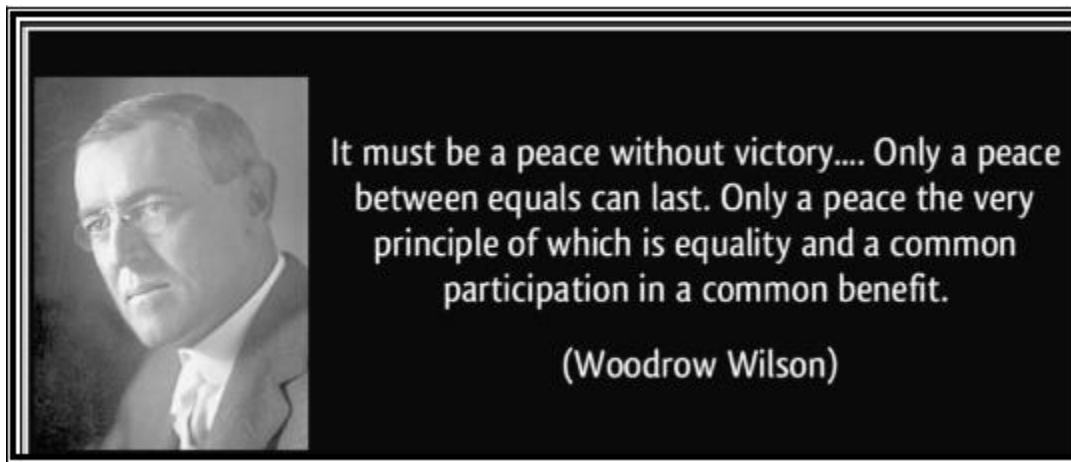
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22 January 1917

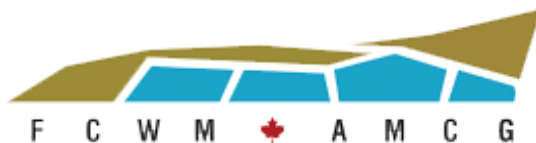
President Wilson's Speech to Nations at War

On 22 January 1917, President Woodrow Wilson makes his speech remembered as «Peace Without Victory», explaining his recent initiatives:

« They imply, first of all, that it must be a peace without victory. It is not pleasant so say this. I beg that I may be permitted to put my own interpretation upon it and that it may be understood that no other interpretation was in my thought. I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments. Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last. Only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit. The right state of mind, the right feeling between nations, is as necessary for a lasting peace as is the just settlement of vexed questions of territory or of racial and national allegiance.»



Arthur S. Link, and William M. Leary, Jr., The Diplomacy of World Power: The United States, 1889-1920 (Edward Arnold, 1970), p. 135-6.



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23 January 1917

Currie's Report

At the end of the Canadian Corps' stint in the Battle of the Somme, in October 1916, the Corps Commander, **Lieutenant-General Julian Byng**, ordered that a survey be done of the facts surrounding the fighting of the last weeks to try to draw conclusions on how tactics should be improved.

The Commander of the First Division, **Major-General Arthur Currie**, took a special interest in this survey and prepared a consolidated report on the findings, including lessons learned in the recent visits of British staff to the French Army in Verdun and elsewhere.



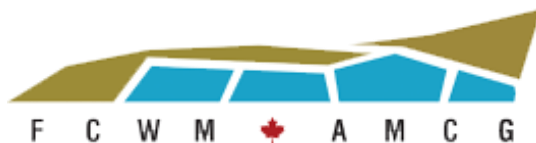
On **23 January 1917**, Arthur Currie presents his report to Byng.

The document is an important statement on the changes that are seen as necessary for the the improvement of offensive action against enemy defences. It incorporates useful information found in many quarters,

Byng and Currie work well together. Byng is an experienced British officer with good character and an easy demeanor. Currie is a Canadian militiaman, fast learner and master of detail. They are both determined that their next job, the Vimy Ridge, will be the best Corps operation that can be put together.

Michael Boire, « Vimy Ridge: The Battlefield before the Canadians, 1914-1916» [51-64];

Mark Osborne Humphries, - «'Old Wine in New Bottles': A Comparison of British and Canadian Preparations for the Battle of Arras» [65-86], in Geoffrey Hayes, Andrew Iarocci, Mike Bechthold (eds), Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).



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24 January 1917

The Argyll House Ivory Tower



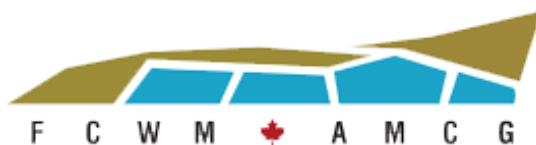
The nomination of the acting High Commissioner to Great Britain, Sir George Perley, as the new Minister of Canadian Overseas Forces, to replace the authority of Sam Hugues, in November 1916, was not done without some investment in real estate in London.

In January 1917, a new Canadian Forces Overseas Headquarters was established at the Argyll House, at 246 Regent Street, London.

Major-General R.E.W. Turner, the General Officer Commanding Overseas Canadian Forces thus became the military officer with the highest authority overseas. He had a full staff, including General Staff, Quarter-Master General and Adjutant-General.

It was not long before critics started to call Argyll House an Ivory Tower with too many doing nothing. Not unusual for Château headquarters, —and inevitable for Regent Street, London.

Wilfrid Bovey, «Brass Hats in Red Tape», (Feb 1954), in Legion Magazine, June 4, 2015.
<https://legionmagazine.com/en/2015/06/brass-hats-in-red-tape/>



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25 janvier 1917

L'Hiver des navets



L'Allemagne a subi une période cruelle au cours de l'hiver 1916-1917, lorsque les récoltes de pommes de terre ont été perdues à l'automne.

Le froid de cette année, reconnu comme le pire en quarante ans, a fait que les pommes de terre ont été de mauvaise qualité et ont pourri très vite après la récolte.

Au cours de cet hiver, l'embargo maritime monté par les Alliés autour des pays de l'Alliance germanique a aussi eu un effet évident, empêchant tant l'exportation que l'importation des denrées.

Il a donc été impossible pour ces pays de subvenir à ces carences en traitant avec des pays moins éprouvés.

Il en a résulté une famine qui a dû être surmontée par l'adoption du navet comme principal aliment de la population, un légume traditionnellement réservé à la nutrition des animaux en Allemagne.

«L'Hiver des navets», de triste mémoire, a été le pire pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, puisque l'hiver 1917-1918 a été meilleur au point de vue de l'agriculture.

Le blocus maritime a eu un effet terrible sur le moral des Allemands jusqu'à la fin de la guerre. Des milliers de civils, incluant femmes et enfants, sont morts des suites de malnutrition et de maladies.

Wikipedia, «Turnip Winter»;
«Plantes pendant la Première Guerre mondiale».



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26 January 1917

Women of War



In January 1917 the British Government was so concerned with manpower in the Army that it allowed a **Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC)** to be created in the British Army.

These women were not the nurses already employed in the Army Medical Corps. They were officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers trained to fill non-combat roles in the technical branches, 'either at home or abroad.'

This service will shortly become the **Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC)** which will eventually send 10,000 women with the forces outside the British Isles, mostly in France.

This initiative had no immediate consequence in Canada. No other Army service was opened in the First World War for Canadian women than the **Canadian Army Medical Corps**, which recruited more than 2,800 'Nursing Sisters', including officers, for service in Canada and overseas.

The **Canadian Women's Army Corps** will be created for the Second World War.

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/women-and-war/military>



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27 January 1917

Andy McNaughton's scientific mind



In **January 1917**, the 29-year old McGill engineer from Montebello, Québec, **Andrew McNaughton**, becomes the Canadian Corps Artillery Counter-Battery Staff Officer.

As such, he is the man responsible to gather information on enemy artillery in the Corps' area and direct fire so as to destroy, neutralize or harass batteries to prevent their effectiveness.

The information on enemy positions can be gained primarily from aerial photography, but there are new techniques in which McNaughton has a great interest: flash and noise ranging. McNaughton is indeed highly interested in sound stereography and light trigonometry.

He is in touch with people at the fine edge of the art, notably British Lieutenant Colonel A.G. Haig, at V British Corps, who himself is speaking with scientist Lawrence Braggi (Nobel Prize 1925). They deal with the various questions of geographical, topographical, optical, physical and electrical accuracy. McNaughton is also interested as an artillerist in the precision of shell delivery.

Much of his work concentrates as well on how to achieve better results at hitting the target once its position is known accurately.

Pierre Berton,
John Swettenham,
Paul Dickson,
Patrick Brennan.



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28 January 1917

Sir Douglas' train trick

On 28 January 1917, General Nivelle notifies the British Government that the requirements for railroad transport in France for the BEF are out of proportion with the needs of the situation.

Haig indeed demands that the *Chemin de fer du Nord* carry 200,000 tons weekly for the British, in addition to the usual 100,000 tons for the French.

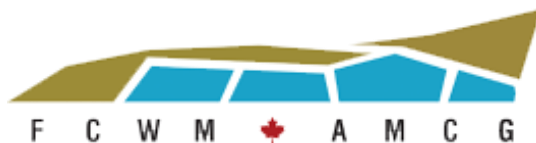
This means that an army half the size of the French is requesting three and a half times the number of wagons each day.

Nivelle is shocked by the demand. He knows that Haig is not only preparing for the Spring offensive in Arras in which the British Government has committed him, but he is staging by the back door for his preferred offensive, in Flanders, which he intends to start right after he can disengage himself from Nivelle's operation in the south.

Sir Douglas is sending the trains south and north in a shell game to hide his real priorities.



Denis Winter, *Haig's Command : A Reassessment* (Penguin, 1992), page 79.



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29 January 1917

Dr Chaim Weizmann meets Mark Sykes



Dr. Chaim Weizmann is a leading chemist at the University of Manchester. He is the father of a process that bears his name, «the Weizmann organism», a bacterial fermentation that can be used in the industrial production of acetone.

Acetone is used in the production of cordite, an explosive propellant critical to the war effort.

Gin distilleries all over the British Isles have now been converted to the

Weizmann fermentation process in the vast transformation of peace industries for shell production.

Dr Weizmann is also a leading official with the English Zionist Federation. His dealings as an industrial chemist with Winston Churchill, Arthur Balfour and Lloyd George have opened doors for formal discussions of a political nature on behalf of the Federation that he represents.

On 28 January 1917, Dr. Weizmann is introduced to the undersecretary of the War Cabinet, Mark Sykes, the leading drafter of the not-yet-famous Sykes-Picot agreement on the future of the Middle East.

This is the opportunity that Dr Weizmann has been looking for for some time. The War Cabinet is disposed to conversations about Jewish help in the war. —And Dr Weizmann has a big thing in mind.

Barbara Tuchman, *The Bible and the Sword*, 331-2.

Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 285.

Julian Louis Meltzer, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1978), 19: 736-7.



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30 January 1917

British Electoral Reform



The life of the British Parliament has now been extended twice since December 1910. For purposes of war, a majority of MPs has agreed to prolong the Parliament and avoid the uncertainties of elections while the war lasts.

But the constitutionality of extending the life of the Parliament beyond 30 April 1917 has now become a serious problem.

In October 1916, the matter was referred to a special conference chaired by the Speaker of the House, in which 32 representatives of various views in the matter were to come to conclusions as to what was to be done with constitutional integrity.

This conference came to the conclusion, at the end of January 1917, that major reforms had to be made to the electoral law before any vote could take place, including how the register of voters could be updated, sorting out how soldiers could vote while overseas and how women were to be given the right to vote.

On 30 January 1917, the new Prime Minister agreed that the Speaker's report should be brought to the wisdom of the Parliament. —Not a small thing for a country at war.

Lloyd George, Memoirs, Chap 60 - «Electoral Reform», Vol IV: p. 1964-82.



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31 January 1917

Uneingeschränkter U-Boot-Krieg

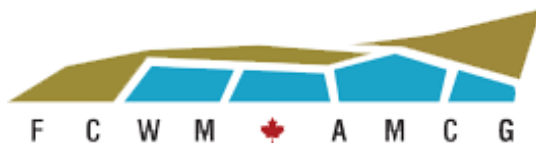
(Unrestricted Submarine Warfare)



On 31st January 1917, nine days after President Wilson's speech to Congress, the German Ambassador, Von Bernstorff, handed to Mr. Lansing, the American Secretary of State, a letter announcing that:

« The Imperial Government - in order to serve the welfare of mankind in a higher sense and not to wrong its own people— is now compelled to continue the fight for existence, again forced upon it, with the full employment of all the weapons which are at its disposal.»¹
[...] 'Under these circumstances, Germany will meet the illegal measures of her enemies by forcibly preventing after 1st February, 1917, in a zone around Great Britain, France, Italy, and in the eastern Mediterranean, all navigation, that of neutrals included, from and to England and from and to France, etc. All ships met within the zone will be sunk.»²

Excerpts 1 and 2 of the letter are from Lloyd George, Memoirs, III, 1656-7.
Winston Churchill, World Crisis, III (Pt.1), p. 230.



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