

May 1st, 1916

Verdun's Hell Fire



Verdun, Gate to Kingdom Come

Since February the battle of Verdun has been a slugging match between artilleries throwing their stockpiles at each other.

The infantry in the middle, struggles to stay alive, not succeeding:

«The most terrible bombardment on 1 May between 3.45am and 1.00pm: the 380s and 420s fell on the fort fifty yards behind us, and other smaller-calibre rounds also headed our way: two 420 rounds every four minutes, whose explosions make us flip like pancakes when they hit the fort... We don't think we'll ever get out of this hell on earth.»

● Ian Sumner, They Shall Not Pass: The French Army on the Western Front, 1914-1918, (Pen and Sword, 2012), p. 107.



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May 2nd, 1915

Bishop's Bird



Lt Col Bishop with his Nieuport 17, B1566

Nieuport 17 Enters Service

The Nieuport 17 was a French single-seat fighter which entered combat on **2 May 1916** with Escadrille 57 of the French air force.

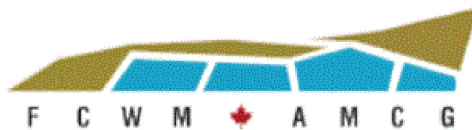
It was developed from previous Nieuport fighters, improved by a new wing design and the Alkan-Hamy synchronization gear which allowed the fighter's machine gun to fire through the propeller arc.

Every French ace flew the Nieuport 17 which was also used by the American Escadrille Lafayette, the Belgian, Italian and Russian air forces and was the most effective Royal Flying Corps fighter from mid-1916 to late 1917.

The Nieuport 17 has an important Canadian connection: **Billy Bishop** scored 29 of his 72 kills in serial number B1566 and won the Victoria Cross in that aircraft.

The Canadian War Museum displays an accurate replica of B1566, built to original plans.

Further Information: *Friends of the Canadian War Museum, Fact Sheet no. 17*



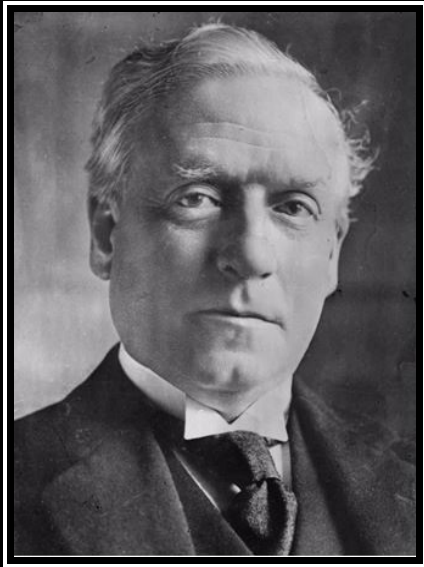
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May 2nd, 1916

Warning of things to come



Asquith is relentless – Conscription for married men *will* pass

On May 2, 1916, Prime Minister H. H. Asquith asked the British House of Commons to support a measure for general and immediate military service for all men between the ages of eighteen and forty one, except those needed at home for economic reasons.

Asquith's request received a cold reception but met with little opposition.

In the month of May, this immense constitutional step will be taken by Parliament.

Universal Conscription of men will be decreed for the first time in British Parliamentary history.

This conscription will allow Government to direct labour toward war industries.

This is a clear indication to Dominions such as Canada that democracy does allow for citizens to be forced into war service.

●Naomi Levine, Politics, Religion, and Love: The Story of H.H. Asquith, Venetia Stanley, and Edwin Montagu, Based on the Life and Letters of Edwin Samuel Montagu", (New York University Press, 1991).



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May 3rd, 1916

What Next?



«The millwheel of Verdun went on turning!»

The attack of the right bank of the Meuse that the Germans have pushed for days have now been stopped as much by the mud than by the dogged obstinacy of the dying *poilus*.

Prince Crown William of Prussia, the nominal commander of the German army in Verdun, is not getting any further reinforcements and he knows that this is the beginning of the end.

But his Chief of Staff, General von Knobelsdorf, does not listen to «Little Willy», the son of Kaiser Wilhelm II, any more. He gets his orders from the Chief of the General Staff, General Falkenhayn, who has been running the show from the start.

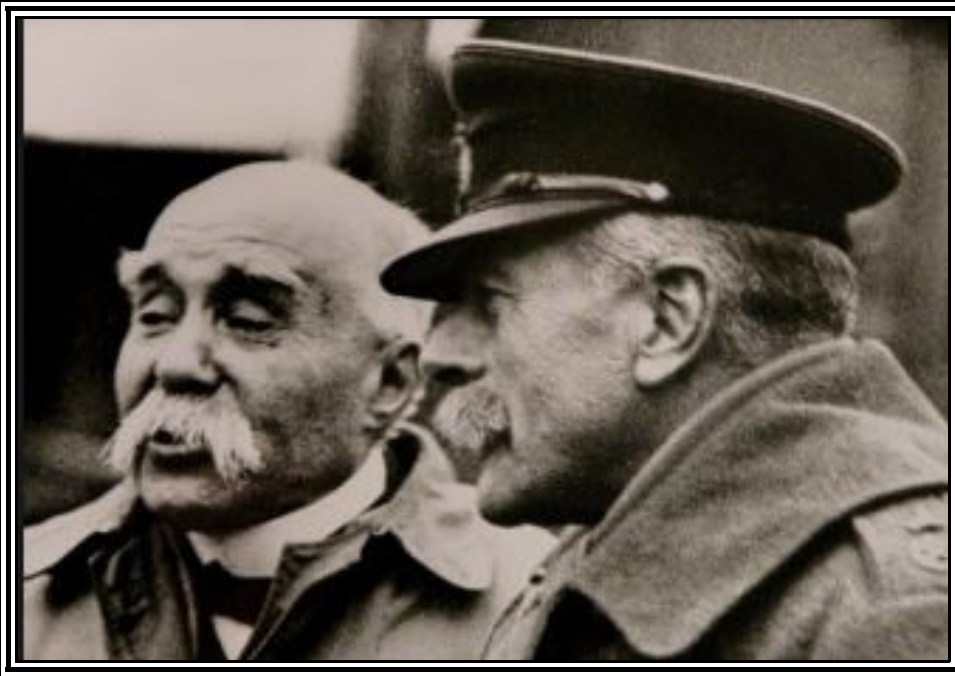
Pétain has now been moved to the command of Central Army Group. Nivelle has replaced him as the Commander of Second Army. Pétain now has Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth armies to feed the Verdun furnace. After having given him IX Corps, the «last perfectly fresh Corps», the General Headquarters is turning to the Somme operation.

— Verdun is condemned to exhaustion on both sides.

•Pétain, Verdun, chap 5.

May 4, 1916

Bad Ol' Clemenceau Poking Around



Clemenceau does what Clemenceau does best

France's President of the Senate's military commission, **Georges Clemenceau** visits the Commander in Chief of the BEF, General Sir Douglas Haig, on **4 May 1916**, and asks him to exercise a restraining hand on General Joffre, whom Clemenceau suspects of wanting to make an offensive before he is ready.

Clemenceau is afraid that political factions will demand armistice if the offensive is not successful.

Haig then writes to the British Ambassador in Paris, Lord Bertie, to ask his opinion about the level of support from the government that Joffre might expect.

●Elizabeth Greenhalgh, Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 50.

●Martin Gilbert, The Somme: Heroism and Horror in the First World War, (Henry Holt and Co., 2006), p. 23.



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May 5, 1916

Météorologie et aérostats



Emportés par le vent

La tempête du 5 mai 1916 met en évidence les dangers du métier d'aérostats; le travail de l'observateur aérien est dangereux, non seulement à cause des attaques mais aussi de la météorologie.

Ce jour-là, une « tempête » imprévue emporte 24 ballons en Lorraine : sur les 28 observateurs à la dérive, cinq sont tués, deux blessés et neuf capturés.

Cette « bourrasque » n'est pas mentionnée sur le bulletin quotidien de la journée du 5 mai 1916, qui est simplement qualifiée de « ventée ». Elle ne semble pas avoir été prévue.

Sur le plan militaire, l'évènement a été lourd de conséquences.

Cette tempête a fait l'objet d'un article complet du bimensuel L'Aérophile, daté du 1er au 15 juin 1916 et conservé à la bibliothèque de Météo-France.

L'article évoque les aérostats disparus et indique que compte tenu de la gravité des conséquences, « le service de renseignements météorologiques qui existe déjà sera d'ailleurs étendu et renforcé. »

Sources : <http://www.meteofrance.fr/la-meteo-au-temps-de-la-grande-guerre/la-science-meteo-a-l-epoque/meteo-et-armees/aerostation-dans-la-guerre>

Pour en savoir plus : http://www.pleinvol.com/chronique/Histoire_aviation/observateurs/index_observateurs.html



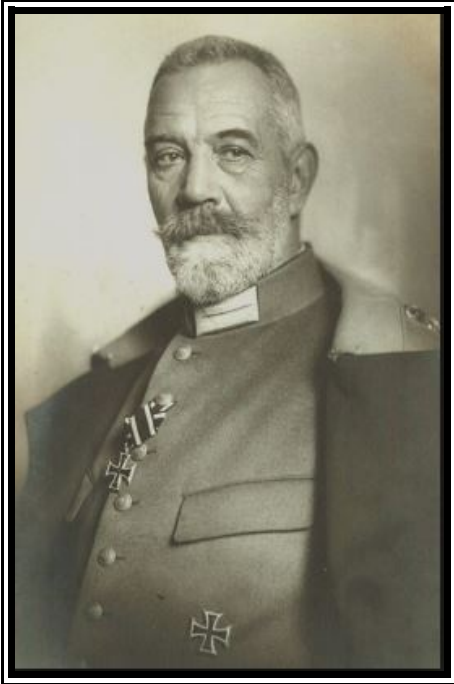
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May 6, 1916

Between a Yes and a No



Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg on a diplomatic 'Third Way'

With the German difficulties in Verdun, the Chief of the General Staff, Falkenhayn, is demanding that unrestricted submarine warfare be resumed against all neutrals so that global supplies to the Allies be cut off.

The Kaiser has refused, so far, to continue unrestricted submarine warfare because of the fear that America will join the Allies in the war. But this is obviously temporary.

The Chancellor of Germany, **Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg**, is now struggling to prevent the United States from joining the war despite the eventual resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. The American diplomatic note of **5 May 1916** about the sinking of the Sussex is indicative of his predicament.

He wants to use the election campaign of November 1916 in the United States to force President Wilson to commit to not joining the war even if Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare.

That diplomatic challenge is great, and Bethmann Hollweg is quite uncertain as to the sensibility of his own plan. But the pressure from the Conservatives in the Reichstag and from the military establishment are so strong in favor of unrestricted submarine warfare, and he is so convinced that such a policy would be suicidal, that he struggles to find any «Third Way» that can possibly be concocted to escape the Yes or No dilemma.

●Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War, p. 287-95.



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May 7, 1916

The Pity of Verdun



Verdun, Day #77

The 'Army of Verdun', the Second French Army, now under General Robert Nivelle, has lost so far 3 000 officers and 130 000 men.

It now stands at 13,600 officers, 570,000 men, 170,000 horses and mules.

The 24 divisions (7 Corps!) of this army have so far necessitated the rotation of 40 divisions to maintain its integrity.

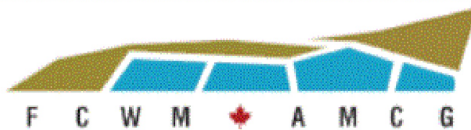
General Philippe Pétain, the commander of the four-army Central Army Group has 52 divisions altogether.

Men of twenty years of age have now been drafted and join the ranks of the fighting divisions where the average age is between 25 and 26.

«To sum up,» wrote Pétain,

«Verdun held. In spite of the fact that the French army alone had been waging for three months a battle of unprecedented violence, its losses were not alarmingly heavy, and a High Command remained [136/137] in a position where its liberty of action was untrammelled.»

●Pétain, Verdun, 136-7.



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Le 8 mai, 1916

Explosion de Douaumont



Le 8 mai 1916, une énorme explosion dans le fort de Douaumont entraîne la mort de plusieurs centaines de soldats allemands. Les raisons de cette catastrophe sont dues à la négligence et à un ensemble de concours de circonstances.

Une panique soudaine envahit le fort: les hommes crient: «les Noirs arrivent» faisant allusion aux troupes coloniales françaises qui sont craintes par les allemands et qui ont la réputation de ne pas faire de prisonniers. Dans cette panique, les grenades à main sont lancées en direction des supposés envahisseurs. Elles atteignent le dépôt de

combustibles pour les lance-flammes. Le combustible entre en contact avec le feu des cuisinières. Il s'enflamme instantanément en dégageant un épais nuage de fumée et de carbone. Tout le monde est couvert de suie et cela explique la phobie qui s'installe à propos des Noirs.

Les corps sont littéralement catapultés, des centaines d'Allemands meurent par asphyxie. Au prix d'un énorme effort, seule une centaine d'occupants sont sauvés. le nombre de morts est estimé à plus de mille soldats mais la plupart des corps n'ont jamais pu être identifiés.

Sources: <http://aufildesmots.net/2014/05/20/le-8-mai-1916-lexplosion-dans-le-fort-de-douaumont/>

Pour en savoir plus: <https://verduunmonsite.wordpress.com/de-1914-a-1916/ouvrages-fortifies/fort-de-douaumont-2/explosion-du-8-mai-1916/>



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May 10, 1916

The Ontario School Question



Laurier Gives Impassioned Speech on Regulation 17

During a debate in the House of Commons on **10 May 1916**, the Leader of the Opposition, **Wilfrid Laurier** pleads with the people of Ontario.

The issue of banning teaching French in Ontario schools divides the country. Laurier asks the people of Ontario to seek a just resolution to the raging Regulation 17 dispute.

Laurier relies on the constitutional right for the French language to be taught in schools, while not wanting to alienate anglophones, or question Ontario's right to pass final judgment on the issue.

In his speech Laurier explains his understanding for both sides' frustration. He ends his heartfelt speech declaring,

“And will it be said that in the great province of Ontario there is a disposition to put a bar on knowledge and to stretch every child in the schools of Ontario upon a procrustean bed and say that they shall all be measured alike, that no one shall have the privilege of a second education in a single language? ... I do not believe that any man will refuse us the benefit of a French education.”

●Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1945, p. 697-698.



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May 11, 1916

In the words of Churchill...



«Temporizing in Peace and War»

Winston Churchill is adamant that Full Conscription must be enforced in Great Britain for the maintenance of manpower in the services and in the war industries.

« In war everything is different. There is no place for compromise in war. That invaluable process only means that soldiers are shot because their leaders in Council and camp are unable to resolve.

«In War the clouds never blow over, they gather unceasingly and fall in thunderbolts. Things do not get better by being let alone. Unless they are adjusted,

they explode with shattering detonation. Clear leadership, violent action, rigid decisions one way or the other, form the only path not only of victory, but of safety and even of mercy. The state cannot afford division or hesitation at the executive centre.

«To humour a distinguished man, to avoid a fierce dispute, nay, even to preserve the governing instrument itself, cannot, except as an alternative to sheer anarchy, be held to justify half-measures. The peace of the Council may for the moment be won, but the price is paid on the battlefield by brave men marching forward against unspeakable terrors in the belief that conviction and coherence have animated their orders.»

●Winston Churchill, The World Crisis, 1916-1918, Volume III, Part I, (Thornton Butterworth Ltd, 1927), p. 359.



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May 12, 1916

Training Not Necessary



General Kiggell's Training of Divisions for Offensive Action.

Because of the crucial need to improve training of recruits processed too fast into the trench immobility, General Lancelot Kiggell (Haig's COS) attempts to show Commanding Officers methods to train their units for manoeuvre.

His May 1916 manual **Training Divisions for Offensive Action** inspires

Rawlinson's '**Tactical Notes**', which give more information on the employment of Lewis guns and Stokes mortars. Schools are instituted for technical training and exchange of ideas. However, manpower was so short for field constructions that the infantry had to do it all. No time for training or rest.

In the end training does not make much difference for the infantry if the artillery does not do its preparatory work. Attacking well-prepared defences is self-destructive.

«Training, in short, was valuable only in an environment which gave trained troops a decent chance of exercising their skills.»

●Prior & Wilson, Somme, 58-9



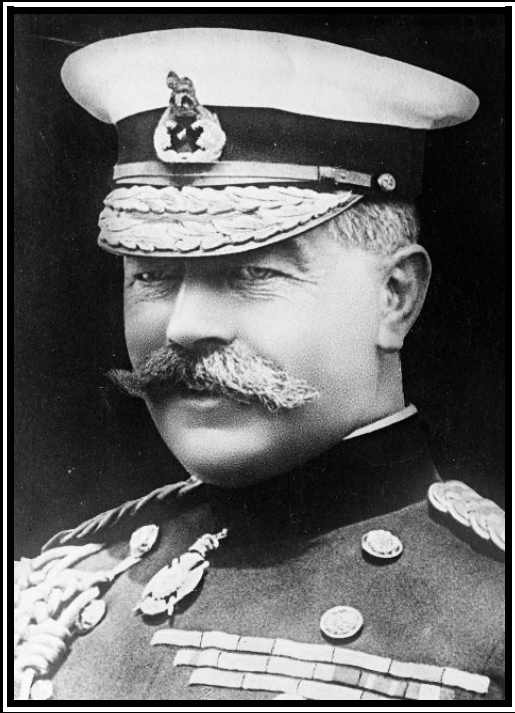
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May 13, 1916

A Very Fateful Invitation



Kitchener invited to go to Russia

On 13 May 1916, Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War in the British Government, received through the Russian ambassador in London an invitation from the Czar, Nicholas II, to visit Russia.

He was offered to tour the Russian fronts, provide such advice as he thought fit, and report to his own Government about outstanding questions of military cooperation and supply.

Kitchener, who had maintained a long correspondence with Grand Duke Nicholas, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces, after having received the more than wholehearted consent of the Cabinet, was delighted to agree:

«Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to visit Russia.»

●Magnus, Kitchener, p. 445-6.



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May 14, 1916

Salonica – What Now?



What to do with Salonica?

The British, who value Egypt, are not particularly interested in keeping five idle divisions in Salonica when it is proving so difficult to feed their armies in France from the Middle East.

But the French who have some ambitions in the Balkans, do not want the joint Salonica Front to be diminished even if the Serbian army is being moved there from Corfu.

In fact they want an offensive there! This was refused by the British in March.

So far, the Salonica command has been tasked to prevent any advance of the Bulgarians; try to maintain the neutrality of Greece; and

constitute a threat 'in being' to the belly of Europe.

This is a big 'sideshow' for no foreseeable prospects.

●Hankey, Supreme Command, II: p. 501.

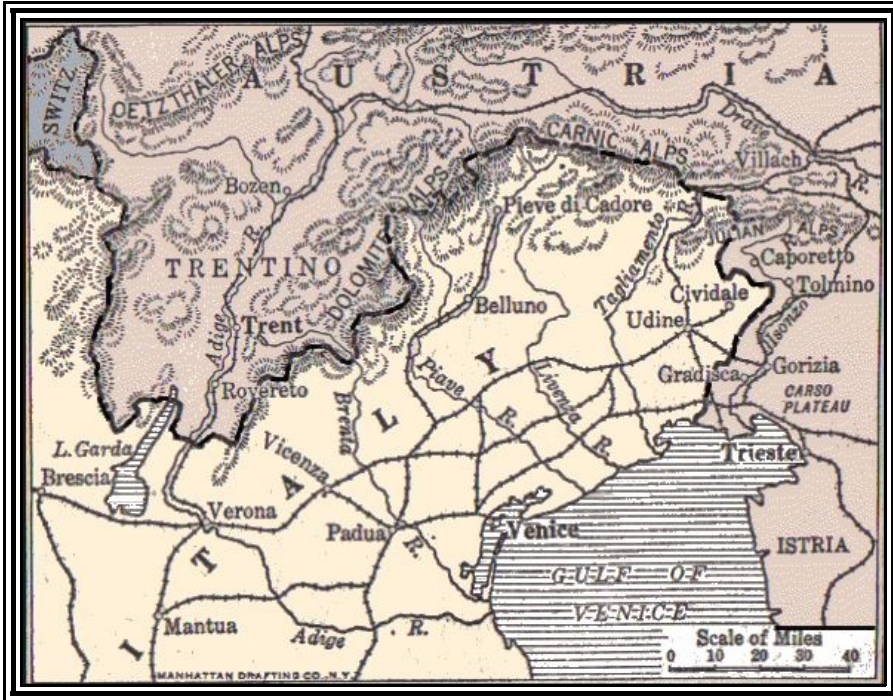


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May 15, 1916 Alpine battles



Austro-Hungarian Offensive in the Trentino

On 15 May 1916, the Austro-Hungarian army in the Alps start an offensive that will last until 3 June.

Italians are pushed back 8 miles in southern Tyrol.

This is not good news for the upcoming French offensive, which was meant to be coordinated with a victory in the South.

Nevertheless, Pétain says that the lack of success of the Austrians was a let down for the Central Powers, who were hoping for much more.

Falkenhayn had to move troops from Galicia (Poland) to reinforce the Austrian army on the Italian front.

Pétain will in fact celebrate General Cadorna for his counter-attack as a morale-booster.

●Pétain, Verdun, p. 160-1.



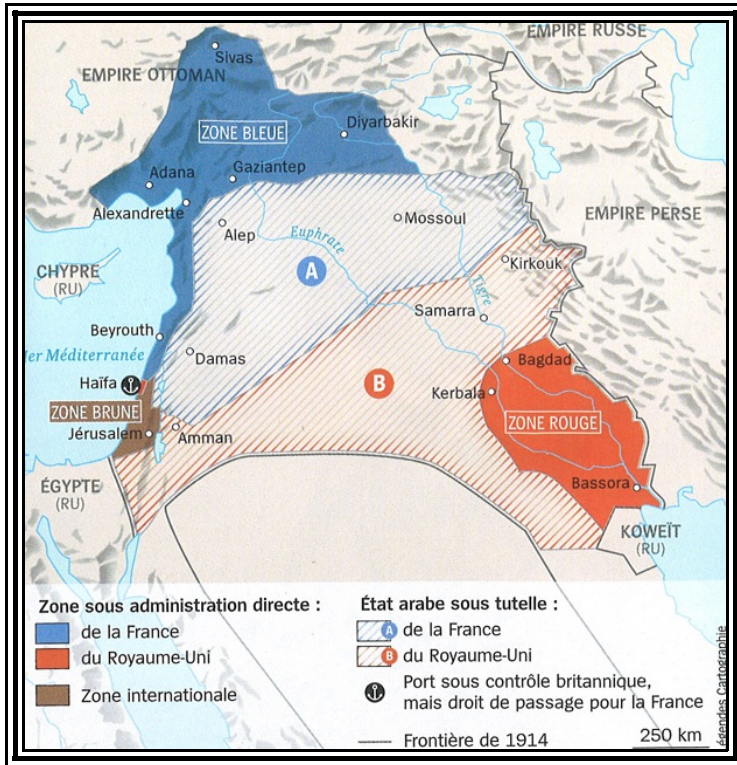
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Le 16 mai 1916

Sykes-Picot sous d'autres noms



L'Accord Grey-Cambon (Sykes-Picot)

En pleine guerre mondiale, le Britannique sir Mark Sykes et le Français François Georges-Picot négocient un accord qui prévoit le démantèlement de l'empire ottoman après la guerre et le partage du monde arabe entre les deux Alliés.

Les Français se réservent le Liban, la Syrie et la région de Mossoul, au nord de la Mésopotamie ; les Britanniques le reste de la Mésopotamie (Irak) et la Transjordanie. La Palestine doit devenir zone internationale et le port d'Alexandrette (Syrie) acquérir le statut de port franc.

Un accord est donc conclu officiellement en secret à Londres, le **16 mai 1916**, par sir Edward Grey, ministre britannique des Affaires étrangères, et Paul Cambon, ambassadeur de France (accord «Cambon-Grey »).

Cet accord initial respecte l'esprit des échanges McMahon-Hussein en préconisant de

« détacher les Arabes des Turcs en facilitant la création d'un État arabe ou d'une confédération d'États arabes » sous l'autorité de Hussein et de ses fils, les Hachémites (ainsi les qualifie-t-on en raison de leur filiation avec le prophète Mahomet et son arrière-grand-père Hachem).

Ainsi se dessine pour un siècle la carte du Moyen-Orient, avant que les soubresauts actuels du monde arabe ne la réduisent à néant.

Sources : http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/divers/accord_Sykes-Picot/145649

Pour en savoir plus : <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/sy1916.htm>



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May 17, 1916

General Mangin



Verdun – Mangin’s Division retakes Fort Douaumont

On 17 May 1916, the French artillery counter-attack starts to allow **General Charles Mangin**’s division to take forward position so as to attempt to retake Fort Douaumont.

The all out artillery duel will continue for five days.

The digging of trenches by the forward units is considerably hampered by the returning fire of the German artillery.

But Mangin, to be later surnamed «*Le Boucher* » [The Butcher] for his fearlessness is a tough leader who does not take no for an answer.

An assault will be prepared for 20 May, but Mangin will find himself talking with five officers as they are killed on the spot by a shell.

He will ultimately delay the attack to the 22nd of May, but, «*mordicus* », Mangin will get that fort back in French hands.

●Pétain, *Verdun*, 156.



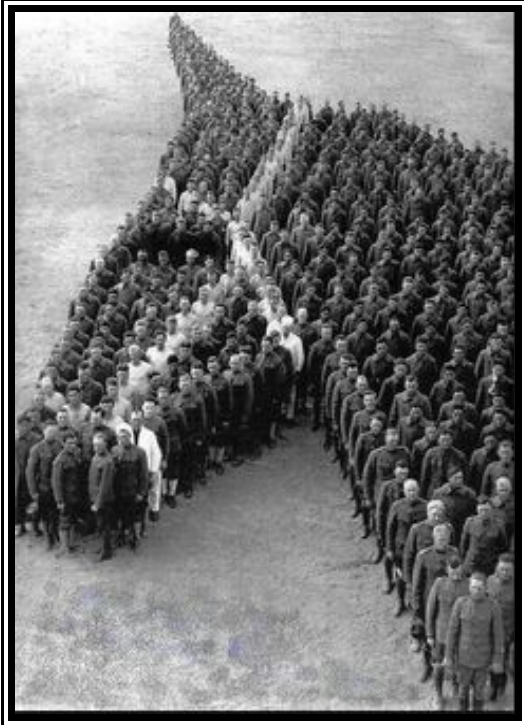
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May 18, 1916

The Frocks, the Brasshats and horses



War Committee – ‘Absolutely astonishing’

Historians Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson in their chapter 2 of The Somme, «Absolutely Astonishing’: The War Committee and the Military», point to a War Committee meeting on **18 May 1916** to show the state of relationship between the British politicians and their generals.

The point raised was that fodder took up a large amount of shipping space and the politicians could not believe that the troops needed so many horses, including thousands for the cavalry that was of no use.

Generals Haig and Robertson (the Army Council) considered the question of horses to be of their domain and would not allow to be questioned on this at the meeting.

Haig even sent such a stiff letter to the Committee that it verged on unconstitutionality and prompted minister Curzon to qualify it as ‘absolutely astonishing’ by the fact that it challenged civilian authority.

Prior and Wilson believe that this exemplifies the relationship between the two parties prior to the battle of the Somme.

«This pattern – of assertion and inaction - of acerbic criticism and an inability to direct – would dog the War Committee’s dealing with the high command from the first day of the Battle of the Somme until the last.» Prior and Wilson, The Somme, p. 11-14.



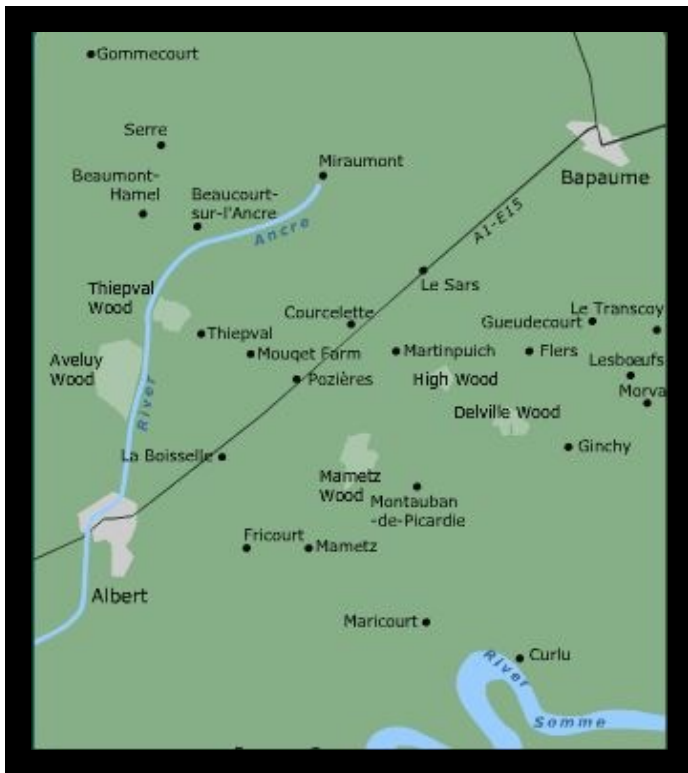
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Le 19 mai, 1916

Décision pour la Somme



Préparations pour la campagne de la Somme

Le Général sir Frederick Maurice, Directeur des opérations militaires au Ministère de la Guerre, à Londres, informe le Haut Commandement britannique, **le 19 mai 1916**, que les Français ont maintenant réduit le nombre de divisions qu'ils ont l'intention de consacrer à la Bataille de la Somme, de 40 à 25.

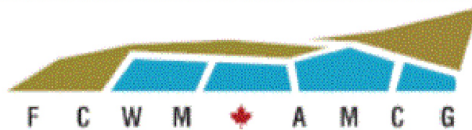
Ceci transforme le rapport des forces entre les Alliés et donne au général Haig une prépondérance en poids.

Le général Joffre ne peut extraire plus de divisions de Verdun ou d'ailleurs.

Il insiste pourtant qu'une offensive majeure doit nécessairement être lancée fin-juin pour faire diversion pour Verdun.

La 'saignée' des Français doit être interrompue.

● Gilbert, Somme, 25



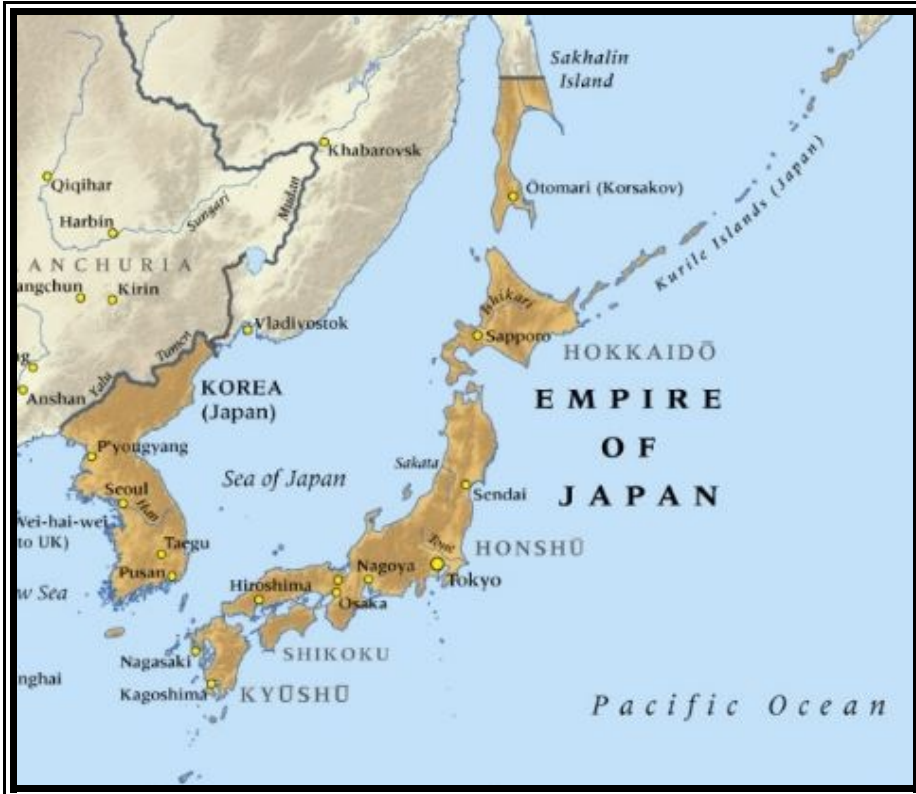
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May 20, 1916

Tickling the Japanese with Asian concessions



German hopes for Japanese leverage

Secret diplomatic half-openings to the Japanese Government force the German Foreign Ministry to put on paper what might be achieved in exploiting the rancour of Japan involved in the Anglo-Japanese Treaty and her animosity toward the United States.

The German Foreign Office prepares two extensive Memoranda, in May 1916, for consideration of such an alliance, if Japan could serve as a catalyst to get Russia to seek peace separately.

The two Memos state in great details what is sought overall, with the description of all what is to be gained and retained and conceded on the face of the planet

for success.

This long enumeration of things that did not happen is an important statement of policy for the purpose of designing negotiation tactics.

What emerges is that Germany does not want peace to be negotiated with Russia at the same time as with the other powers. Germany wants France isolated, broken, and then England's case dealt with separately. The word is therefore, here, to divide first, and conquer after.

At a time when it sees hope of success in Verdun before 1 July, the German Government is expansive and truculent on the stepping stones that it foresees with its forthcoming victory.

•Fischer, 228-36.



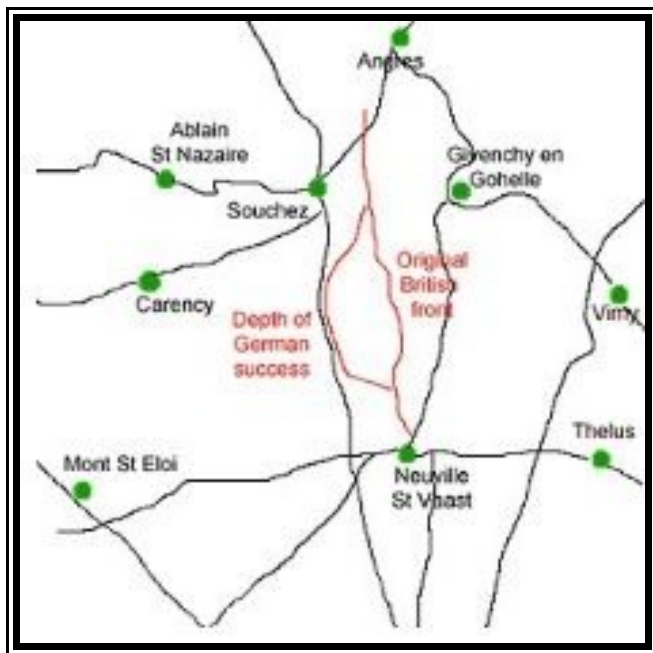
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Le 21 mai, 1916

Vimy – Les Allemands grignotent à leur tour



Poussée allemande à Vimy

Début mai 1916, l'activité de l'artillerie et des mortiers allemands s'intensifie devant la crête de Vimy, s'en prenant aux tranchées britanniques de première ligne, mais également aux boyaux de communication.

Observant des permutations de troupes ennemies dans le secteur d'Arras (préparatifs de l'offensive de la Somme), les Allemands décident de tirer parti des circonstances : **le 21 mai 1916**, ils déclenchent un puissant bombardement (le plus massif de toute la guerre, rapporté à la surface concernée : 70 000 obus en 4 heures), sur une faible largeur du front et en profondeur, au-delà des deuxièmes lignes.

Après avoir fait exploser une mine, ils lancent l'assaut d'infanterie et s'emparent d'une partie de la première ligne anglaise, puis creusent de nouvelles positions, en «retournant» les tranchées.

Une tentative de contre-attaque britannique est brisée dans l'œuf, le 23 mai, par l'artillerie et les mitrailleuses allemandes. Désormais tourné vers la préparation de l'offensive de la Somme, le haut commandement britannique décide d'en rester là.

Sources et pour en savoir plus, version française :

<http://www.cheminsdememoire-nordpasdecalsais.fr/lhistoire/batailles/loffensive-allemande-sur-la-croete-de-vimy-21-mai-1916.html> et en anglais :

<http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com/history/battles/the-german-offensive-on-vimy-ridge-21-may-1916.html>



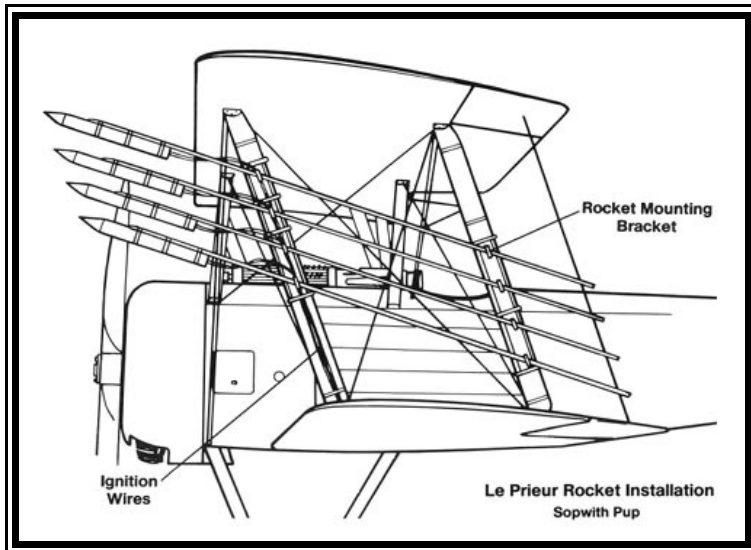
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Le 22 mai, 1916

Des fusées incendiaires anti-ballons



La Fusée Le Prieur

Le 22 mai 1916, jour de l'attaque contre le fort de Douaumont, Charles Nungesser et sept autres pilotes décollent avec leurs avions armés de fusées. Ils abattent alors six «drachen» d'observation situés sur la rive droite de la Meuse.

Déclenchées électriquement, ces fusées nécessitent de s'approcher très près de l'objectif, au risque de brûler avec le ballon attaqué. Aussi les spécialistes de l'attaque des «saucisses» préférèrent les balles explosives incendiaires.

Ces armes furent conçues par le lieutenant de vaisseau Le Prieur pour lutter en

premier lieu contre les dirigeables Zeppelin qui survolent Paris. Destinées ensuite à attaquer les ballons d'observation allemands, ces fusées incendiaires sont fixées par quatre ou cinq à l'extérieur des mats de voilure des biplans Nieuport ou Farman.

Les supports et les ailes sont protégées des flammes par un revêtement en amiante et aluminium, la mise à feu électrique s'effectue à une centaine de mètres de la cible en attaquant en piqué et transversalement.

Sources : <http://fandavion.free.fr/fuseeleprieur.htm>

Pour en savoir plus : http://albindenis.free.fr/Site_escadrille/escadrille023_2.htm



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May 23rd, 1916

Kitchener at the House of Lords



Lord Kitchener underwrites Full Compulsory Service

Lord Kitchener, the man who undertook to man the «new armies» all with volunteers has now joined the Government in implementing the Second Part of the Service Act 1916 which Prime Minister Asquith seeks to vote into law the next day.

Lord Kitchener addresses the House of Lords on **23 May 2016** to ask for a swift passage:

«My Lords, on this the final stage of the Bill it may be appropriate for me to say that its smooth and rapid passage through your Lordships' House will prove most beneficial to the Army. As soon as the measure has received the Royal Assent we shall be able to regulate the flow of recruits to the Colours and get rid altogether of those sudden fluctuations in recruiting

which were so prejudicial alike to military and industrial interets. Further—and I emphasize the point—the process of recruiting will now be carried out with the minimum possible inconvenience to the men themselves.»

Sir Hedley Le Bas (Ed.), The Lord Kitchener Memorial Book (Published on Behalf of the Lord Kitchener National Memorial Fund by Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1917).



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May 24, 1916
A Dragon in the making



In preparation for the Battle of the Somme, the Royal Engineers under the direction of William Howard Livens have five weeks left to deliver the **Livens Large Gallery Flame Projector**.

● See Wikipedia and You Tube to get this fascinating story from the University of Glasgow Center for Battlefield Archeology.



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May 25, 1916

Married Men, Fall In!



The extension of the *Military Service Act*

The Military Service Act of 27 January 1916 brought limited conscription into play for the first time in the war.

Along with the *Defence of the Realm Act*, it was possibly the most important piece of legislation in placing Britain onto a "total war" footing.

On 25 May, 1916 the MSA is extended and new

conditions are implemented . This second part is known as the *Military Service Act, 1916 (Session 2)*.

Together the two complementary laws are known as the *Military Service Acts, 1916*.

The definition of who is in scope for conscription is changed to include all men who have been at any time resident in Great Britain since 4 August 1914, and who have attained the age of 18 but are not yet 41. Exceptions are defined in the Schedule attached to the first Act.

Thus married men are now included.

"Second report of the Provost Marshal General to the Secretary of War on the operations of the Selective Service System to December 20, 1918 ", United States Provost Marshal General's Bureau, United States War Department, 1919, page 387.



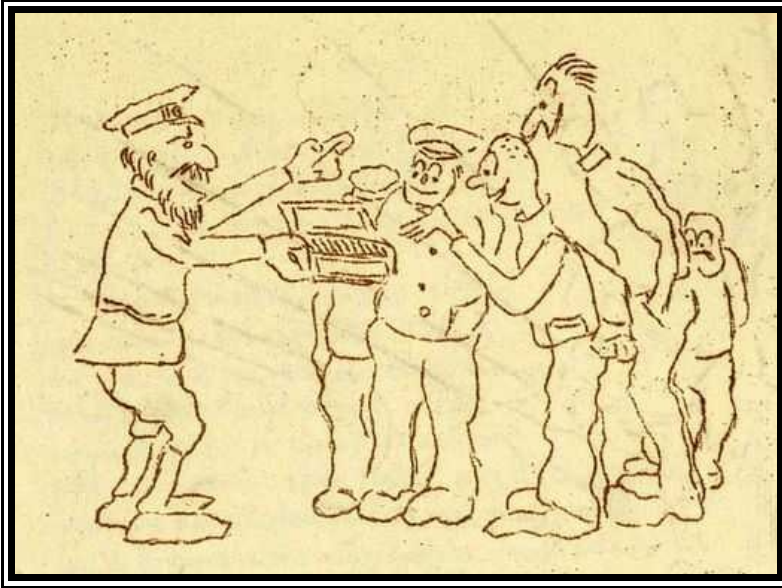
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Le 26 mai, 1916

Lisez *Le Claque à fond*



France: Premier numéro du journal *Le Claque à fond*

Le Claque à fond deviendra le plus attendu et le plus connu des 'journaux de tranchées' du front.

Il paraît sur le front de l'Yser, dans la 7^e division d'infanterie belge, afin de mieux supporter le caractère pénible de la situation. La lecture apparaît à certains soldats comme un moyen de s'aérer l'esprit.

Le Claque à fond choisit le parti de l'humour. Malgré son aspect fruste ce journal brille comme un soleil tout illuminé par des dessins d'André Massonet: des lignes nues dépouillées de tout comme l'étaient souvent ces soldats; des traits d'une fraîcheur

éblouissante qui rehaussent à merveille la prose magique d'un Louis Boumal.

À la lecture de ces pages calligraphiées on ne peut s'empêcher d'être étonné de la fraîcheur d'âme et du message d'espoir distillé pour ces hommes qui vivaient dans la boue et la misère, ne sachant jamais s'ils se coucheraient le soir entiers.

«Claque à fond» était une des nombreuses expressions nées au fond des tranchées et qu'utilisaient les soldats en vidant une gamelle jugée toujours trop petite.

Sources : <https://textyles.revues.org/283>

Pour en savoir plus : <http://centenaire.org/fr/espace-pedagogique/ressources-pedagogiques/deuxieme-degre/les-journaux-de-tranchees-une-information>



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May 27, 1916

Joffre-Haig Meeting



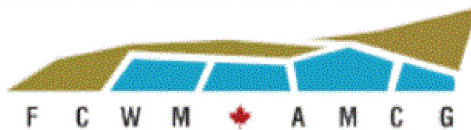
Haig-Joffre Meeting

General Joffre sees General Haig on **27 May 1916** for the confirmation that 1 July will be the day for the start of the Somme offensive.

When Haig mentions that he would be better prepared on 15 August, Joffre says the French army « **would cease to exist, if we did nothing till then.**»

From this point, 29 Jun is agreed to be the the start day.

Gilbert, Somme, 26.



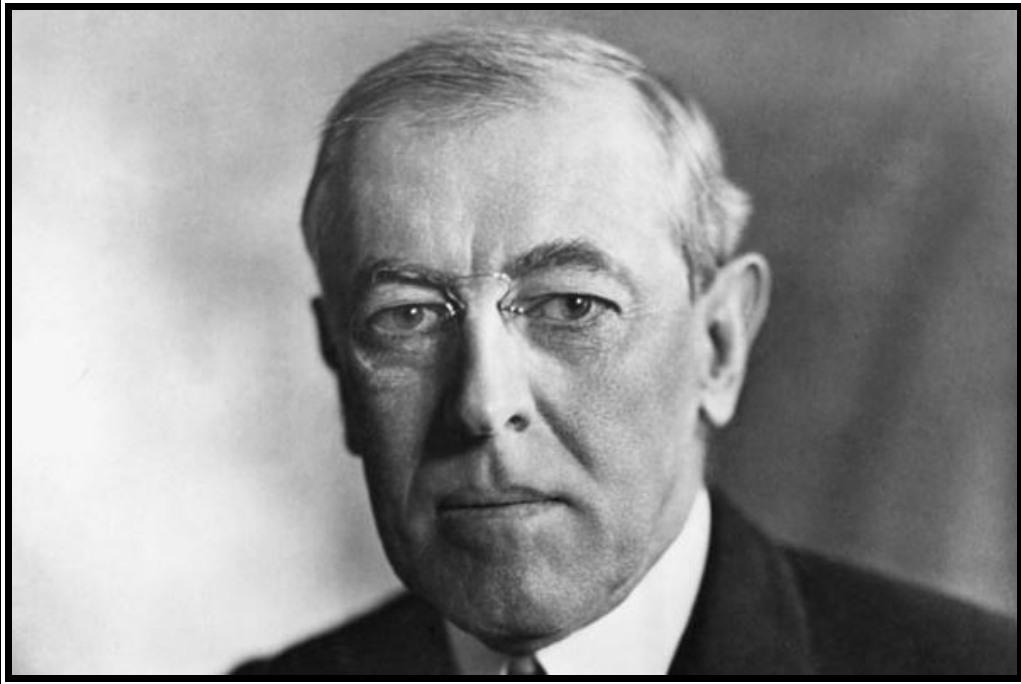
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May 27, 1916

Wilson Ignored



President Wilson's Principles for Peace: No Echo in Germany

Speaking to the American League to Enforce Peace, President Wilson forcefully articulated principles of the “inviolable rights of peoples and of mankind” including the rights of the small nations and the right of the world, to be free from the disasters of war.

Wilson also stated that if the US was asked to mediate a peace, it would seek the unhindered freedom of the seas

(because of US concerns with German submarine warfare) and guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity for the belligerents.

However, German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, under pressure from the German right which sees the US as hostile to German war aims, rejects Wilson as mediator.

In this, he quietly welcomed British opinion as almost equally dismissive of American mediation.

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- Further information: *The American Presidency Project* (presidency.ucsb.edu)
 - Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*

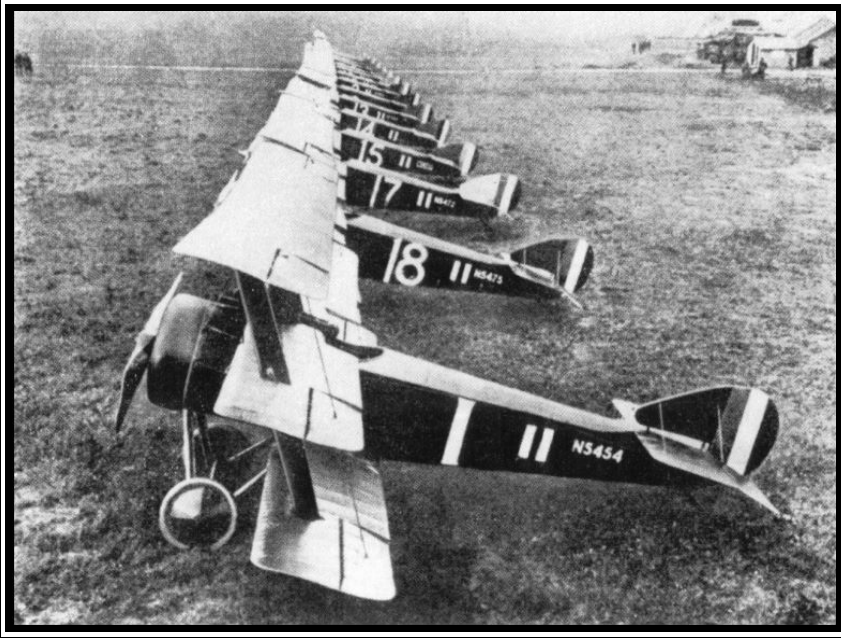


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Le 28 mai, 1916 L'Oiseau à six ailes



Le Sopwith Triplan fait son apparition

Le 28 mai 1916 : Premier vol du chasseur britannique Sopwith Triplan conçu par Herbert Smith.

Ce triplan était tellement supérieur aux chasseurs adverses qu'il fut à l'origine d'une véritable psychose dans le camp ennemi : les pilotes préférant ne pas engager le combat à la vue d'une formation de ces chasseurs monoplaces dotés d'une vitesse ascensionnelle élevée et d'une bonne manœuvrabilité.

L'avion fut envoyé pour évaluation au Squadron « A » du RNAS, stationné en France, où il fit sensation. Il entra en

action dans les quinze minutes qui suivirent son arrivée !

La formule triplan a été choisie pour rendre la machine plus agile que le Pup (biplan à aile décalée et entoilée, motorisé par un Clerget 7 de 80ch) tout en conservant une bonne visibilité au pilote.

Cette configuration permet de diminuer l'envergure pour une surface alaire donnée, donc de faciliter la construction et le stockage de l'avion.

Elle présente l'inconvénient d'augmenter la traînée en multipliant par trois des tourbillons marginaux.

Sources : <http://jn.passieux.free.fr/html/Triplane.php>

Pour en savoir plus : <http://encyclopedie-des-armes.com/index.php/aviation/avions-de-combat/1179-sopwith-triplane>



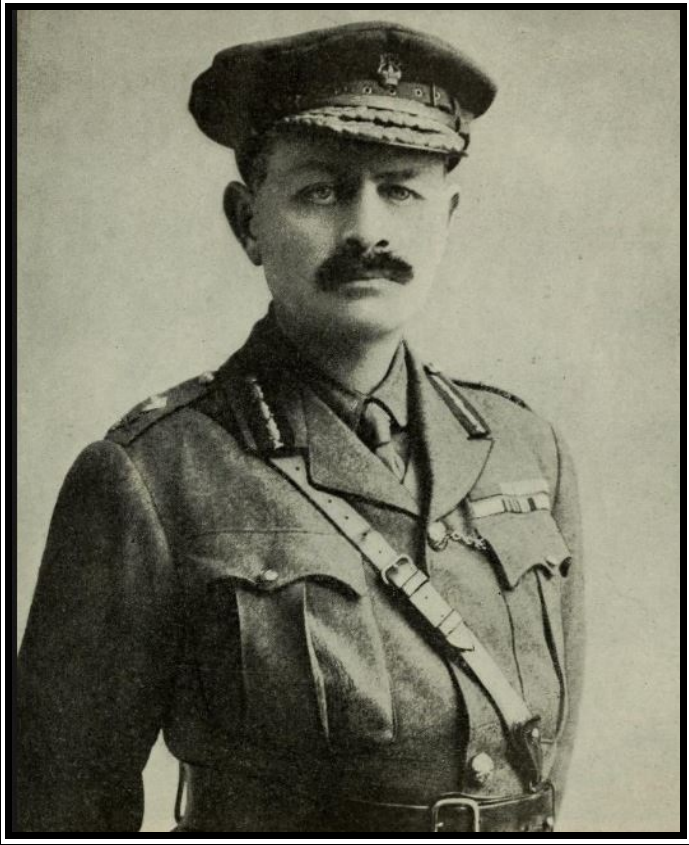
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May 29, 1916

Bongo Gets Here



Arrival of Lieutenant General Julian Byng

The Commander of the Canadian Corps, General Alderson, is being replaced by **The Honourable Sir Julian Hedworth George «Bongo» Byng**, seventh son of the Earl of Strafford (10th Royal Hussars).

Byng, a cavalry officer, arrives at the Canadian Corps headquarters on **28 May 1916** without knowing any of the Canadian commanders there.

Indeed, the only officer who knows him is Brigadier General Charles Harington, a long-time friend loaned for General Staff.

Byng who distinguished himself in the early fighting in the Ypres region and in the flawless withdrawal from the Dardanelles, cannot understand why he was sent to the command the Canadians whom he does not know.

An early reaction will be to offer his resignation if the Canadian political interference that hampered Alderson continues.

Three weeks later he will write: «...to officer these splendid men with political protégés is to my mind little short of criminal...»

● Jeffery Williams, Byng of Vimy, 117-8.



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May 30, 1916

Conference near Amiens



Somme – Conference near Amiens

Chief members of the French Government, and British High Command, Poincaré, Galiéni, Joffre, Castelnau, Foch and Haig, meet near Amiens to discuss arrangements for the upcoming Somme offensive.

This is when it becomes clear that Foch's role in the Somme offensive will be further reduced because of the needs of Verdun.

Foch will have only one army involved, Fayolle's, instead of three.

This gives the lead to Haig.

However Haig does not reduce his vision for his part of the campaign. He looks at the BAPAUME-CAMBRAI road as his main axis of advance with a view to penetration to the north.

Both Joffre and Foch see this as unrealistic, especially that Haig will have less than half of the French 900 guns left for the Somme for a much larger frontage.

Haig is using his single Fourth Army (Rawlinson) for this whole attack.

●Liddell Hart, Man of Orleans, I:228.

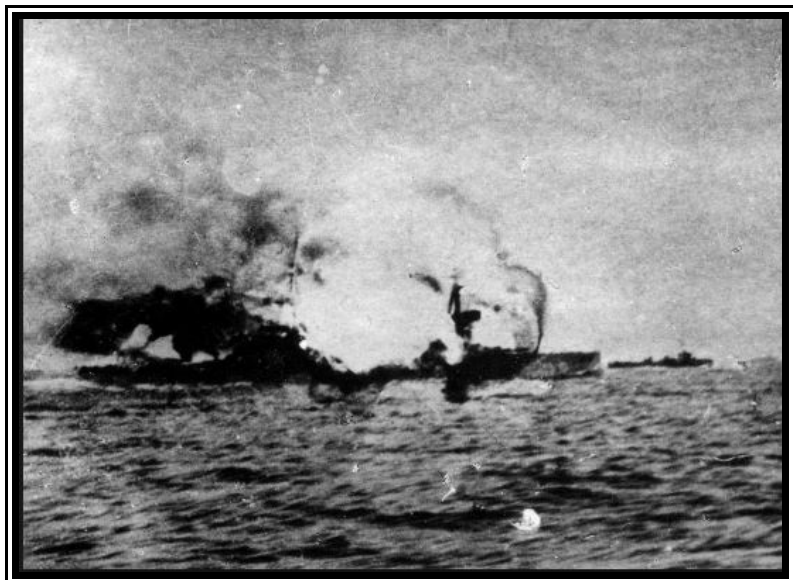


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Le 31 Mai, 1916 Jutland



Le 31 mai 1916, la bataille du Jutland, au large du Danemark (ou bataille du *Skagerrak* pour les Allemands), est la plus grande bataille navale de la Première Guerre mondiale et probablement l'une des plus complexes de l'histoire.

Elle opposa pendant deux jours, la Royal Navy à la Marine impériale allemande en mer du Nord.

À une heure du matin, la flotte allemande (la *Hochseeflotte*, Flotte de haute mer), sous le commandement de l'amiral von Scheer, quitte la rade de Shilling et se dirige plein nord.

Du côté anglais, l'amiral Jellicoe, commandant en chef, décide la sortie de la

grande flotte avec un point de ralliement qui se situe à environ 200 milles à l'Est de la côte britannique. Il croit alors qu'il ne rencontrera qu'une partie de la marine ennemie alors que les deux flottes, impliquant au total 250 navires de tous types, se dirigent l'une vers l'autre.

Les Allemands évitent l'encerclement et obligent la Royal Navy à rompre le combat. Les pertes sont lourdes des deux côtés et le résultat indécis. La nuit tombée, l'amiral allemand avec ses unités restantes largement endommagées, est réduit à un retour hâtif vers ses bases.

6.094 Anglais dont 2 amiraux, et 2.500 Allemands ont péri. Mais surtout le mythe de l'invincibilité de la "Home Fleet" est ébranlé.

Pas totalement toutefois, puisque la flotte allemande va pratiquement rester à l'abri de ses ports jusqu'à la fin du conflit, et abandonner aux sous-marins la lutte contre le commerce britannique et la marine anglaise.

Sources : <http://forum.netmarine.net/viewtopic.php?t=3477>

● Pour en savoir plus :

<http://www.meretmarine.com/fr/content/le-dernier-survivant-de-la-bataille-du-jutland-cede-au-musee-de-la-royal-navy>



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