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8 speakers (Theo Mayer, Dr. Jay Winter, Dr. Dickinson, Dr. E. Lengel, R. Laplander, Mike Shuster, Dr. O'Connell, Sir Hew)

[0:00:07]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News, Episode #104. For last week and for this week, we're proud to present a two-episode special where we've pulled together some of our favorite stories and segments from 2018 for you. They're presented in chronological order. Part One came out last week, the last week of 2018, and Part Two is publishing this week the first week of 2019. During the show we're not going to spend a lot of time setting up each piece, but we will tell you the date, the episode, and the segment title every time, just to keep it all in context. This is all made possible by our sponsors, the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission, The Pritzker Military Museum & Library, and the Starr Foundation. Welcome to Part Two of our favorite segments of 2018. June 29, Episode #78. How World War I Shaped The 20th Century, with Dr. Jay Winter. This week in our Historian's Corner, we're joined by Dr. Jay Winter, from Yale University, and the Charles J. Stille Professor of History Emeritus. Dr. Winter has a great insight into the cultural impact of our 20th Century wars, and he's the author of such books as, The Great War and The Shaping of the 20th Century, and Sights of Memory, Sights of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History. Dr. Winter is also the co-writer and chief historian for the 1996 PBS series, The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century, which was awarded two Emmys, as well as the Alfred DuPont Journalism award, the George Foster Peabody Award, and more. Jay, it's an honor to have you on the show.

[0:02:09]

Dr. Jay Winter: It's good to be with you.

[0:02:10]

Theo Mayer: Jay, you've been focusing on World War I since before the centennial. How did you come to focus on this time period?

[0:02:17]

Dr. Jay Winter: I began studying the First World War in 1965, when I was an undergraduate at Columbia University. The First World War struck me as Europe's Vietnam, so it was the contemporary echoes of the war in Vietnam that effected my choice of subject, and indeed is part of the explanation for the vast expansion of First World War studies from the 1970s on.

[0:02:40]

Theo Mayer: We've talked with a number of historians and others about the many changes that this period brought around. In fact, we've been referring to it as the war that changed the world. Would you agree with that?

[0:02:51]

Dr. Jay Winter: Absolutely. The technology of information and images was revolutionized. One of the leading revolutionaries was the Kodak Company, who put in the hands of ordinary soldiers, the Kodak vest pocket camera, that made it impossible for armies to enforce their regulations that soldiers shouldn't have images of war. They should simply fight, and let the propaganda agents take care of that. In some ways, what the First World War did, was to open up ordinary soldiers' vision of war is, including American soldiers of course, and prepare the ground for the fact that you can't control images. It's the prehistory of Abu Ghraib in Iraq.

[0:03:32]

Theo Mayer: Fascinating, and Jay, in some of your writings, you're specifically talking about World War I, and how it changed the way we mourn our dead. Could you elaborate on that?

[0:03:42]

Dr. Jay Winter: The First World War produced 10 million dead men, either killed in combat or died in disease, and of those, five million have no known graves. It's as true for the American army as it is for others. War has always been a killing machine, but what 1914-18 did, because of artillery, was to turn it into a vanishing act. The issue of missing soldiers, soldiers who died but no one has a trace of them, becomes universal in the First World War. It was the birth of the war of the disappeared, and it's also the moment when a number of different countries all attempted to represent this revolution through creating tombs for unknown warriors. In other words, not people who disappeared, but a body that doesn't have a name, and it's those that we honor, as in Arlington Cemetery.

[0:04:27]

Theo Mayer: Well, you're certainly right about that. In the thousands of locales where World War I memorials are around the country, the names of the lost form the central theme for the communities and for the memorials. Is that also true in Europe?

[0:04:39]

Dr. Jay Winter: Very much so. The names are all that really mattered. This is a phrase that the British poet Rudyard Kipling, who lost his son too, who literally vanished during the Battle of [Lucien] . His body has never been found. He put that in all of the Commonwealth, initially Imperial, but now Commonwealth war graves cemeteries. Their names shall liveth forevermore, because there's nothing left. Artillery killed 80% of the men who died in the First World War. It was mechanized, assembly line, machine-run, killing. Four years of war. The biblical message that we all return to dust was relived with a savage irony attached to it. The notion of honoring the dead, meant honoring the individual who once walked by your side, and now has simply vanished from the face of the Earth.

[0:05:21]

Theo Mayer: In addition to all you've done, you also were asked to consult on the design for the Historial de la Grande Guerre, a major World War I memorial with multiple locations in France, a really unique design. What were some of the thoughts and considerations during that museum's design process?

[0:05:37]

Dr. Jay Winter: Well it was quite something in 1985 to be asked to design a museum, we historians are used to thinking in two dimensions, to actually think in three dimensions about what a museum of the First World War should look like. And what I ultimately came up with, was the idea that 20th Century warfare needs to have a horizontal axis in order to do justice to the subject. The reason is soldiers dug trenches to stay alive, but the second reason is this: the language of glory, the language of heroism. The 19th Century language about war is vertical. 20th Century war and the language we use to represent it, is much more horizontal. Think of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. That particular design is entirely horizontal, and you can see the advantage. Horizontality is the language of mourning. Verticality is the language of hope and celebration, and absolutely, you do not celebrate the First World War, you commemorate it. A horizontal design can express commemorating the War much better than a vertical design.

[0:06:37]

Theo Mayer: As you know, the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission is building a World War I memorial in Washington, D.C., and it's something that's currently missing in the Capital. I know you've been following the project because you've commented on it, but what do you think of the plans for the National World War I Memorial?

[0:06:51]

Dr. Jay Winter: I think they're very interesting, and indeed, there are a number of reasons why. I think it's actually consistent with the change in representation that has taken place in museums all over the world. First, it's a wall, and what American soldiers did, was fill the holes on the Allied side, and also paid for them. To have a wall, that's what's due, to represent the First World War. Secondly, a wall showing men fighting for each other, and I think the third advantage of having a wall that shows men in combat, is to make it clear that the First World War was the first of 20th Century wars that didn't do what they were supposed to do. It was the war that made the next one almost certain. I hope funding becomes fully available. The design in question I fully support.

[0:07:35]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Jay Winter is the Charles J. Stille Professor at Yale University, and the author of numerous books on the cultural impact of World War I on the 20th Century. July 20, Episode #81. A two-for-one combo with World War I War Tech, and Speaking World War I, both about photography. This week in World War I War Tech, the subject is photography and imaging in World War I. Photography and the war had major influences on each other. In 1914, as the Germans streamed through Belgium towards France, pilots had seen the columns of invaders from the air. Now, they made estimations on the number of invaders, but the commanders just didn't believe that you could make such an accurate assessment from up in the sky. But soon after, the planes were outfitted with cameras, and aerial reconnaissance grew into a major part of combat and strategy. The combination of these two, relatively new technologies, the airplane and the camera, provided field commanders with a comprehensive map of the enemy positions and movements, as field darkroom technicians started to stitch together dozens of images into comprehensive area maps. Now there was a pattern here. Reconnaissance overflights preceded artillery bombardments, and artillery bombardments preceded ground offensives. A pattern that the soldiers began to recognize. And if you think about it, even though fighter plane aces were the noted, notorious, wonderful knights of the sky, as they engaged in dogfights, much of the time their actual job was protecting the recon planes. In fact, those pilots and the specialized units that made sense of their photos, probably had a greater impact on the war. On the ground, official war photographs and films were being made by all sides. The U.S. Signal Corps motion and still cameramen were assigned to every division, and outfit of the American military, as well as the Red Cross and the

Salvation Army. These cameramen produced nearly 600,000 feet of film abroad, and in the United States the Signal Corps shot another 277,000 feet of film. The U.S. Signal Corps documented an American war in an unprecedented fashion, preserving countless motion and still images for posterity. A huge boon to the Centennial, as the Library of Congress has added troves of great, digitized images and films to the publicly available resource. But the Signal Corps cameramen weren't the only ones on the ground with cameras. World War I started just after the introduction of a world-changing, new camera, the Vest Pocket Kodak, the VPK. By 1914 War photography had actually been around for a half a century, however due to the tech limitations of the camera gear, pictures of war were mostly staged. According to military historian Joe [Koxy], 19th Century war photographers were hampered by wet-plate technology, with unwieldy cameras that need long exposure times. Not exactly ideal for capturing the chaos of war. But the 1912 Kodak Vest Pocket camera was small enough to carry, and anyone could take a picture. It quickly exploded in popularity, and reached the Front in 1914 with the first wave of British soldiers. Commanders were far from thrilled about this. They wanted to control the world vision of the War. After friendly images of Brits and Germans surfaced following the Christmas Truce of 1914, the British government banned portable cameras, but of course it didn't work. In contrast, the German authorities were fairly tolerant about personal photography in their ranks. In the U.S., the Kodak Company marketed the VPK specifically to soldiers, who brought them to France in droves. According to a Kodak advertising poster, the camera helped the soldier create, "History from their viewpoint." Now, this isn't just effective marketing, but a poignant statement regarding the significance of personal photography in wartime. So thanks to this new piece of photographic technology, soldiers, nurses and civilians alike, produced a massive collection of personal images and have managed to share their experience with us about the war that changed the world. Now for our weekly feature, Speaking World War I. This week, we're going to stay with our photo kick, with the reprise of a word we featured in Episode #46. Now, Americans have been known for their shooting skills since the colonial pioneer days, and in World War I, they continued to display their sharpshooting skills in the trenches. But shooting from a trench in a war was really different from shooting back home. Lifting your head up while you carefully aim in on target, could get you killed, so when you went to fire, speed was key. Snapping up over the parapet, aim, fire, and drop, became the standard procedure. A procedure that came to be known as the snapshot. The word snapshot had been used to describe a quick shot from a firearm during the 1800s, but came into much more frequent use during World War I. Around the same time, the word was then borrowed for another activity. As we mentioned in this week's World War I War Tech, this is the era of a new, small, portable, camera. Pop up a camera, aim, and fire. You've just taken a snapshot. A game even emerged called snapshooting, a photographic version of tag, where you tried to escape while someone raced around trying to catch you on film. It was a kind of photographic version of hunting. Snapshot. See the podcast notes to learn more. August 10, Episode #84, Japan in World War I, with Dr. Fredrick Dickinson. Now those who've never been exposed to what happened in the far east during World War I are often surprised by the fact that Japan declared war almost as soon as hostilities broke out in 1914, years before America entered the fray, and many of those same people are also surprised to learn that Japan fought on the side of the Allies. And, those who know just a little about Japan in World War I, tend to hold some precepts about Japan, and Japan in World War I, including the accepted Western concept that Japan was an isolated nation, and stalked away from the Versailles Treaty, having been seriously insulted by the non-acceptance of their proposal for racial equality for the League Of Nations. Now, I'm one of those people, so it was really great to have some of my precepts realigned by our next guest, Dr. Frederick Dickinson, Professor of Japanese History at the University of Pennsylvania, Co-Director of the Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies, and the Deputy Director for the Penn Forum on Japan. Dr. Dickinson didn't just study Japan, he was born in Tokyo, and raised in Kanazawa and Kyoto. He's written a series of books including War and National Reinvention: Japan and the Great War, 1914-1919. Dr. Dickinson, thank you for joining us.

[0:15:25]

Dr. Dickinson: Sure, thanks Theo, thanks for having me. Delighted to talk about Japan, delighted to have an audience for Japan.

[0:15:30]

Theo Mayer: Okay, let's start with the isolation issue.

[0:15:33]

Dr. Dickinson: I would say number one, that Japan was never isolated, but we have this impression because Japan was very adept at essentially controlling its own foreign policy up through the Early Modern Period. Had a little bit of issue in the mid-19th Century obviously, when Commodore Perry came along, and it turned out that the Americans were going to sort of decide the terms of trade and negotiation, but the Japanese are first defeating the Chinese in war in 1895. They're also a very important part of the international coalition to suppress the Boxer Rebellion in China, in 1900. Later 19th Century, it's the Age of Empire, so there are a few things you have to do in order to be taken seriously on the international stage. You have to create a modern state, and you have to create a modern empire. In order to do both of those things, you have to create a modern navy and a modern army. Essentially, Japan is doing that. The Japanese, already by 1885 are looking to Korea as the principle target of their potential empire building enterprise, and that very much begins with the Sino-Japanese War, and just continues. So, Japan is very much on

the radar screen, and this is the main reason for the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902. The British recognize, number one, that Russia is a problem, and they recognize number two, that the Japanese are the ones to help deal with the Russians.

[0:16:55]

Theo Mayer: World War I breaks out, and within months Japan invades the [Foreign] region of China, presumably because it was held by Germans at the time. Is that true?

[0:17:04]

Dr. Dickinson: Definitely, but even more important than the within months idea, is that the Japanese are declaring war on Germany, August 23rd of 1914. This is quite remarkable. I mean obviously it's after the British, after the French, but it's before the Americans, it's before the Italians, it's the Ottoman Empire gets involved in this war. They're very much out there, at the beginning of the war. And, yes, you have to ask yourself, well what's going on? Essentially, it's the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and in particular it has to do with the one man who was basically in charge, in August of 1914, and he was the one who made almost single-handedly the decision to go to war against Germany. That was [foreign] . He was the Foreign Minister at the time.

[0:17:45]

Theo Mayer: So what role did Japan play during the War?

[0:17:49]

Dr. Dickinson: Well, it's an interesting question and important one, and one that you would probably be surprised to learn, but I would say to put in a nutshell, the Japanese belligerence against the Central Powers was a deciding factor in the victory of the Allied Powers. The Germans essentially are knocked out of the war in Asia by November of 1914. And, I would simply say that had the Japanese decided instead of declaring war on Germany, to declare war on Britain and its Allies, we would be living in a very, different world right now, and that was not necessarily out of the realm of possibility.

[0:18:27]

Theo Mayer: No, it's a fascinating role. They also played a fairly large part in keeping the U-boat threat down in the Mediterranean.

[0:18:34]

Dr. Dickinson: Exactly, so all kinds of supporting roles that the Japanese are playing throughout the War, in fact.

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Theo Mayer: So now the War wraps up, and Japan is at the table at Versailles. How'd that go, and what role did classic American racism play in the outcome?

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Dr. Dickinson: We usually simply hear the issue of the racial non-discrimination clause that the Japanese put up, for inclusion in the Covenant of the League of Nations, but you have to remember that was a very minor issue for the Japanese. They essentially got everything they wanted except that clause, and then some. And, what they actually wanted was confirmation of their newfound power in China, number one, and they also got confirmation of their newfound empire. That is, they're given German Micronesia as League of Nations mandate territories, to essentially develop as part of their sort of informal empire, after 1919. So those are the two things that the Japanese were really interested in, and they got them without a problem. Plus, they got recognition of being a world power. They were one of the five victor powers that were present at the table to discuss not simply issues in Asia, but to discuss issues of world peace.

[0:19:49]

Theo Mayer: Okay, so moving forward again, Japan was allied with the Anglo-Franco Alliance during World War I. What happened between World War I and World War II, that caused Japan to align themselves against the Allies 25 years later?

[0:20:02]

Dr. Dickinson: The changes from the Manchurian Incident onward. The Manchurian Incident in September of 1931. After becoming a pivotal player at the Paris Peace Conference, a pivotal player at the Washington Conference, at the Geneva Conference, and Naval Arms Reductions at the London Conference in 1930, a very important signatory to the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. After that, clearly something different is going on. Essentially, I would say it's a problem of domestic politics in Japan. Political parties are sort of a new phenomenon in Japan until the First World War, essentially. The oligarchs had been in charge, the bureaucratic decision makers had been in charge, so the

1920s is a new era of political party management, and there are some within Japan that do not benefit politically by this arrangement, and they try as hard as they can throughout the 1920s to put Japan on a different path. They finally find a solution, a formula, and that is just to start shooting at home and abroad. So these folks are doing that in early 1930s, and this obviously ultimately changes Japan's trajectory, puts it on a path toward alliance with Germany and Italy, rather than with Britain and the United States.

[0:21:15]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Dickinson, thank you so much for providing our listeners with this great overview of a story that many people I've spoken with are actually surprised at, and really a story that's pretty much untold. Thank you for coming in.

[0:21:27]

Dr. Dickinson: My pleasure. Thanks for having me Theo.

[0:21:29]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Frederick Dickinson is Professor of Japanese History at the University of Pennsylvania. In the same Episode #84, The 28th Division: Pennsylvania National Guard Doughboys Fight, from Dr. Edward Lengel.

[0:21:52]

Dr. E. Lengel: The curtain opened in August, 1918, on one of World War I's hardest-fought battles. The 28th Division Pennsylvania National Guard had been in the thick of the fighting for three weeks now, following up the defeat of the final German offensive along the Marne, on July 15, by participating in the so-called Aisne-Marne Campaign. The campaign cleared a German-held salient, and pushed the enemy back to Vesle River. Now however, the Pennsylvania Doughboys had to cross the river at the shell-shattered village of [Fism] . 19-year-old Corporal Harold [Pearce inaudible] approached Fism with his comrades of the 112th Regiment, on the evening of August 7th. A white cloud of gas and smoke hovers over the town, but otherwise it looks peaceful enough, he thought. The closer he got though, the worse it appeared. Supposedly, the just departing Red Arrow 32nd Division from Michigan and Wisconsin, had captured the town. As the Doughboys past an old mill and railroad though, they saw a red glow from fires burning in the town. Then, enemy artillery shells began falling as the Doughboys ran past a wrecked Dodge staff car, smaller fires crackling with exploding cartridges, corpses, and streets littered with fallen buildings, shell holes, poles, wires, and other debris. German snipers were everywhere. American detachments worked through the town to clear out the enemy snipers who had penetrated Fism from the smaller village of Fismette across the river to the north. Meanwhile, other Doughboys, with automatic rifles used a half-wrecked footbridge to enter Fismette. German infantry managed to hold the Americans back, until a group from the 112th Regiment's 3rd Battalion raced across a bridge of fallen logs and established a weak bridgehead below a railroad embankment near Chateau Diable, soon better known by its English name of The Devil's House. American artillery opened fire on the north bank of the river at dawn, on August 8th, an hour later the Americans hot-footed it across the footbridge from Fism to Fismette. Converging enemy machine gun and artillery fire quickly drove them back. That afternoon the 112th Regiment attacked again, this time following a rolling barrage that ripped through Fismette. Fighting desperately in the streets, often hand-to-hand, the Americans gained footholds in the southern and eastern parts of the village, and took 40 prisoners. It wasn't much, but it was a start. August 9th dawned with the Americans in Fismette just trying to hold on. Savage German artillery fire, including gas, descended on the village all day, making relief difficult. Harold Pearce and his brother Hugh had to dash across the footbridge into Fismette, at their captain's direct orders. Harold Pearce recalled, "He commands to go, and we start as fast as our legs can go. Over the bridge, past a big dud, aerial bomb. I see my brother Hugh fall and I think he's shot, but he has only jumped into a hole in the bridge, and we all follow him in, to get our wind. Two dead men are lying half in the water. We climb out again and run to the end of the bridge, and turn quickly to the left, into the houses. Near the first house an American is lying, so covered with rock dust he looks like a marble man." In a house, Pearce found some Doughboys sniping at Germans and cutting notches in their barrels to count the kills. The men were out of cigarettes and so desperate that they had been smoking leaves. Fortunately Pearce didn't smoke, so as he recalled, "I hand out packs of Camels and Chesterfields, and know how the Good Samaritan felt. I am a hero, a saint, a philanthropist in their eyes. They inhale and relax." Beyond, he found houses with wounded and killed. Pearce and his brother next joined some Doughboys behind a stone wall. The Americans fired uphill into an orchard where they heard, but did not see a gun firing, ignoring orders to conserve their ammunition, and he recalled: "Hugh claims it is an American gun, and does not get down although it's firing steadily now, and the crack of its bullets are plain now over our heads. I yell at him to get down, but he laughs and fires another shot. I jump and grab him around the neck and shoulders, and throw him to the ground heavily, and lie on top of him. Just then a leaf comes tumbling out the peach branches, cut by a bullet not a foot over his head. He is willing to admit I'm right. Later, the men open fire together as if the whole German army are marching down the streets. Quickly, I shift my Springfield to the right, to get in a shot. As I shoot, a man from F-Company next to me, drops to the ground as if dead. I had the muzzle about six inches from his ear. He's out for a few seconds, and then rolls onto his back, stares to the sky, and asks me where he's hit. A sergeant next to him, whose ear drums were almost broken, curses at me, but the one who was knocked out says, 'Never mind, buddy.' I settle back of the wall, ashamed, but

then my intentions were good." German soldiers of the proud, and battle-hardened 4th Guards Division counter-attacked, but the Doughboys behind the stone wall beat them back. Undeterred, the Germans filtered snipers and machine gunners into town overnight. They were determined not just to hold Fismette, but to wipe out the impudent Americans.

[0:27:37]

Theo Mayer: October 5th, Episode #92. The Historian's Corner, The Lost Battalion, with Rob Laplander. There are really two fabled stories in American World War I lore. Interestingly, they both surround the first few weeks of October. One is the story of Sergeant Alvin York. The other, the story of the Lost Battalion. Both become larger than life, spun up by popular media and the desire to turn the war into adventure and saga. But the real story, the actual events, are probably more dramatic, more human, more emotional, and certainly more painful than the fictionalized ones. What they share in common, is the humility, valor, willing sacrifice, and character of some remarkable Americans. Ordinary men, in extraordinary circumstance. We're joined by Rob Laplander, citizen historian and author of, Finding the Lost Battalion: Beyond the Rumors, Myths and Legends of America's Famous World War I Epic. Rob, welcome back to the podcast.

[0:28:44]

R. Laplander: How are you there, sir?

[0:28:45]

Theo Mayer: Good! Hey Rob, you're coming in all the way from France.

[0:28:48]

R. Laplander: Yes sir, we are just outside of [Venirville], France, where the Lost Battalion was trapped for five days on a hillside in the Charlevaux Ravine. We are just about three kilometers away. I'd like to be doing this from in the pocket, but there's no cell phone coverage there, sorry.

[0:29:08]

Theo Mayer: Well, I'm not surprised, it's a bit remote. Rob, to start with, who is the Lost Battalion, and how did they wind up getting lost?

[0:29:16]

R. Laplander: The Lost Battalion is actually a group of about 700 men who were trapped a kilometer and a half ahead of enemy lines for five days between October 2nd and October 7th, 1918. If this were the '20s or '30s, you'd know all about it, it was a very popular story at the time. About 700 men went into the ravine, and at the end of the five-day siege, 194 walked out. They took 72% casualties, and it was one of the most over-reported stories of the war. The most significant thing about it I think, is that Lost Battalion is a misnomer. They weren't lost in the sense that nobody knew where they were. Everybody knew where they were. Even the guys would tell you, "Hell, everybody knew where we were, even the Germans knew where we were." Lost, meant that they were in a situation that it didn't look like they were going to get out of.

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Theo Mayer: So Rob, your book The Lost Battalion, is actually titled, "Finding the Lost Battalion: Beyond the Rumors, Myths, Legends of America's Famous World War I Epic," and that begs the question, what are the myths and misconceptions about the epic?

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R. Laplander: There's always been this misconception that the leader of the Lost Battalion, Charles Whittlesey, had them in the wrong spot. Or, that he charged ahead in some moment of glory, and put them in a situation that was untenable. Neither one of those stories is true. Whittlesey was exactly where he said he was, and he was given specific and direct orders, and he followed them when nobody else did. Another myth is that he sent out the wrong coordinates from where he was, which led to an American artillery barrage directly down on their position, and that's not true at all. There were several, different factors that were involved in how that happened, but it had absolutely nothing to do with Charles Whittlesey.

[0:31:07]

Theo Mayer: But there was a barrage that came down on them?

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R. Laplander: Yes. On October 4th, for a period of time, there was an American barrage that landed directly on the position. They had to endure it for almost two and a half hours.

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Theo Mayer: How did they wind up getting found?

[0:31:23]

R. Laplander: Whittlesey and his men sat on that hillside for five days, and in the mean time the rest of the regiment and their sister regiment the 307th, fought very hard to get them out. To get over the hill and into that ravine so that they could link up with their flanks, and it helped pry the line loose, so that the Germans had no choice but to actually pull out. It was about 7:30 p.m. On October 7th that the Germans evacuated the area, and Company B of the 307th managed to come in on the right flank, and hook up with Whittlesey. By that time however, the damage had been done. Only 194 were able to walk out under their own power.

[0:32:08]

Theo Mayer: Now, they tried to resupply Whittlesey by air. We had a story about that last week. What was that about?

[0:32:15]

R. Laplander: The 50th Air Squadron tried very hard to come into the ravine and drop packages. The problem was Whittlesey's men were dug in so deep. If they could be seen from the air, then they could be seen from the hills around them. And, if they were seen from the hills around them, they'd be killed.

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Theo Mayer: When they finally came out there are already cameras and reporters all set up, and it got turned into kind of a media story, didn't it?

[0:32:42]

R. Laplander: Well, even before they were out of the pocket, as early as October 5th the first newspaper articles were appearing in the newspapers at home about them. They were already heroes, even before they were out of the pocket. And, when they walked out of the position on October 8th, there was cameras there and reporters, and there's actually film footage that was taken of them coming out.

[0:33:05]

Theo Mayer: Well Rob, you're there now. What's it like walking the space on the centennial of the event?

[0:33:12]

R. Laplander: We were here 10 years ago for the 90th, and it was a very moving experience then. Now, being here on the hillside each day that they were there, 100 years to the minute that they were there, this is a story that I've lived with for the better part of 21 or 22 years. My kids know the story, the wife knows the story. You can't swing a dead cat in my house without hitting something Lost Battalion. And here we are at the 100th anniversary, on this hillside. It's an extremely moving thing to be part of the centennial of World War I to begin with, and now to be allowed to be part of this. To have this honor of standing on this hillside in the foxholes that they were in a hundred years ago, and to know what happened here, it defies description in a way, and it's very, very, moving.

[0:34:08]

Theo Mayer: Rob Laplander is an author, citizen historian, and importantly, the force behind the Doughboy MIA Project, which tracks all of the still missing service personnel from the war. Episode #94 Maneuverings Both Military and Diplomatic, with Mike Shuster. There is an incredible mix and tension of aggressive fighting and anticipation of an armistice. Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for The Great War Project blog, picks up that story as October flows into November.

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Mike Shuster: Thank you Theo. The headline reads, "Take The War To German Territory, A New Allied Offensive." The thing left unsaid? Surrender. Special to The Great War Project. Events were moving quickly now, as Germany continues to pull back its forces on the Western Front. Historian Martin Gilbert reports on October 12th, "The German government accepted President Woodrow Wilson's conditions for negotiations. The complete withdrawal of their troops from France and Belgium." "Excitement about the coming peace in premature," reports Gilbert. Before Wilson received the German acceptance of his terms, the British and French open a new offensive inside Belgium. In five days, the new offensive had advanced 18 miles, taking 12,000 prisoners and 550 guns. Gilbert reports, "German troops continued to fight for the French cities under their control, unwilling to withdraw without a struggle from regions they had ruled for more than four years." On October 13th, French forces drive them out of the city of [Laurent] , liberating 6,500 French civilians. According to Gilbert, the liberation of Laurent was a turning point. A city that had so often been within sound of the guns during battles, but had faced the humiliation of occupation for more than 1,500 days. Not all the allied leaders favor an armistice. The British Prime Minister David Lloyd George raises serious

questions about it. He tells his senior military and political advisors of his fears that if the Germans gained a break, they might obtain time to reorganize, and recover. According to notes of a meeting with his advisor, Lloyd George then raised for consideration whether the actual military defeat of Germany, giving the German people the real taste of war, was not more important from the point of view of the peace of the world, than a surrender at present time when the German armies were still on foreign territory. And other British diplomat worried from a perch in Switzerland, that Germany would make peace too soon. "It will be a thousand pities," he writes in mid-October, a century ago, "if we are called off before we hammer the Germans completely on the Western Front. We ought to get them into their beastly country, for that is the only way of bringing home to the Kaiser or to his population, what war means." On that day, October 14th, among the Germans wounded at the [Eep] salient, is a Corporal Adolf Hitler, temporarily blinded by a gas shell. Hitler is evacuated from the Front. The state of German forces is pitiful. One of the German leaders writes in a letter, "The wretched condition of troops, short of artillery support, short of ammunition, fuel, horses, and officers." He concludes, "We must obtain peace before the enemy breaks into Germany." By late October a century ago, President Wilson is making it clear, in fairly blunt terms by his standards. According to a story in [Gary Mead] that what was wanted from the Germans now, was not offers of peace negotiations, but surrender. "Nothing," Wilson writes, "can be gained by leaving this essential thing unsaid." And that's the news from The Great War Project, a century ago during these days, in The Great War.

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Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster is the curator for The Great War Project blog. November 11, Episode #98. From the World War I Armistice Centennial Day Sacred Service - an excerpt. The Last One Down: Henry Gunther. Written by Matthew Naylor, underscored with "The Unanswered Question" by Aaron Copeland, performed by the World War I Centennial Orchestra, and read by Dr. Libby O'Connell.

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Dr. O'Connell: The squad approached a German roadblock with two machine guns. The soldier got up with his bayonet in hand and against the orders of his sergeant, charged. The German troops tried to wave him off. He kept going, firing a shot or two. When he got too close to the machine guns, he was shot in a burst of automatic fire, and killed instantly. At 10:59 a.m. The last soldier was killed. An American, just one minute before the Armistice took effect. Just one minute. Knowing the Armistice would come into force at 11:00 a.m., the German soldiers had tried to stop him, to wave him off, to stop the bloodshed. This last man who died, shot by a German machine gunner, this last man, Henry Gunther, a German-American born to German parents in Maryland. Had he waited just one more minute, they might have welcomed him as a brother. "Mein bruder, mein bruder." As many as 35 million dead, millions more wounded, families torn apart, with 50- or 100 million dead from the flu of 1919, the founding catastrophe of the modern age, ushering the greatest period of change in human history. A world forever changed.

[0:42:36]

Theo Mayer: And we're closing with December 14, Episode #101. Three Key Impacts of World War I, with historian Sir Hew Strachan. Sir Hew is one of the most respected World War I historians anywhere. He's the Professor of International Relations at the University of St. Andrew's, and Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, University of Oxford. Sir Hew, it's wonderful to have you back on the podcast. Thank you for taking the time.

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Sir Hew: It's a great pleasure Theo. I'm delighted to be back on.

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Theo Mayer: We've been calling it the war that changed the world. Now in your opinion, as one of the great subject matter experts on World War I, what would you pick as the top three changes that were brought about by the conflict?

[0:43:24]

Sir Hew: I suppose the first and most obvious thing, if you look at it from the perspective of 1918-1919, is that four of the major empires in the world have collapsed, but the results across Central and Eastern Europe, and into Asia, and into Central Asia, and down to the Middle East, is massive. Here is essentially a situation where there is a vacuum in terms of governance, in terms of which the successor states will be. All that is going on, and possession is nine-tenths of the law. So, while the peacemakers are meeting in Paris these competing entities are fighting each other, and force of arms is deciding a great deal. So that's perhaps the long answer, but I think that's one of the most dramatic changes. The second would be the entry of the United States into the world order. Its role in shaping the international order. Its positioning of itself as a global power, so that would be my second point. And, I think the third is that what emerges out of both those things is that our understanding of how states should be put together itself changes. So there's a consideration of power politics, and in some ways Wilson pays no attention to those principles of power politics. He simply says, or he gives vent to the idea of national self-determination. And that remains even today, something we respect as a principle, but of course has been a tremendous source of conflict in the 20th Century world not just in the short term, in the run up to the Second World War, but also still today.

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Theo Mayer: That's fascinating. So your biggest take on all of this is, that the transformation from this was political?

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Sir Hew: Yes, I think I would. I mean, if the implication of your question is, it economic, is it social, well of course it's those things as well.

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Theo Mayer: Sure, technological, social.

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Sir Hew: There is a lot, and I think I would put political, economic and social ahead of technological, because although the technologies of war are predominately new by the First World War, you can see the antecedents of much of that with industrialization between 1850 and 1914. And perhaps most basic would be the notion that they are societies with mass popular press, with a very high level of literacy, with a degree of economic security, and with a genuine sense of progress defined in all sorts of ways. Which makes for the war being a sort of surprise, in that you'd expect Europe to have more sense than to go to war, and also makes this war so radically different so quickly it becomes a major war involving whole societies from 1914 itself. And, the collapse of the empires at the end of the war is something which all have realized is a possible implication of the war from 1914 itself. Change is there, but change now is going to be in a much more radical form, and a revolutionary form.

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Theo Mayer: Now, there are some who argue that World War II is simply a continuation of World War I. What are your thoughts on that subject?

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Sir Hew: I've never bought that argument. I don't think I've ever bought it, I certainly don't buy it now. The aspiration that this is a war to end all wars, which is an aspiration expressed by socialists particularly in France in 1914, and one of course reflected by Woodrow Wilson after the U.S. Entry, that's one genuinely felt across Europe in 1919. But, I think if you look at the situation across the world from the perspective of 1924, let's say, with the Treaty of Lausanne, and with people returning from the war, I think there must then have been a sense of optimism, and that whatever has happened in relation to the war and the experience of the war, can begin to be put behind societies, as they look forward. So, I don't think you can jump from 1919 to 1939, or 1941. There's too much in between.

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Theo Mayer: You've written a lot of books and a lot of articles about World War I, and you've done a lot of research. What are some of the key issues about this global catharsis that remain unknown, unknowable, and unresolved?

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Sir Hew: There are areas where I think research will still be done, which will leave us much better informed. In the Russia case, Russia's been neglected because at least up until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian history began in 1917. So the First World War was always looked at the precursor to the revolution. And the same point in a slightly different way applies to the Ottoman Empire, but it has remained a story too dominated in some ways, by the fact that the easily accessible source material is in languages other than Turkish. In terms of what will remain unknown, one is on hunger in the First World War, but what we will always struggle to identify is how much hunger across Europe in the First World War was the direct product of the war effort, and how far hunger was a product of maladministration, of the mobilization of peasant societies, the withdrawal of animals from agriculture for use in the armed forces. In other words, how much is hunger an indirect consequence of the War, rather than a direct consequence of military action. And this seems to be crucially important because one of the things that I thought would happen as a result of this [inaudible] but hasn't, is that we haven't the faintest idea what the total number of dead as a result of this war, is. Most historians would say demographically the impact of the war is pretty short term, and most societies have recovered fairly quickly in the 1920s. But, it would still to my mind, be the great project actually to answer that question. So, there's a lot to be done.

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Theo Mayer: Thank you. Nice chatting with you.

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Sir Hew: Thank you Theo.

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Theo Mayer: Sir Hew Strachan is Professor of International Relations at the University of St. Andrew's, and Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, University of Oxford, and an author of many books and papers. And that wraps up Episode #104, our World War I Centennial News New Year special, with some of our favorite segments of 2018, Part Two. So thank you to our 2018 production team, our amazing guests, and our most amazing audience. I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. Thank you for listening. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate and educate about World War I. For the past nearly five years, we've inspired a national conversation and awareness about World War I. We've brought the lesson of 100 years ago, to today's educators and to their classrooms. We've helped to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across our nation. And now, we'll be putting our focus and attention on one more key goal. With your help, we're going to build America's National World War I Memorial, in Washington, D.C. Please see ww1cc.org/memorial for all the details. We want to thank the Commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, as well as the Starr Foundation, for their support. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn. You'll find World War I Centennial News in all the places you get your podcasts, and even using your smart speaker by saying, "Play WW1 Centennial News podcast." The podcast Twitter handle is @theww1podcast. The Commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc, and we're on Facebook at WW1 Centennial. Thank you for joining us, and don't forget, keep the story of World War I alive in America by helping us build the National World War I Memorial in Washington D.C. Just text the letters WWI or WW1, to the phone number 91-999. Thank you. And as a closing 2018 treat we thought we'd end with a post-War big band rendition of, "Over There." So Long.

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