

December 1st, 1915

The Murky Underworld of Intelligence

Fiction meets Reality: *Greenmantle*

John Buchan's classic World War I work of fiction *Greenmantle* starts into motion in end-1915 around the plot that the Germans are attempting to foment Jihad among the 100 million Muslims of the British Empire.

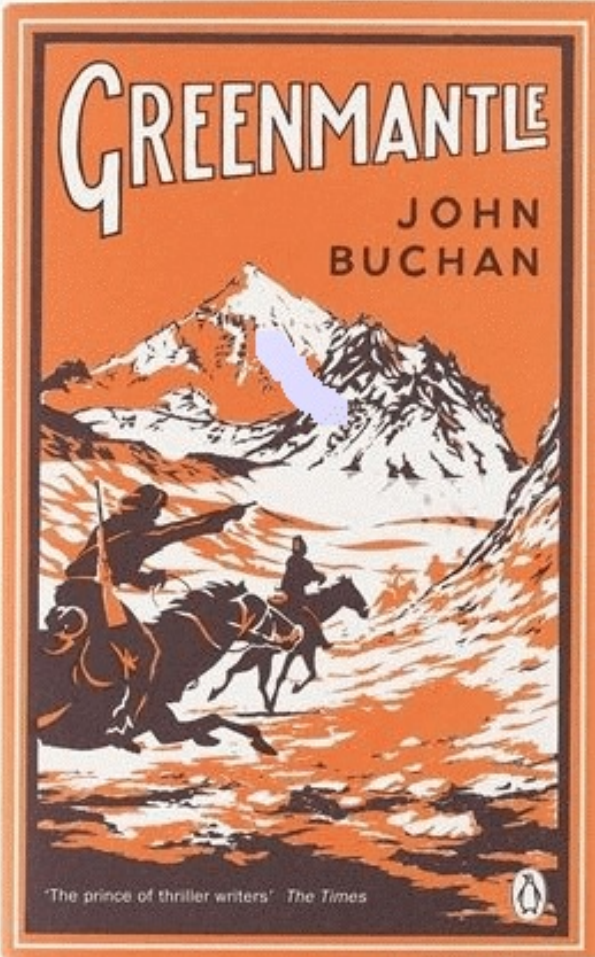
The story swims in historical truth. Kaiser Wilhelm was strongly attracted to Islam during his visits with the Turkish Sultan, Mehmed V, in the late 19th century. He personally initiated plans to use his Ottoman ally as a base for subversion among British Muslims.

At the same time that *Greenmantle* delivers its captivating Oriental swashbuckling, the German counterpart to the British effort to raise the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire also forays through secret Middle East backwaters.

Baron Max von Oppenheim, scion of the Oppenheim banking family, a noted archeologist and a diplomat, establishes the Bureau for the East in the German Intelligence service, to sway the Muslim masses to the Entente.

Greenmantle by «The Prince of thriller writers» proves a vista into the reality of Imperial battles for the hearts and minds of the East.

The endgame is there in full view: Unfettered influence over the Eastern world.



●John Buchan, British author and propagandist, was Governor General of Canada as Lord Tweedsmuir, between 1935 and 1940.

●Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War, p. 121-6.



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December 2nd, 1915

Papa Gets Seven Stars



General Joffre promoted to... General

General Joffre was the Commander-in-Chief of all French armies in France (★★★★★★) since the beginning of the war. As such, he ranked the Army commanders (★★★★) and the Army Group commanders (★★★★★).¹

On 2 December 1915, the Government of France decides that Joffre will be promoted to be the **Commander-in-Chief of all French Forces in all theatres of War** (★★★★★★★). This is a rank that was not necessary before substantial French forces were sent to the Dardanelles and Salonika.

But the rank had not proved necessary for the year since the first French divisions arrived on the Turkish shores.

Joffre is a national hero, known to the people as 'Papa' Joffre, and any idea of criticizing him publicly would doom a Government.

Président du Conseil Aristide Briand has however decided to promote Joffre out of the operational world.

He will now sit with the Government as a strategist, having to face the debates of the ministers and Parliamentarians.

His direct authority over the military operations in France is thus somewhat curtailed.

1

This WWI French star system is different from the better known and more influential American star system, where generals cannot get more than four, except for the honorific five, seldom granted to successful retired commanders (Pershing in WWI, Eisenhower in WWII). This is similar to the French custom of the honorific *Maréchal de France*, which is not a field commander's rank (seven French generals will become *Maréchal de France* at the end of WWI). British 'Field' Marshals can hold command, as Field Marshals French and Haig notably did in WWI.



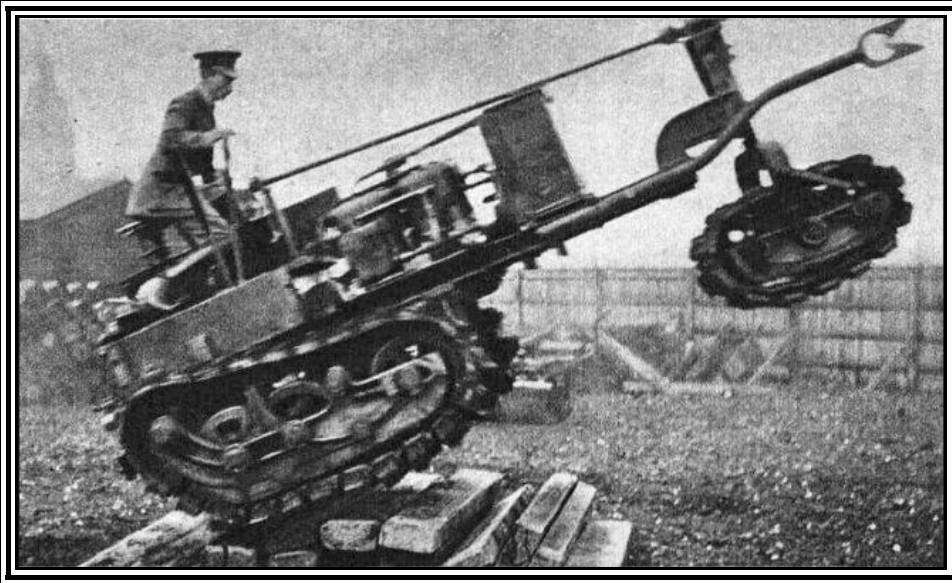
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December 3, 1915

Churchill's Brain Wave



Major Churchill writes a letter in the field

Winston Churchill had barely received a uniform and set foot in France as a Major with the 6th Royal Scott Fusiliers that he prepared a secret Memorandum entitled «Variants of the Offensive» that he took to the Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, Marshall John French, for him to forward to the Cabinet Committee on Imperial Defence (CID).

In the Memorandum dated **3 December 1915**, Churchill

outlined ideas on «Attack by Armour», on «**Caterpillars**» to address the barbed wires, and his admonitions on the importance of Surprise.

«If artillery is used to cut wire, the direction and imminence of the attack is proclaimed days beforehand. But by this method the assault follows the wire-cutting almost immediately, i.e. before any reinforcements can be brought up by the enemy, or any special defensive measures taken.»¹

Major Churchill got his paper forwarded and could quote it in 1917 at the battle of Cambrai when all he predicted (almost all) was successful. It was a marvel of clearvoyance.

¹ Churchill, World Crisis, II: 86-8.



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Le 4 décembre, 1915

M. Briand Sauve le Front de Salonique



Aristide Briand, Président du Conseil

Aristide Briand, récemment élu Président du Conseil, est un de ceux qui maintiennent que des fronts autres que ceux de France doivent être maintenus de sorte à harasser les forces des Puissances du Centre de plusieurs côtés.

Il s'oppose donc, **le 4 décembre 1915**, à l'idée du Cabinet britannique d'abandonner tant les Dardanelles que Salonique.

Heureusement l'influence de Lloyd George à Londres lui permet de sauver le front de Grèce.

Briand compte sur le général Sarrail pour y établir une force importante qui pourra être utilisée pour menacer le ventre du territoire récemment conquis en Serbie, tout en espérant que les Grecs pourront se décider à se joindre aux Alliés. Les Roumains demeurent aussi indécis pour le moment.

Sarrail ne réussira pas à créer à Salonique une force active et efficace. Ses relations avec le général britannique Mahon vont de mauvaises en pire, et ce dernier devra être remplacé en 1916.

Pour le moment, le Haut Commandement allemand se réjouit de voir immobilisée dans une petite enclave hermétique une force impuissante.

● Cochet, François, « 6-8 décembre 1915, Chantilly: la Grande Guerre change de rythme », *La Revue historique des Armées*, 242, 1er trimestre 2006, pp. 17-26.



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December 5, 1915

Chantilly Tomorrow



Conference in Chantilly (6-8 Dec 1915)

The French headquarters of Chantilly, near Paris, will be host to an international conference of national military commanders in the next two days.

High representatives from Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, Russia and even Japan, will be here to discuss world strategy for the year 1916.

Joffre has presented a plan to the Conseil Supérieur de la Défense nationale, and intends to unveil a strategy involving all fronts, including the 'sideshowes' that some are finding

so counterproductive.

But the major concern brought to the table is industrial support.

Munitions are the key to success and all are agreed that 1916 will introduce a sea change.



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December 6, 1915

Exit Sir John



Marshall French Resigns

The Conference of Chantilly is the point where the command of the BEF is discreetly transferred from **Marshall Sir John French** to the Commander of the First British Army, General Sir Douglas Haig.

Although the official announcement will be made later in the month, Haig goes to the conference, on **6 December 1915**, knowing that all decisions pertaining to the British Army in France will be his to carry out in 1916.

The relationship between the French and British in France is evolving with the growth of the British Army Group. The BEF now has a million men in France, and a fighting force of 35 divisions.

The French in comparison have 95 divisions.

Haig's instructions from his Government are more pliant toward French command. The matter of cooperation is paramount.

But hard-headed Sir John French is not being replaced by a mollifier.



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December 7, 1915

Chantilly: All Together



Some Key Points on the Conference

✓ Concerted offensives on all major fronts.

« The major result of the conference was unanimous endorsement of the principle that 'the decision must be sought by concerted offensives on the main theatres where the enemy maintains the greater part of his forces, that is to say, on the Russian, Anglo-French and Italian fronts.' »¹

✓ Central coordination

« The basis had been thus laid for a concerted military effort, with provisions for a variety of contingencies. So far

as the coordination of the coalition was concerned, this was Joffre's greatest achievement. For the first time, the several Allies had a plan by which they would all march together and prevent the enemy from using his interior lines to his advantage in engaging the Allies one at a time. The difficulty, of course, lay in execution of the plan.»²

● Roy Prete, « Joffre and the Origins of the Somme: A Study in Allied Military Planning », The Journal of Military History, No. 73, 417-448. Quotes: ¹ P. 429; ² p. 430.



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DECEMBER 8, 1915

A Poem for the Ages

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields

'Punch'
Dec 8 1915

John McCrae

Iconic Poem First Published

On **8 December, 1915**, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae's poem *In Flanders Fields* was first published in *Punch*, a British magazine.

Lt. Col McCrae served as a Brigade surgeon during the First World War, treating wounded men as they came off the front lines.

He wrote his famous poem after the Second Battle of Ypres, in the spring of 1915, after attending the funeral of his friend, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer.

After receiving positive attention from his comrades, McCrae sent the poem to the magazine, *Spectator*, but it was rejected. He tried again, this time with *Punch*.

After the war the poem and its imagery inspired women to sell fabric poppies to raise money for veterans.

In Flanders Fields and the poppy continue to be an important aspect of remembrance ceremonies in the Commonwealth.

•Dianne Graves, *A Crown of Life: The World of John McCrae*, Chap. 12, 'Some Yielded, No, Not We!', p. 183-210.



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December 9, 1915

Muskoka in Flanders



Trench warfare in the Muskoka

In December 1915, the Canadian Corps is manning a line in Flanders since the summer.

Rebuilding unit cohesion, mastering No Man's Land, and draining trenches is an all-hour business.

But Canadians are good at looking after themselves, and they maintain an excellent morale.

«The section known as 'Plug Street' Woods seemed peculiarly familiar to men from Ontario for on first impression it reminded them of the old holiday grounds of Muskoka. It was possible to drive right into Ploegsteert Woods by motor car and then, by walking up the hill through the woods, enter the Canadian trenches. In these woods numerous log houses had been built, resembling those of campers in Muskoka, while rustic fences, gates and trellis work completed the illusion that this was a section of one of Canada's summer playgrounds.»

●Colonel George G. Nasmith, CMG, Canada's Sons (Toronto: John C Winston, 1919), p. 236.



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Le 10 décembre, 1915

Laurier parle de Guerre



Laurier prend position en faveur

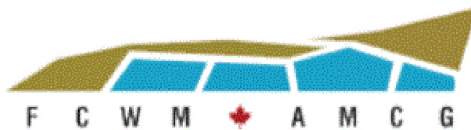
L'ancien premier ministre Libéral élu en 1896 est Chef de l'Opposition depuis 1911. Il se sent vieillir, à 74 ans. Pourtant, **le 9 décembre 1915**, il parle encore une fois en public au Monument National de Montréal, un lieu central des grands débats en plein air.

Bien qu'il soit en Opposition au gouvernement Conservateur de Robert Borden et qu'il se soit déjà prononcé contre toute mesure de service obligatoire, Laurier encourage tous les Canadiens à s'enrôler.

Pour lui, lorsqu'il s'agit d'une cause noble comme celle-ci, les Canadiens ne devraient pas se restreindre à défendre leur propre territoire national. Ils devraient aller combattre l'ennemi chez lui.

Mais il fait face à Montréal à une opinion renfrognée, attisée par les règlementations scolaires de l'Ontario contre la langue française dans l'enseignement public.

Mason Wade, The French Canadians, (Toronto: 1968), Chap 11 – Strife in Ontario and War in France, p. 608-708.



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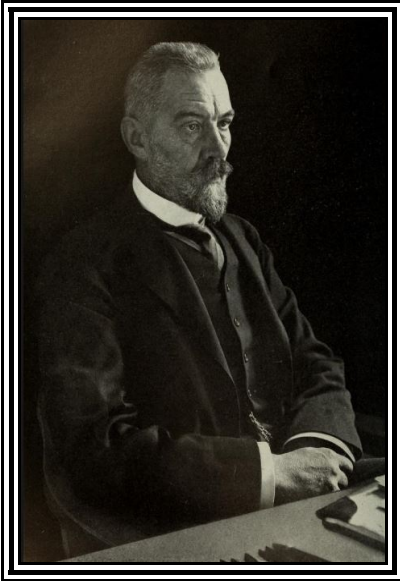
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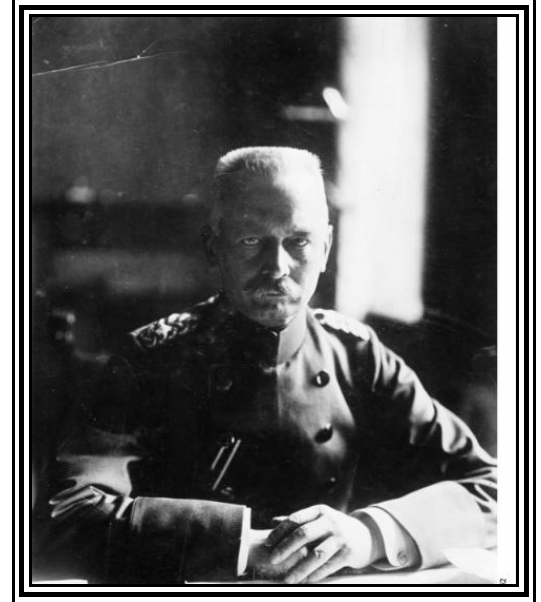
December 11, 1915

The Bethmann-Falkenhayn Divide

Bethmann vs Falkenhayn



The Chief of the German General Staff, **General Erich von Falkenhayn** is recommending that the point of view of the German Navy be taken into consideration: that **Unrestricted Submarine Warfare** should be resumed, including against neutrals.



His calculations are that the supply that is being brought to France and Great Britain from America and elsewhere, and the naval blockade that is being imposed around Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, are working against the

prospect of success in the land warfare.

Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, the Chancellor of Germany and chief Parliamentarian in Berlin, is against such a policy. He foresees that the political consequences of U-Boat Warfare will be much more important than the immediate military strategic advantages.

From this point, the two men will work at cross purposes. Bethmann will work to see Falkenhayn replaced by Hindenburg, but Falkenhayn will attempt to force the French line in Verdun so as to ensure that successful military advice supersedes political advice with the Kaiser.

This cannot end well...

●Gordon A. Craig, Germany, 1866-1945 (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 368-76.



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Le 12 décembre, 1915

Saut technologique en aviation



Premier vol d'un avion tout métal

Le **Junkers J 1 « Blechesel »** (âne de métal) est un monoplan entièrement métallique à aile médiane en porte à faux non haubanée.

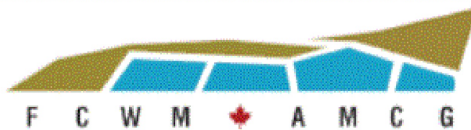
Le **12 décembre 1915**, à Döberitz, près de Berlin, l'avion, piloté par Theodor Mallinckrodt, fait son premier vol, un petit bond à trois mètres de hauteur avant de s'abîmer à l'atterrissage, déséquilibré par un coup de vent.

Après de nouveaux réglages, il effectue un véritable vol, le 18 janvier 1916, avec Paul Arnold aux commandes.

Le Junkers J1 marque une révolution qui mènera aux avions modernes. Le seul exemplaire construit fut remis en 1926 au Deutsches Museum de Munich. Il sera détruit en 1944, lors d'un bombardement allié.

Un Junkers J.1, biplan connu sous le nom de « *Möbelwagen* », c'est-à-dire « camion de déménagement », que l'on peut voir au Musée de l'Aviation et de l'Espace du Canada, a fait son premier vol en 1917).

• <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/junkers-j1-avion/>



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December 13, 1915

Sino-Caesarism



China – President Yuan Shikai Proclaims himself Emperor

Yuan Shikai (Shih-k'ai) was a man of great abilities without the academic background normally required of Chinese leaders under the Manchu dynasty. He was involved as a military commander in Korea in the 1880s, in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95, and in the reconstruction of the Chinese army after the Boxer rebellion of 1900.

His rise as a strong man under the Manchu Dowager Empress Tz'u-hsi led him to become the first President of the Republic of China, after her death, in 1908.

Faced with immense political challenges, notably from the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), Yuan returned to his harsh methods and used murder and obstruction of the National Assembly to prevail. By 1913 he had succeeded in anchoring a dictatorial presidency which he assumed for life. **On 12 December 1915**, Yüan Shikai 'accepted' to form a new dynasty and re-establish an Imperial Monarchy in China.

This gesture set the terms of a struggle by which the Kuomintang under Dr. Sun Yat-sen vowed to unseat Yüan, seen as the traitor of the Chinese Republic, and establish a Constitutional Communist regime in China through the Nationalist Party.

To his great regret, and at the price of his demise in 1916, Yüan Shikai's friends in Europe were too busy with the First World War to come to his help.

● Jerome Ch'en, 'Yüan Shikai', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th Ed, 1978), XIX, 1098.



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December 14, 1915

Getting ready to Skeddadle



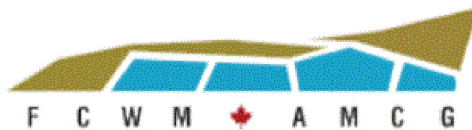
Preparations to evacuate at Gallipoli

All personnel are aware at Gallipoli that the evacuation is going to happen soon.

By the end of the second week in December secret preparations were well advanced.

«The weather had improved wonderfully after the blizzard, and seemed settled. The accursed flies had gone, and conditions were almost as good as in early May. Every night the flotillas of small boats would creep into Suvla Bay and Anzac Cove; by morning, the seas were empty again. Tents were kept standing, the remaining guns kept up a regular rate of fire, and every possible step was taken to give the appearance that a large army still remained. The men entered into this part of the deception willingly, although their officers noticed a natural reluctance to take unnecessary risks now that the end was so near.»

•R.R. James, Gallipoli, 339.



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December 15, 1915

The PPCLI is brought home

The Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry joins the Canadian Corps

The PPCLI was the first Canadian unit to arrive in France, in December 1914. It joined the 27th British Division, 80th Brigade, where it fought with great gallantry in the Ypres area.

On 15 December 1915, the PPCLI remains in France when the 27th Division is extracted from the front after having been in France for one year.

The plan is to take the unit into the 3rd Canadian Division which will be created before the end of 1915 in the Canadian Corps.

It will be incorporated to the 7th Brigade where the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), a unit of the Canadian Permanent Militia, is also being brought into the Canadian Corps, after having served in Bermuda for eleven months.

Two units that are already in France for some time under training will be joined to the 7th Brigade: the 42nd Battalion from Montreal and the 49th Battalion from Edmonton. Brigadier A.C. Macdonell will be the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of this formation.

The winter of 1915-1916 is rather quiet, but nevertheless difficult for the troops. Conditions in the damp trenches are harsh and many more fall to disease than to gunfire.

●Stacey, Canadian Expeditionary Force, Chap 5.



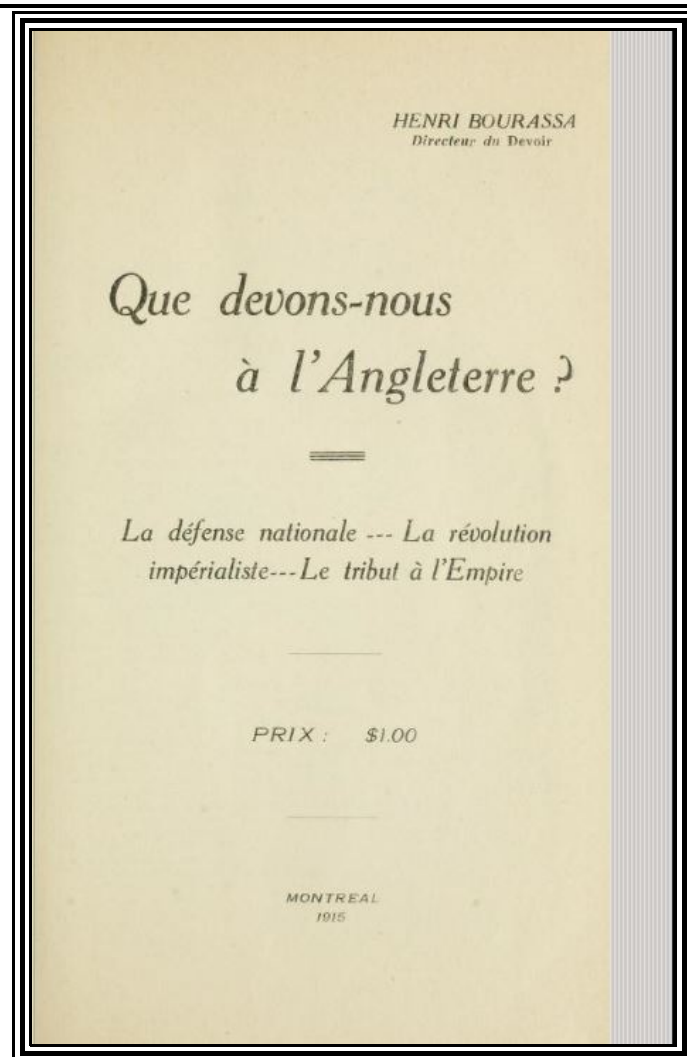
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Le 16 décembre, 1915

The Little Book That Made the Big Argument



Henri Bourassa's *Que Devons-nous à l'Angleterre?*

On December 16, 1915, Henri Bourassa, founding Editor of the Montreal **Le Devoir**, and foremost *Canadien* nationalist, gave a lecture at the Monument National on 'Cartier, Macdonald, and Our Military Obligations.'

He concluded that Canada had no military obligations outside its territory.

Simultaneously he put on sale a book, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre ?*, (What do we owe to England?) which was an extensive historical and legal development of this thesis.

Bourassa points out in it how the Fathers of Confederation and the Imperial authorities had agreed to limit the new Dominion's military obligations to the defence of Canadian territory.

This agreement, Bourassa affirms, was observed until the development of the jingoistic imperialism at the time of the South African War.

— But Conscription of any kind was not part of the deal.

●Wade, The French-Canadians, II:683.



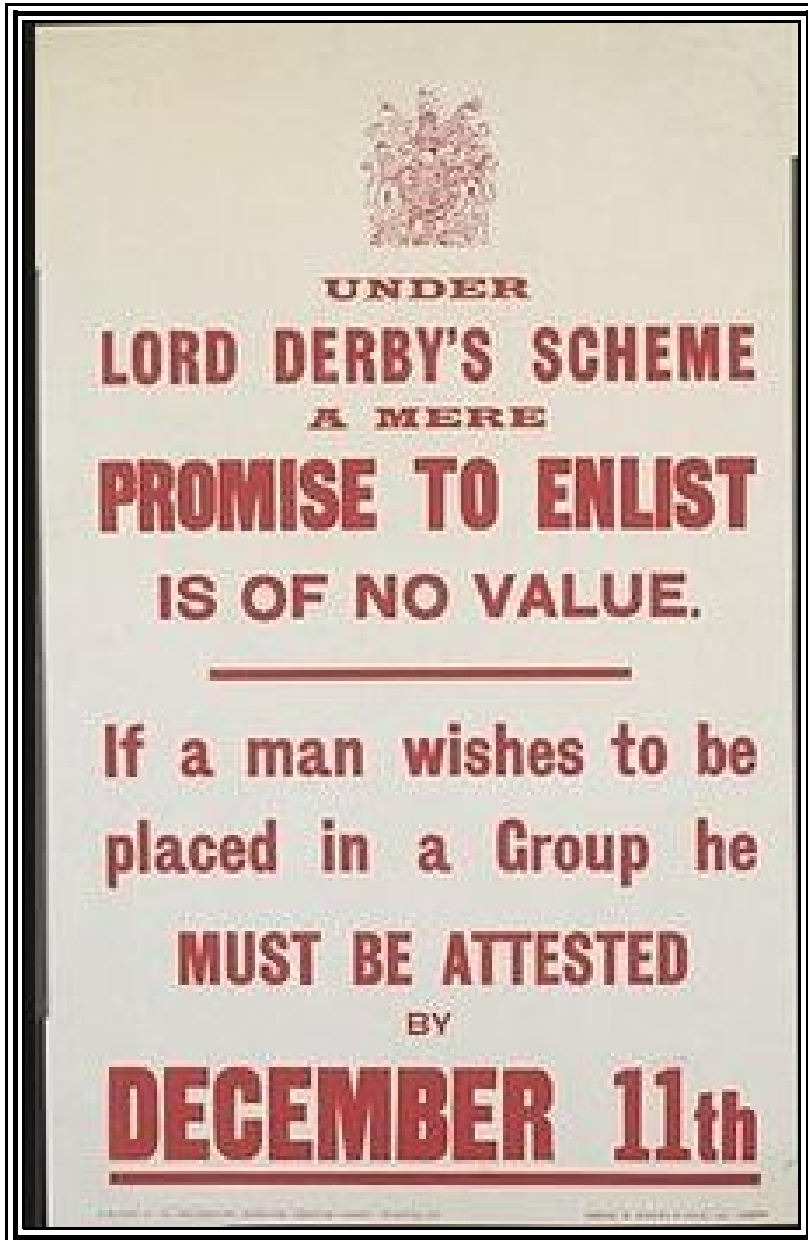
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December 17, 1915

Derby's Scheme: Time's Up!



Lord Derby's Scheme Ends – No more Volunteer Recruitment in Great Britain

In October the British Government gave its last try at volunteer recruitment.

The Derby Scheme was the ultimate campaign, to last until December 11th, where the Government would seek to enroll the large numbers of soldiers necessary to replace losses and fill the new divisions under construction.

After extending the program by a few days, it became clear, on **17 December 1915**, that the necessary numbers had not been reached.

The Government issued a Proclamation, postdated to 20 December, that the first stages of Compulsory Service were decreed.

Since Prime Minister Asquith had promised that unmarried men would be drafted before married men, all unmarried men between the ages of 19 and 23 were ordered to report for duty on January 20, 1916.

Those who wanted to be exempted had to present a request in writing to the clerks of the local tribunals before 30 December.



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December 18, 1915

Leaving Hell Behind



First Phase of Gallipoli Evacuation: Suvla

Beginning on the 10 December, the plan for IX Corps was to evacuate most troops, artillery and stores by **18 December 1915**.

The plan succeeded: just 19,500 troops, 28 artillery pieces, a few pack animals and several million rounds of small arms ammunition remained to be evacuated from Suvla, where the Newfoundland Regiment and the rest of the 29th division had been transferred earlier in the month.

In itself this move had served as a deception, indicating normal activity on the allied side.

Other, deliberate deceptive measures had successfully misled the Turkish forces, including obvious, noisy night-time re-supply moves of (empty) transport carts to the front, followed by their withdrawal, fully loaded, on padded wheels. Most famous of these ploys was connecting a fixed rifle's trigger to a tin can of sand into which another can would gradually drip water, triggering the round by the weight of the can, thus simulating sniper fire.

On the 18th, it was the turn of the Newfoundlanders to exit under cover of naval bombardment and random sniping from the British trenches. No casualties were recorded.

Robin Prior, *Gallipoli: The End of the Myth*.



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Le 19 décembre, 1915

Nouveau Cavalier en Selle



Le Général Haig devient commandant du Corps Expéditionnaire britannique

Le général Douglas Haig a commencé la guerre en 1914 comme commandant du Premier Corps britannique et a reçu la Première armée lorsqu'une deuxième armée a été créée.

Le 19 décembre 1915, Haig prend le commandement du groupe d'armées de trois armées qui constitue le Corps Expéditionnaire Britannique en France.

Haig prend position immédiatement qu'il va coopérer indépendamment avec Joffre, et «me conformer en toutes circonstances aux directions et instructions

du Commandant-en-Chef français.»

Mais les instincts de Douglas Haig sont de protéger le nord du front français, de sorte à assurer la sécurité des ports le long de la Manche et prévenir que le transport maritime des Îles britanniques soit menacé par d'autres avancées allemandes le long de la côte belge.

Il va arriver souvent à Haig que son intention sera divisée entre aider les Français au sud et protéger ses arrières au nord.

- Brigadier-General John Charteris, At GHQ (London:Cassell, 1931).
- Denis Winter, Haig's Command: A Reassessment (Viking 1991; Penguin, 1992).



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December 20, 1915 ANZAC WAS HERE



Last Australians Leave Anzac Cove

In the early hours of **20 December 1915**, the last Australian troops boarded boats and closed out the evacuation of Anzac Cove, the scene of the original Australian landings in April.

The remaining troops had been organized into three separate parties, each departing in turn.

In their letters to home, Australian troopers commented on the perfect silence of the retreat to the shore, with boots muffled in sandbags, no lights and each

man holding onto the coat of the man ahead of him.

Despite the bright moonlight which lent an otherworldly sheen to the proceedings, the Turks had again been fooled by small groups from each company who moved from post to post in their section of the line, firing a round each, giving the impression that the line was still manned.

The Australians suffered no fatalities, although a very few men were injured in falls.

No one was left behind although one sentry fell asleep and awakened just in time to sprint to the beach and board the last boat.

-
- Australian War Memorial: *On This Day, 20 December 1915.*



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December 21st, 1915

Harnessing Fire and Brimstone



Lloyd George's speech in the House of Commons

The Minister of Munitions delivers one of his resounding speeches in the House of Commons, marking the withdrawal from Gallipoli, on **20 December 1915**.

On the theme of 'Too Late', it cannot but be perceived as an indictment on the Prime Minister, his fellow ministers, and in particular the Secretary for War, Kitchener.

«'Too late in moving here, too late in arriving there, too late in coming to this decision, too late in starting with enterprises, too late in preparing! In this war the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of «too late,» and unless we quicken our movements damnation will fall on the sacred cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed....'»

Lloyd George is indeed becoming restless (if he ever was not) at the lack of success on all fronts by the Entente.

●Lloyd George, Memoirs, Vol. I: p. 529, quoted from the House of Commons, 20 December 1915.



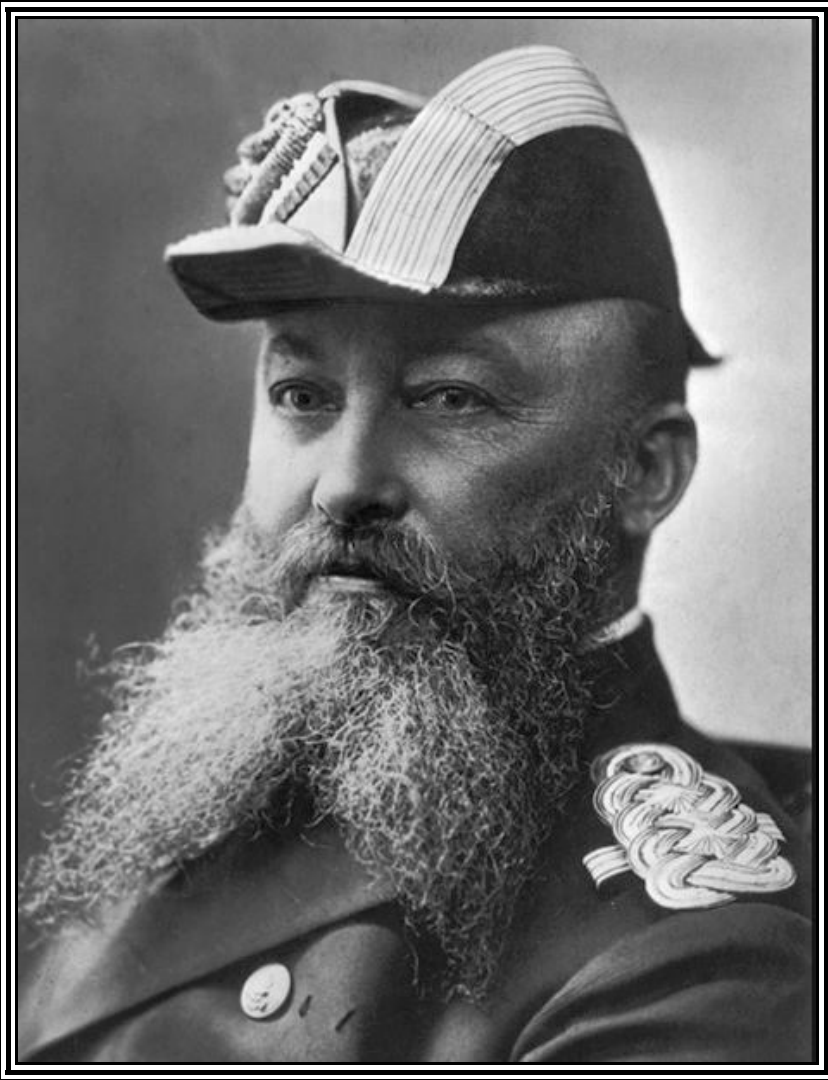
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Le 22 décembre, 1915

Savoir ne pas trop en dire



L'Amiral Tirpitz parle à la Presse américaine

L'amiral allemand **Alfred von Tirpitz**, l'architecte de la marine du Kaiser, a donné une entrevue au journaliste américain Karl von Wiegand en fin-novembre.

L'article paraît **le 22 décembre 1915**.

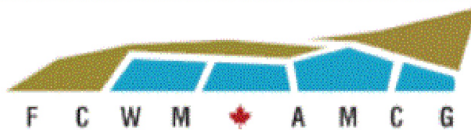
Tirpitz y révèle les intentions l'Allemagne de retourner à un blocus sous-marin des Iles britanniques de sorte qu'il ne puisse ne s'y produire aucun commerce maritime.

La force sousmarine dont parle Tirpitz pour accomplir cet objectif est plutôt exagérée. L'Allemagne ne possède à ce moment que 21 UBoats, dont douze sont de vieux modèles au pétrole qui ne sont même pas capables de se rendre à la côte anglaise.

Mais Tirpitz vise surtout le public germanique, puisqu'il sait que l'opinion publique est nettement à la faveur de la guerre sous-marine à outrance et désire que l'industrie produise l'arme ultime pour assurer le succès d'une guerre industrielle.

Tirpitz tente ainsi de contourner le Parlement qui s'oppose à une telle guerre, justement à cause de la menace américaine.

●Gordon A. Craig, Germany 1866-1945 (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 369.



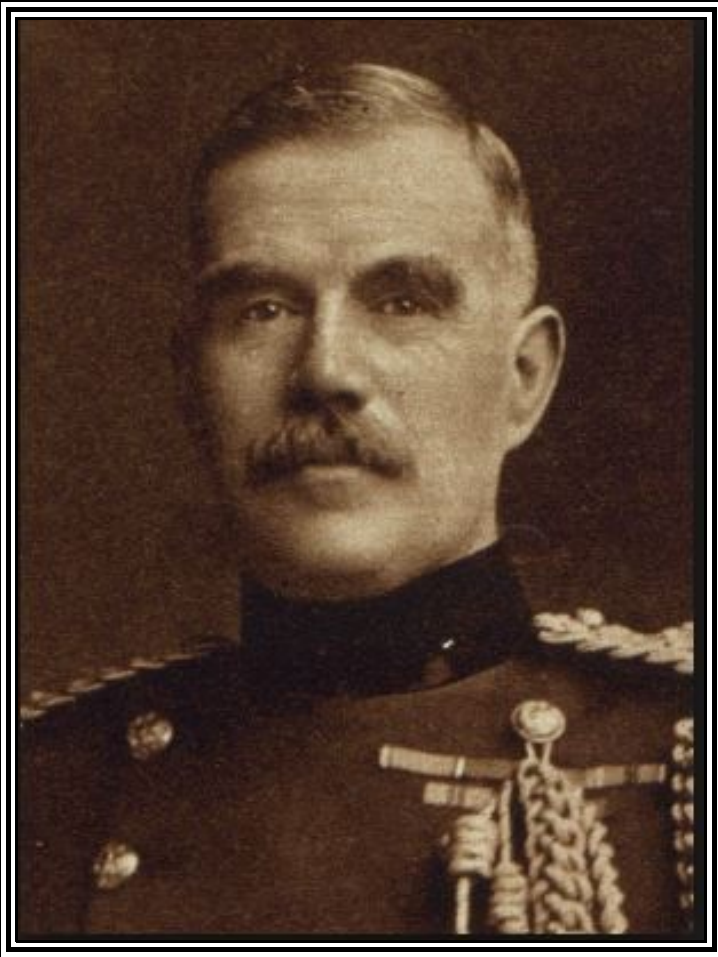
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December 23, 1915

'Woolly' Robertson working his way



General William Robertson becomes CIGS

Now that Sir John French has lost the command of the BEF, his Chief of Staff is being reassigned.

Lieutenant General Sir William Robertson goes to assume the job of Chief of the Imperial Staff (CIGS) in London **on 23 December 1915**.

Robertson is a tough bugger who does not owe anything to Kitchener. He makes it clear that he will represent the armed forces' view to the Cabinet, not the Secretary for War.

At his insistence, and with the agreement of many ministers, the new CIGS is in fact given much larger powers than his predecessor, including access to Cabinet, which General Murray never had.

Kitchener sees his own powers reduced, but the two act as if Kitchener was still in full control.

Robertson is charged with the strategic aspects of the war, and the Secretary for War is left with the administrative and political asides.

confidence of the Cabinet and, having lost Munitions and Strategy, he is being merely left with recruiting and administration of the War Office.

— He knows that his time is about to end...

•Beaverbrook, Politicians and War, p. 203. <https://archive.org/stream/politicianswar00maxa#page/220/mode/2up>



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Le 24 décembre, 1915

Pourquoi je m' enrôle



Olivar Asselin, officier canadien-français

Olivar Asselin est un journaliste et politicien du Québec qui a assisté Henri Bourassa à créer *Le Devoir* de Montréal

Mais au moment où Henri Bourassa doit se défendre, **le 23 décembre 1915**, contre les attaques virulentes qui sont portées contre lui pour ses discours récents et la publication de *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre?* Asselin, lui, a pris un autre chemin.

Il a en effet décidé de former un autre bataillon canadien-français, le 163e Bataillon du Corps expéditionnaire canadien, dont il donne le commandement à Henri DesRosiers, un ancien du 14e Bataillon. Asselin accepte de servir comme major dans ce bataillon.

Sans prétentions militaires, et sans ferveur impérialiste, Asselin veut défendre la France comme centre de liberté en Europe.

Il publiera *Pourquoi je m' enrôle* en 1916, un testament pour ceux de langue française au Canada qui ont vu dans la guerre un devoir auquel ils n'ont pas voulu échapper.

Wade, *French Canadians*, 684-5.



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December 25, 1915

No Christmas in Kut



Failure of Turkish Attacks on Kut

After the siege of Kut, occupied by the British and Indians, which began on 7 December, the Turkish forces under the German **General Baron Von der Goltz**, Commander of the Sixth Ottoman Army, encircled the town and built a series of fortifications to the south designed to prevent relief forces from reaching it.

The Turkish forces launched a series of three attacks against the defences (mainly composed of the Indian Army's 6th Poona Division under Lieutenant General Townshend) but all were repulsed.

The final attack, which ended on **25 December 1915** convinced Von der Goltz that the town could not be assaulted and therefore the Turkish plan devolved to a siege, which would prove to be one of the longest in British military history.

Historians have speculated on Townshend's motivation for making a stand at Kut. In 1895, he had won fame and elevation to knighthood as a Companion of the Order of the Bath for his successful defence of Chitral Fort on the North West Frontier of India and some observers thought that he wished to again portray himself as the heroic British general defying oriental enemies.

— Kut will be an altogether different story.

- BGen F.J. Moberly, History of the Great War – The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1918 (London: Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defence, H.M. Stationary Office, 1924), Vol II, p. 178-83.
- Wikipedia, Mesopotamian Campaign, Charles Verre Ferres Townshend, Colmar, Freiherr von der Goltz.



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December 26, 1915

●MIMI and TOUTOU on Lake Tanganyika



Naval Action on Lake Tanganyika

Lake Tanganyika, 676 km long, was one of the strategic keys to the East African theatre.

German control provided strategic mobility and a barrier to British and Belgian attempts to penetrate into German East Africa.

German naval forces consisted of a number of craft, notably two motor gunboats, one of them the *Kingani*, of 45 tons.

After the Germans had sunk Belgian and British ferries, British naval forces were reconstituted by the shipment by sea, rail and ox

caravan of two 40 foot motor gunboats built by Thornycroft in the UK. They received the somewhat whimsical names of *Mimi* and *Toutou*. A small base at Kalemie was built for the gunboats and they entered the water in late December.

On 26 December 1915, the *Kingani* approached Kalemie to reconnoitre the new base. *Mimi* and *Toutou* pursued and attacked the German vessel ; after an eleven minute fight in which the German commander and several of his men were killed, *Kingani* surrendered. She was taken into Royal Navy service as HMS *Fiji*.

— The balance of power on Lake Tanganyika had begun to shift.

●TIMES History of the War, The Campaigns of German East-Africa, Part I, X:121-60; II, XII: 77-117; III, XIII: 397-432; IV: XIX:19-73.



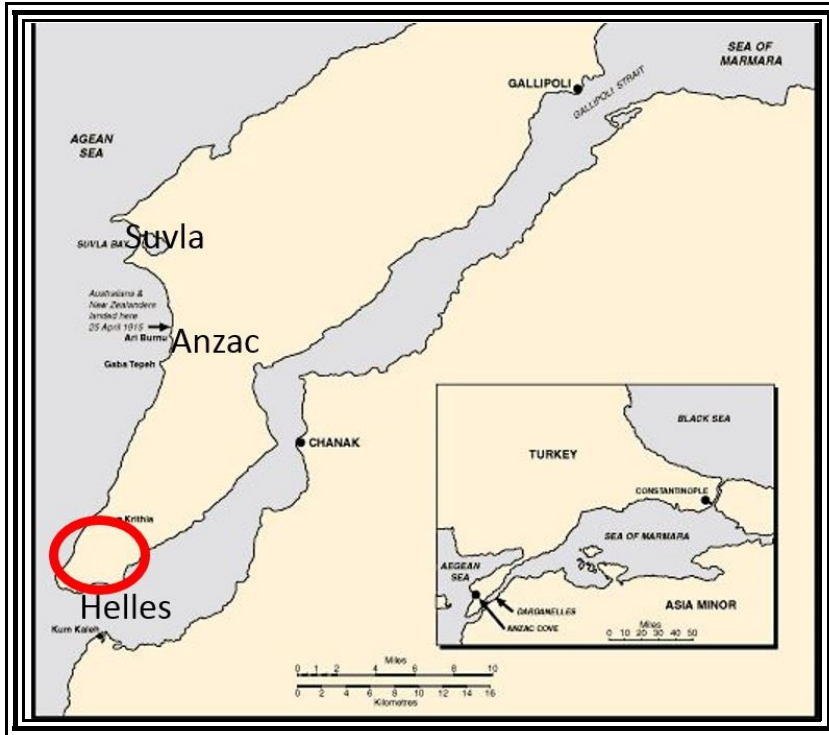
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Le 27 décembre, 1915

La Fin des Fins



Dardanelles – Decision d'en sortir complètement!

À la lumière du succès retentissant de l'extraction des corps d'armée des plages de Suyla et de Anzac, le 20 décembre dernier, et des rapports qui font état d'aucune perte en hommes dans ces opérations pourtant difficiles, le Cabinet britannique prend la décision, **le 27 décembre 1915**, que la dernière plage va être à son tour évacuée une semaine plus tard.

Les troupes qui restent à Helles s'inspirent des stratagèmes intelligents qui ont été inventés pour les plages de l'ouest dans la préparation d'une sortie subreptice au sud.

Si certains croyaient que l'enclave de Helles pourrait être maintenue pour l'hiver et un nouvel essai bien préparé

renouvelé au printemps, l'arrivée du général Robertson comme chef de l'État-major général à Londres met fin à ces espoirs. Robertson est un 'occidental.' Il tient à renouveler le combat en France au printemps.

Certains ministres voient maintenant leurs idées de fronts secondaires contrecarrées. Rien ne semble plus, tout-à-coup, avoir d'importance au Moyen-Orient.

R.R. James, Gallipoli, 344.



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December 28, 1915

New Wine in Old French Bottles



A 'New' Strategy for 1916

On 28 December 1915, General Douglas Haig led the discussion in London which endorsed the decisions of the Allies at the Chantilly Conference in early December.

At this conference it was agreed that France and Flanders would be the main theatres of operations in the Spring, in order to focus on pushing the Germans out of France and Belgium.

The minister of War, Lord Kitchener, backed the plan, despite the objections raised by the minister at the Admiralty, A.J. Balfour.

Balfour doubted the Allies' ability to prevail in the French theatre, where he considered the German Army to be too well entrenched and well prepared for an attack.

David Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, agreed with him, and added that a renewed attempt and subsequent defeat in France would be crippling. He advocated for a campaign in Salonika or Mesopotamia, and sending help to Russia.

Nevertheless, with Haig's recommendations unaltered and the unconditional support of the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Robertson, now providing the expert military advice to the Cabinet, preparations for the spring offensive in Flanders began.

This is old French bottles with Haig's new wine which will be broken at Verdun and on the Somme with a lot of wine spilled.

● Martin Gilbert, *The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War*, p. 12.



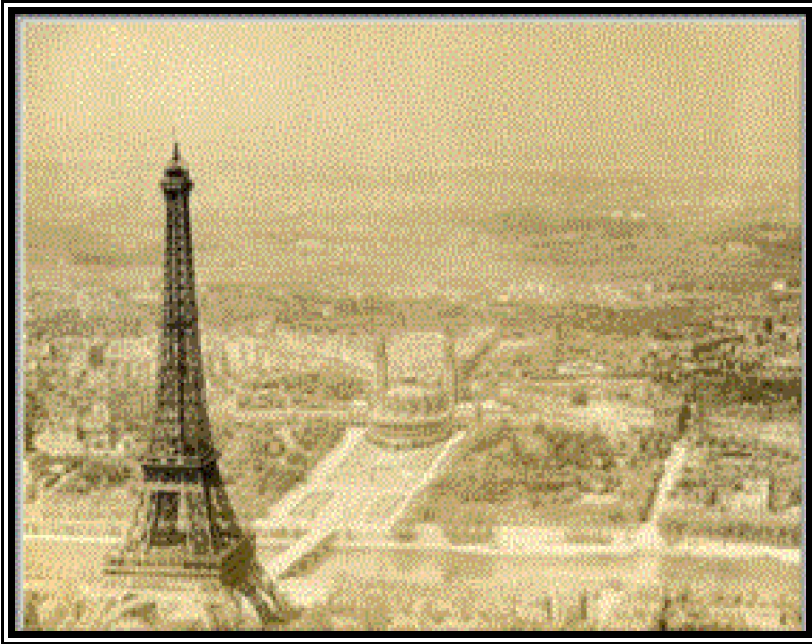
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December 29, 1915

Speaking of Kingdom Come in Paris



Douglas Haig speaks of *artillerie* in Paris

General Douglais Haig met the French Government in Paris on **29 December, 1915**.

After having ascertained on the previous day with the British Government that he would strive to fight a campaign in the north of France so as to push back the Germans in Belgium and secure the Channel ports, he lays this plan with the French.

Once again discussions turn around to the industrial production of guns and munitions.

To all present, 1916 appears to be the moment when explosives will be

produced in such huge quantities that the armies will be able to blast their way through, both in the French south and the British north.

Meanwhile, of course, Falkenhayn is preparing an offensive in Verdun that will precisely rely on volume of explosive and numbers of artillery — and he has the French railroads to move his heavy *pétard*.

The humungous artillery battle of 1916 is already begun in the arsenals and railheads of both sides.

●François Cochet, «6-8 décembre 1915, Chantilly: la Grande Guerre change de rythme», La Revue Historique des Armées, 1er trimestre 2006, pp. 17-26.



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December 30, 1915

The Shell Game in Canada



Industry on war footing in Canada

By the end of 1915, Canada has become a major exporter of manufactured goods toward Great Britain.

In artillery alone, the industry is putting out one million shells per month, a value of 30 million dollars.

Orders are on hand for 22,800,000 shells of which 2 million fixed and 6 million empty have already been shipped.

There are 422 munitions plants at work and the total war manufacturing output so far is above \$200 million dollars.

This will grow to \$361 million by September 1916.

With 500,000 men required for the army, control of labour becomes an issue.

●Hopkins and Renison, Canada at War, p. 205.



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December 31st, 1915

500,000 to Go



Half a Million Canadian Men Now

In his New Year's address Prime Minister Robert Borden announces that on **31st December 1915**, he has increased the authorized establishment for the Canadian Expeditionary Force from 250,000 voluntary men to 500,000.

This action is largely in response to public pressure, which claims Borden is not doing enough for the war.

His initial response to this criticism had been to raise the authorized force to 250,000 in October 1915.

Back in October, the increase to 250,000 had been announced against military advice.

The Chief of General Staff, Major-General W.G. Gwatkin, noted that “there is a limit to our production” in terms of training and equipment.

He pointed out that Canada could not throw all available men into the front lines at once: reserves had to be maintained to replace casualties and provide auxiliary assistance.

Neither of these cautions acted as a deterrent to Borden's plan—The news from Britain that Compulsory Service had been introduced there was too much of a political factor to listen to advice.

●J.L. Granastein and J.M. Hitsman. Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada, p. 35-36.



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