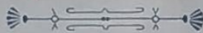


**Vivre en  
Somme**

THE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE SOMME ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL WWW.SOMME.FR

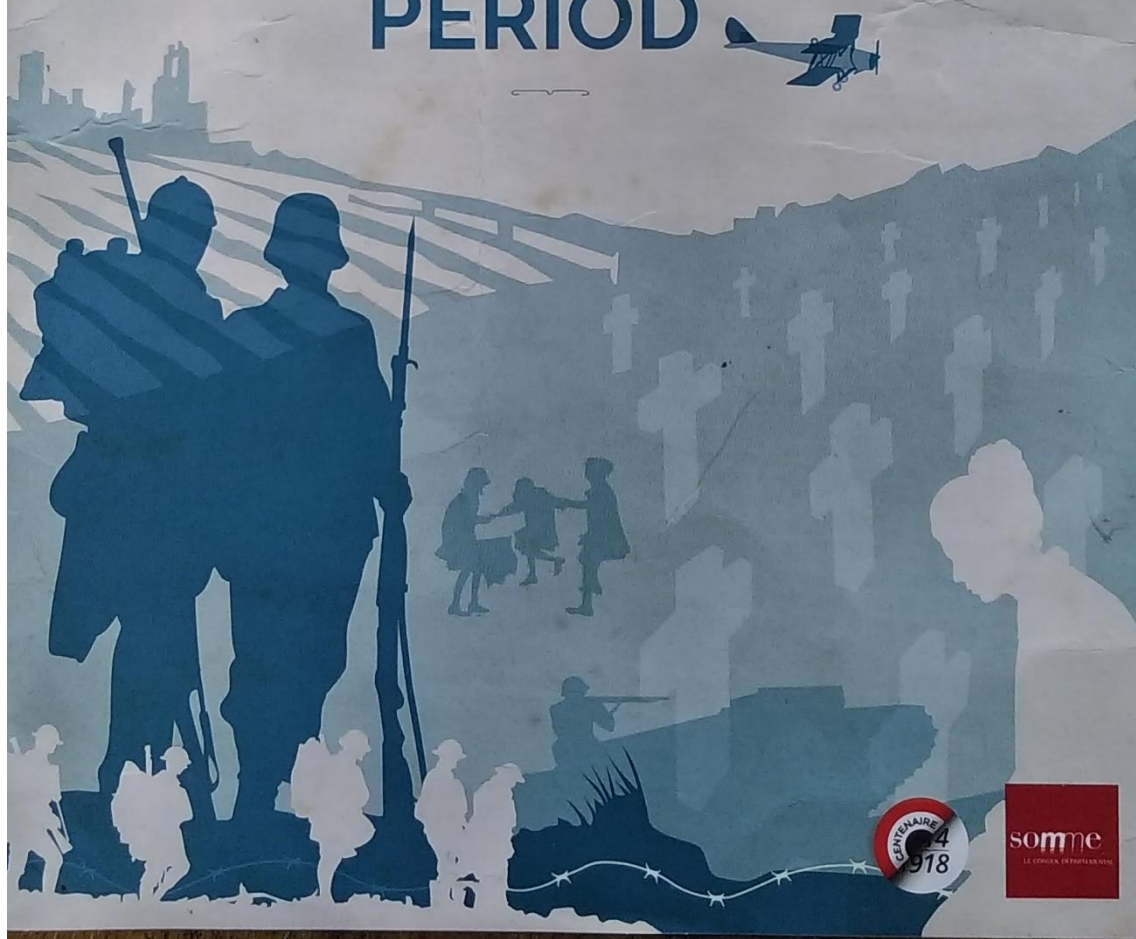
Special Edition



March/April 2018

# 1918

## & THE POST WAR PERIOD



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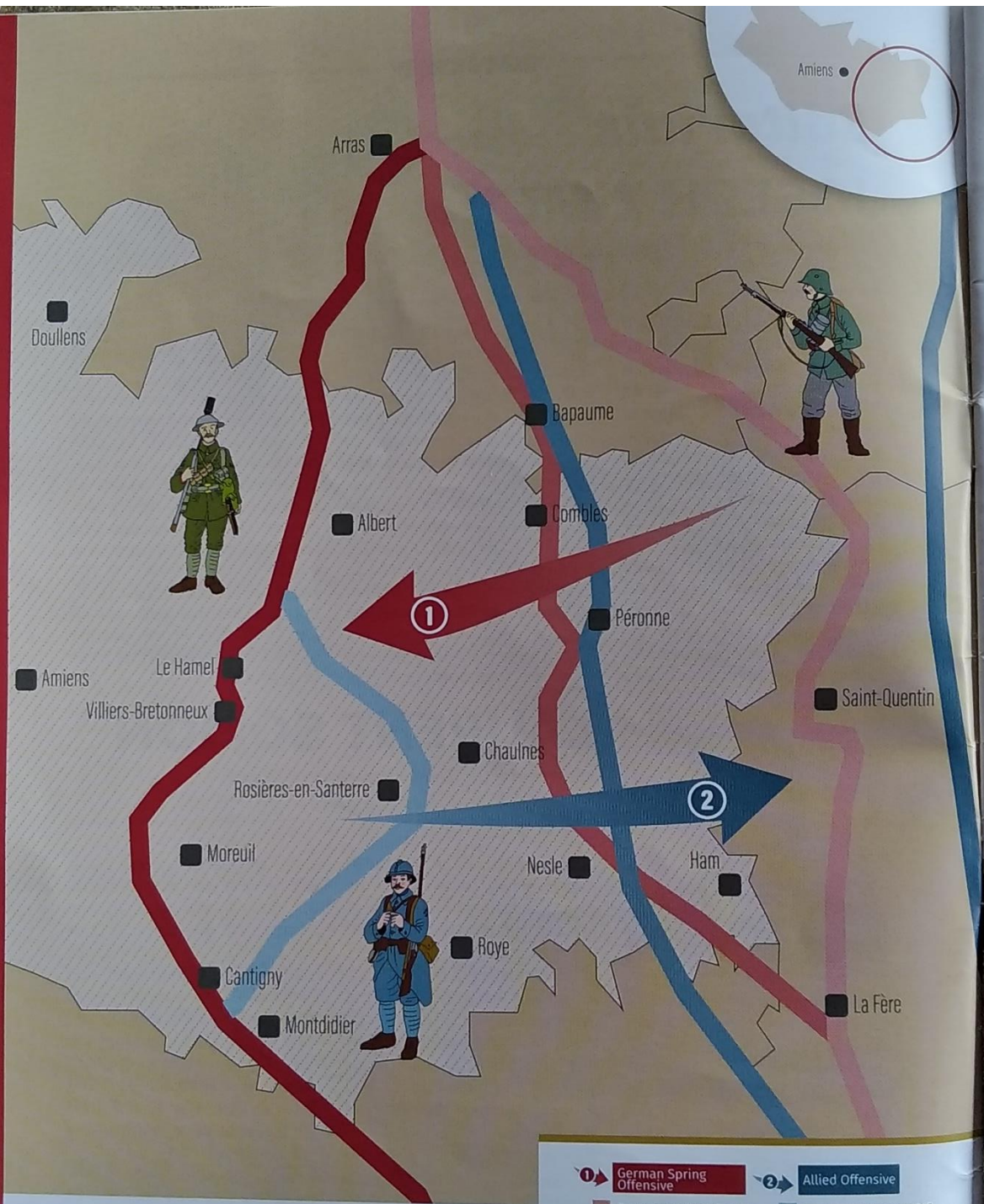
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## THE BATTLES

# The Fall of the Red Baron

With 80 victories under his belt, Manfred von Richthofen, was an ace fighter pilot of the First World War who began military training at the age of 11. When war broke out he was a cavalry lieutenant, but when his regiment was posted to infantry duties in the trenches, he transferred to the air service, originally as a machine gunner. He took his first solo flight in 1916 and aboard his Albatros DII, shot down the British ace Lanoe Hawker on 23 November 1916. With his Albatros DIII, which he had painted bright red, von Richthofen took command of Jasta 11, stationed at Douai, in January 1917. His red plane would draw the enemy towards him while the rest of his squadron remained waiting, hidden above the clouds to take the aircraft by surprise. During the month of April 1917, he shot down 20 British aircraft.

## THE BARON'S LAST FLIGHT

In October, after a period of convalescence because of a head injury, von Richthofen took command of a new plane, a Fokker Dr.I. Sowing terror in the skies, he soon became known as the "Red Baron". It was feared he would be killed, which would deeply demoralise the Kaiser's men, therefore German High Command wanted him to withdraw from duty but he ardently refused. On 21 April 1918, he set off with nine other pilots from Cappy. His squadron met the 209 Squadron of the Royal Air Force

which had set off from Bertangles, near Amiens. In the confusion, von Richthofen crossed enemy lines, an error that cost him a bullet to the chest from an anti-aircraft battery. He was just able to land his plane before dying of his wounds. The Allies recovered his body and buried him with full military honours the next day at Bertangles. In 1919, Manfred von Richthofen's remains were transferred to the German cemetery at Fricourt before his family repatriated the body to Germany in 1925. ■ G.Y.



1918

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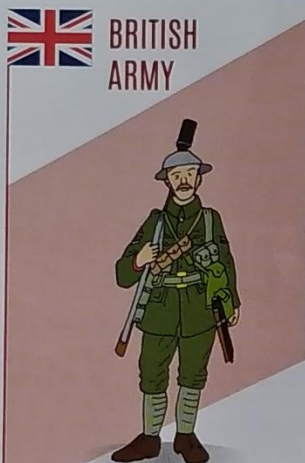
Operation Michael (part of the



# The Forces Involved in 1918



**FRENCH ARMY**



**BRITISH ARMY**



**GERMAN ARMY**

Commanded by General in Chief  
Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929)

Army Group North  
commanded by General Louis  
Franchet d'Espèrey (1851-1921)  
until 10 June 1918, followed by  
Marshall Philippe Pétain

> I Army

(General Eugène Debeney)

Army Group commanded by  
General Sir Douglas Haig  
(1861-1928)

> III Army

(General Julian Byng)

> IV Army

(General Henry Rawlinson)

> V Army

(General Hubert Gough)

Commanded by Marshall Paul  
von Hindenburg (1847-1934)

> II Army

(General Georg von der  
Marmitz)

> XVIII Army

(General Oskar von Hutier)



American Expeditionary Corps  
(General John Pershing)

## Overview of the First World War (Allied powers and central empires)

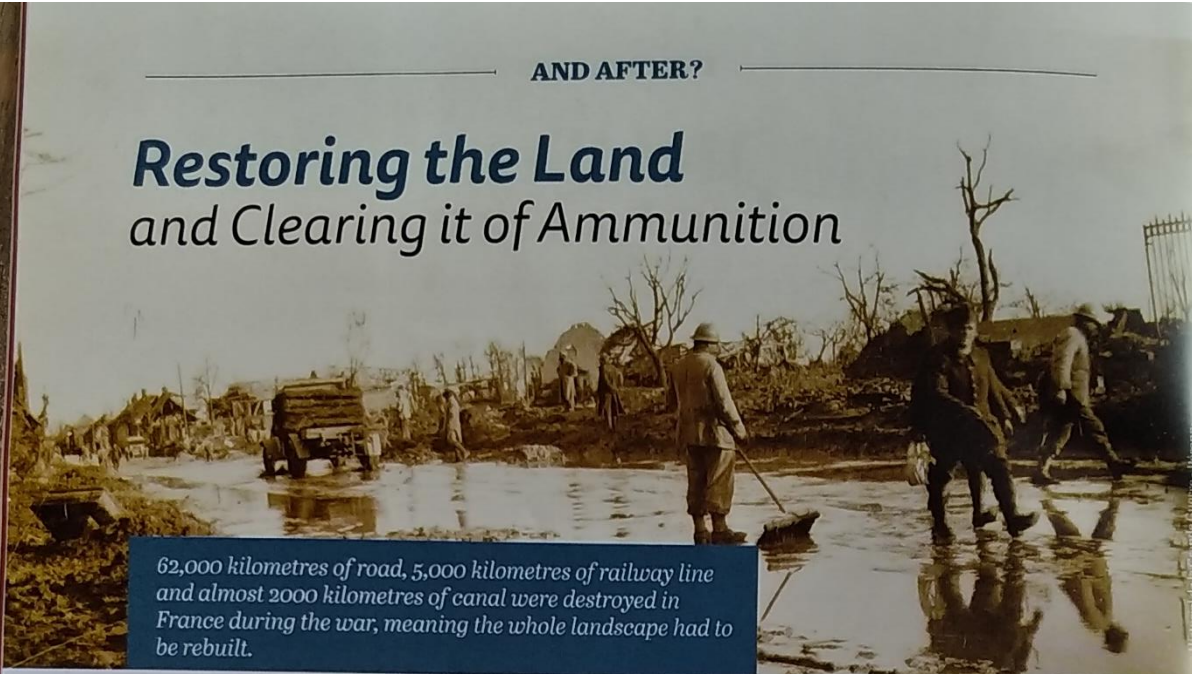
**73.8**  
million  
servicemen mobilised

Over  
**9.5**  
million  
KIA or reported missing

**21.2**  
million  
wounded

**1**  
billion  
shells fired

## Restoring the Land and Clearing it of Ammunition



62,000 kilometres of road, 5,000 kilometres of railway line and almost 2000 kilometres of canal were destroyed in France during the war, meaning the whole landscape had to be rebuilt.

With the urgency of getting people and supplies back on the roads and the lack of manpower to be found locally, German POWs and Chinese and North African labourers were tasked with ridding the land of ammunition, clearing roads and tracks, filling in trenches and levelling the ground. These unpleasant jobs were crucial for allowing populations to return and reconstruction work to begin. The Somme's woodlands, which had been used to hide batteries of artillery and soldiers and where chapels and aid posts had been established, also had to be cleared of ordnance. Trees had been chopped down in order to make stakes, trench pickets and even coffins; the war had destroyed half of the region's woods and forests.

### LEARN MORE:

About the impact of war on forest management:  
[somme-battlefields.com](http://somme-battlefields.com)

### REPLANTING

In 1919, the land was given different colour codes depending of the amount of damage it had suffered in order for war damages to be calculated. Being a combat-zone, with a lunar landscape dotted with rubble, shells and bodies, a large area of the Somme was listed as "red". Only tree trunks remained in the woods and lumberjacks chopped the trees down to their stumps and strove to replant the areas.

### A LASTING LEGACY

Fertile land justified being replanted, as was the case for 28,000 hectares of farmland in the Somme. In the districts of Santerre and Vermandois, larger companies bought up land in order to build vast farming estates. People from the Netherlands and Flemish

Belgium were invited to move here and many shells and bodies were found by farmers at this time. The fields had been completely reshaped, torn and polluted by the number of shells that had fallen upon them, which has greatly affected the legacy left to future generations.

### RELICS RESURFACING STILL TODAY

In the Somme each year, especially in the east of the department, between 40 and 50 tons of WW1 ammunition is found on farmland and construction sites. British, French and German shells, mortars and grenades are still extremely dangerous. Those who come across any are required to contact the local mayor or the gendarmerie (by calling 17 or the international emergency number, 112).

■ Isabelle de Wazières



## The Revival of Industry and Agriculture

*In order for life and the economy to return to normal in the devastated region of the Somme, farms and industries had to be restored as a matter of urgency.*

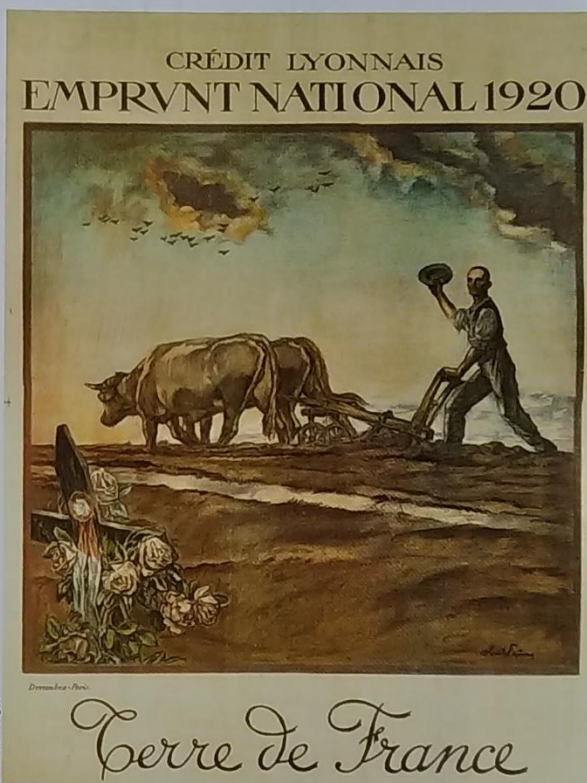
The industries of the Somme had been wiped out by bombardments, raids and the deliberate destruction carried out by the Germans to restrict competition after the war. 1190 factories had to be rebuilt, including half of the 100 cotton mills of the area. War damage compensation was used to rebuild them in devastated areas and within a 50 kilometre radius of these areas.

When making compensation claims, many joined forces as a prelude to the creation of cooperative societies for reconstruction. Through the National Office of Industrial Reconstitution created in 1917, the equipment that had been sent to Germany or occupied Belgium during the war returned to France from 1919 and advance payments were accorded to the affected businesses.

Out of the Somme's 33 sugar refineries, only nine were restored after the war as the profession became concentrated into larger factories. The Vermandoise refinery at Villers-Faucon opened in 1924 and one sugar refinery in Eppeville replaced 14 others in the Santerre and Vermandois district. The distilleries of Nesle and the breweries of Hombleux, Nesle and Péronne were all restored, while in Albert, Victor Liné sold his properties in order to finance the reconstruction of his machine-tool factory to supply the neighbouring Potez aircraft manufacturer.

### AN ASSORTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A great number of farmers returned to their homesteads with debilitating injuries, or never returned at all. Upon the former battleground, land owners found it difficult to work the ravaged, shell-pocked farmland and some preferred to sell to Belgian immigrants. This heralded a great



reparcelling of the land. The new proprietors, managed large farms and called on manpower which was also largely Belgian. During the 1920s and 30s, Polish immigrants were also given general labouring jobs. The people of Picardy were anxious to see their fields return to life and strongly opposed the government's idea of a "red zone", which would prohibit farming and public access.

The reconstruction ended in the early 1930s, having provided local businesses of the construction sector with new lines of trade. It had also enabled the complete electrification of the region's companies. A new world was emerging from the ashes.

■ Isabelle de Wazières

# An Architect's View of the Reconstruction

*The French Government began to think about the reconstruction as early as 1914, questioning whether it would be better to retain certain traces of war or totally erase them. Should they rebuild their homes as exact replicas of the old, or design modern cities of the 20th century? Thérèse Rauwel, town planner of the CAUE (Department of Architecture, Planning and Environment of the Somme), tells us about the different stages of the reconstruction and its historical significance today.*

## Tell us about the different stages of the reconstruction

**Thérèse Rauwel :** The first stage consisted mainly of restoring that which had been destroyed. Architectural research from 1915 focused on two objectives, which were to modernise the town while respecting traditional and regional architecture. Roads and buildings were rebuilt to their old design but different materials were used such as concrete, a new invention of the time. A very broad range of architectural styles were achieved in the end, combining different styles from different periods. The reconstruction was then marked by an exploration of more contemporary styles like Art Deco. The essence of the second phase can be summarised by these words, "as everything has been destroyed, let's design a new world". This is seen to a great extent in churches, like that of Brie, built entirely of concrete. The reconstruction was a very creative period, which drew to an end in the early 1930s.

## How does modernity manifest itself, even in the reconstruction?

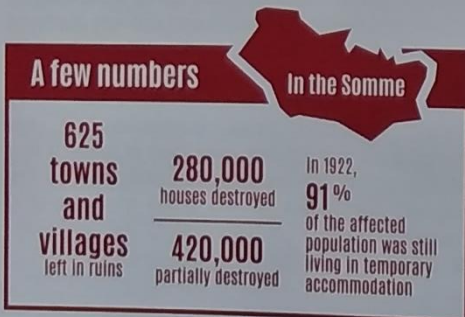
**T.R. :** Brick was the building material most used

in the Somme. Architects created new decorative possibilities and played with geometric shapes. Two different types of housing reconstruction can also be observed. Some were chosen from set models in catalogues, while others were designed by architects. In both cases, the use of economic materials and designs that could be rapidly built were all taken into account as were health and hygiene regulations such as exposure to sunlight, ventilation, and decent living standards, including running water and drainage systems.

## How is reconstruction carried out today?

**T.R. :** With natural disasters and war throughout the world, reconstruction is still an important subject today. The principles are still the same. Architects would prefer to design ecological buildings capable of withstanding extreme weather conditions, but reconstruction is carried out on such a huge scale that cheaper materials and designs that can be rapidly built are often chosen. Bioclimatic reconstruction is the challenge of modern architecture.

■ Interview by Gwendoline Yzèbe



CANTIGNY (Somme) — Le Nouveau Village - La Mairie et la Poste





# The Impact of War on the Mind and Body

During the war, modern weapons and shell shrapnel caused terrible injuries that overwhelmed doctors who had received insufficient training for this type of trauma. The difficulties in evacuating urgent surgical cases from the battleground often led to infection and amputation.

As a result, when peace returned, 300,000 wounded men, two million disabled men and 15,000 men suffering from facial injuries were returned to civilian life. Depending on their state of health, family members veered between support and rejection. To protect the "Gueules Casées" (the French name for men suffering from facial injuries, literally "Broken Faces") from the outside world, three badly wounded men founded the Union of Facially Wounded in 1921, which was financed by the French national lottery. United in a supportive environment the men were able to rebuild their lives.

Little understood mental disorders affected, one in four soldiers. Living with dead men in the trenches, the loss of comrades and the violence they had both suffered and inflicted often led the men to suffer from nightmares and become aggressive. Shell-shock, unrecognised by specialists at that time, meant that the affected men would be interned in psychiatric institutions or returned home, where they would isolate themselves within their memories. ■ I.d.W



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## Defending Soldiers' Rights

The first military associations were formed during the war because of the treatment of wounded soldiers who were unfit to return to the front. In August 1915, the Association générale des mutilés de guerre (General Association for the War Wounded) was created. This was followed by the Union nationale des mutilés et réformés (National Union of Wounded and Discharged Soldiers) and the Fédération nationale des mutilés, victimes de guerre et anciens combattants (National Federation of the Wounded, Victims of War and Veterans). French soldiers, particularly unhappy with living conditions in demobilisation camps, were difficult to control at the end of 1918. The government and army thus encouraged the creation of the Union nationale des combattants (National Union of Servicemen). Shortly afterwards appeared other associations like the

Fédération nationale des combattants républicains (National Federation of Republican Servicemen), the Association républicaine des anciens combattants (Republican Association of Veterans) as well as specialised associations for men who had suffered lung injuries or for men suffering from facial or head injuries, known as "Les Gueules Cassées" (Broken Faces). There were also more corporate associations like one for postmen. These associations were very efficient, enabling soldiers to obtain pensions and material gain. To join an association also enabled the soldiers to talk about war-time experiences that they couldn't share with their families and they encouraged camaraderie, especially in villages and small towns. The movement affected all social backgrounds and despite being patriotic, it was not was not predominantly nationalist, and aspired to peace. ■ G.Y.

### Did you know?

In early 1919,  
**13,000** train windows  
and **400** doors were  
destroyed each month by  
unhappy soldiers.

# Demobilised Soldiers: Finding a Place in Society and Family Life

*Soldiers could not always return home immediately after the Armistice. Some were only demobilised from service in the spring of 1920. Although the homecoming was a moment of joy, the soldiers were not always able to pick up with their former lives. The inexpressible side of war formed a wall between them and the civilians who had stayed at home.*

After months or even years in the trenches and hundreds of letters sent back and forth, soldiers and their families had had plenty of time to imagine the long awaited homecoming. Sentiments were without doubt never expressed as strongly as during those exchanges, often strengthening the bond that existed between husband and wife. Though future demobilised soldiers also had to live with the anxiety of their eventual return. Would they be able to find their place in a world that had gone on without them?

## LOSS OF BEARINGS

The reality was often very different from the fantasy, as much for the men as for their families. The fetes organised by villages and loved ones celebrated their return home but were often tainted by the loss of those who had died at the front. After the war, civilian life would probably appear rather mundane. Going back to work was not always that easy. Companies were obliged to take back their former employees, but were not allowed to fire their replacements. Some French soldiers who had lived in the battle zones could not even recover their former lives; their homes had been destroyed, businesses ruined, and their loved ones killed. In regards to the 500,000 prisoners of war, the return home was even more difficult. They could not automatically apply for veteran of war status and were often suspected of having deserted or allowed themselves to be captured.

## FRAGILE RELATIONSHIPS

The return home was even more emotional when a soldier met his child for the first time. The



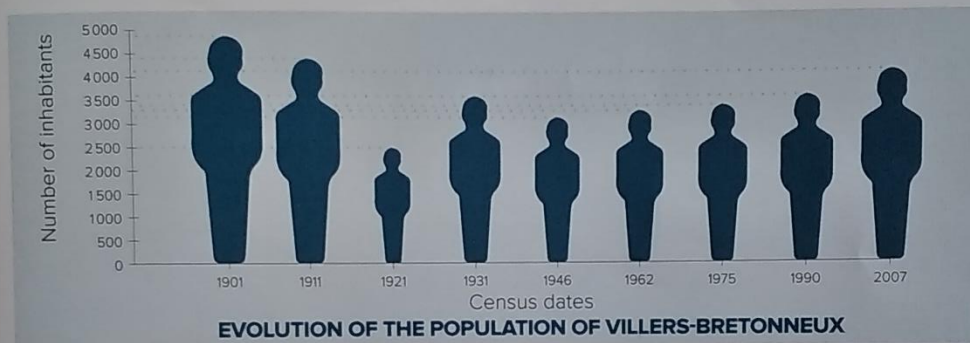
French soldiers often felt dispossessed of their parental authority and the couple had to recover some sort of equilibrium. The war had been long and each had become used to the absence of the other. Infidelity was also a fear that hovered above the homecoming. Some who had suffered psychological trauma during the war were vulnerable and couldn't tolerate loud noises and bright lights. The soldiers never spoke of life at the front, setting a distance that created mutual incomprehension. Impotence, called in French "Mal des Tranchées", also interfered in the marital bedroom. Alcoholism and divorces increased (from 561 in 1913 for 10,000 marriages to 1235 in 1920). Although happily married couples must have existed as well, as the wave of weddings and the increased birth rate seem to indicate (see pg 25).

■ Gwendoline Yzèbe



# The Demographic Impact of the War

*The Great War claimed the lives of millions of victims across the globe. The Spanish Flu epidemic added to this number in 1918 and 1919. When the war ended, the new challenge the nations had to face was how to cope with the demographic imbalance that had been caused.*



In 1918, as the war was drawing to a close, a highly contagious flu epidemic began to spread throughout the ranks. Spanish Flu claimed 25 to 50 million lives with most of its victims aged between 20 and 40 years old. These losses came in addition to the ten million already inflicted by the Great War. Plus, out of a total of 73 million servicemen, almost 21 million returned home disabled, often severely. The greatest hit were those aged between 20 and 35 years old. In France, 10% of the active male population had been completely wiped out. In Germany, this percentage escalated to 15.1%. Modification of the Population Pyramid, lack of manpower, civilian losses in war torn villages... the demographic impact of the war differed depending on the country. In the UK, losses were not as high as in France and Germany and thus the country was less affected by the demographic imbalance. In Germany, the high pre-war birth rate compensated for their losses during the conflict. In France, however, with a birth rate in decline, the ravages of war and the flu epidemic had starved the aging country of manpower and babies. To cope with the lack of workers, France

called upon immigration. One million workers, mainly from Poland, arrived in the country from 1921 to 1931.

## REPOPULATING THE NATIONS

Society had to adapt to this demographic imbalance. Women married men much older, younger or from a different social category than themselves. In France, the number of weddings increased, from 300,000 in 1913 to 623,000 in 1920, although a great number of women remained unwed and many widows never remarried. Life, which had been interrupted by war, gradually went back to normal. In France, the birth rate increased after 1918, but this demographic boost was short lived. Pro-birth policies had to be introduced and a law prohibiting "incitement to abort and propaganda promoting contraception" was passed on 31 July 1920. Nevertheless, the war left a deficit of one million births. In 1939, France was the country with the oldest population in the world. The birth rate did not increase until the end of the Second World War.

■ Sophie Desmaret

# Repercussions that

*In 1918, on the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, four long years of war came to an end. Four atrocious years of death, destruction and trauma, which had lasting consequences on the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

Five peace treaties and more than two years of negotiations were needed to bring these four years of war to an end. Two essential principles led the negotiations; the first was self-determination, in line with the proposals made by American president Woodrow Wilson, and the second was the War Guilt Clause, which forced Germany to accept responsibility for causing the war and creating a legal basis to extract compensation from them. These treaties extracted important territories from the central powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Turkey and Bulgaria and imposed considerable war-damages upon them.

## A MAP OF EUROPE REDRAWN TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE VICTORIOUS

The map of Europe, and indeed the world, was profoundly changed by the war and the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires completely disappeared. The treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye was signed on 10 September 1919, marking the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In its place appeared other states such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. The Allies refused to let the German-speaking Austrians join the Republic of Weimar and Austria and Hungary became independent states. The Ottoman



Empire which had experienced numerous disagreements, within and without its borders, before, during and after the war, was also divided into new states. The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on 24 July 1923, gave shape to the young Republic of Turkey, which arose from this Empire. To ensure that this new global ensemble would not create additional conflicts, a supra-national organisation called the Society of Nations was created through the initiative of President Wilson to arbitrate any international disputes.

## THE RETURN OF NATIONALIST EXASPERATION

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919 and was seen as a *diktat*. Alsace-Lorraine, which had been annexed by Germany in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian War was returned to France. The German Army was limited to 100,000 men and conscription was prohibited. The Treaty of Versailles was thus particularly humiliating and severe on Germany. It insisted notably on the War Guilt Clause; Germany was held solely responsible for the war and was ordered to pay huge amounts in war damages. These measures led to many Germans being left full of hate and wanting revenge. The treaty was therefore not a source of peace; on the contrary, it only accentuated certain tensions that had led to the outbreak of the First World War in the first place. The governments of the defeated countries rapidly violated the military and financial terms of the agreements. To defy and revise the harsher clauses of the peace treaties became key factors of foreign policy and were destabilising factors of international policy. The



# It Lasted a Century

revision of the Treaty of Versailles was also one of the demands that allowed Adolf Hitler's Nazi party to gain support at the beginning of the 1920s and 1930s.

The whole of the 20th century was marked by the

geopolitical consequences of the settlement of the First World War, which generated not only a second world war 20 years later, but also regional conflicts, ethnic cleansing, genocides and civil wars. ■ David Rauscent



## Memoir of a French Translator at the Armistice

**Paul Laperche** (1880-1946), a locksmith from Friville-Escarbotin in the Somme, served as a second-lieutenant and interpreter for High Command from the autumn of 1917. From 7 to 11 November 1918, he accompanied civilian and military representatives of the Allied countries to Rethondes in the forest of Compiègne. They were to debate the conditions of the Armistice with German authorities and Laperche was to ensure the translations in German and in French. Foch, Commander in Chief of the Allied Armies and representative for the Allied nations, would not allow the Germans to use their own interpreter. A first-

hand witness, Paul Laperche wrote about this major chapter of international history. These memoirs are conserved at the Somme Departmental Archives (*shelf 134J64*).

Paul Laperche is very factual in his writing, but also included his own personal impressions of the meeting. He thus describes the Germans who were present, reveals the tensions felt during the exchanges and highlights the emotion of the defeated when faced with the harsh conditions of the Armistice, which were also the only way to bring an end to the fighting.

■ Florie Dournel-Orzel