

1918, ARMISTICE(S).

BEFORE AND AFTER THE 11TH NOVEMBER

24 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2018

The Musée de l'Armée looks back at the key historical and commemorative moment that was the 11 November 1918 armistice, with a free exhibition of documents in the magnificent Turenne Room, usually closed to the public.

The documentary exhibition *1918, Armistice(s). Before and after the 11th November* shows how, once the general and immediate sense of relief had subsided, perception of the post-war experience varied depending on periods, nationalities, and whether the warring parties were victorious or defeated. Public opinion was marked by complex grieving processes and a sense of disillusion and/or resentment, as states and veterans' organisations drew up commemoration policies.

The exhibition features photographs, paintings, posters and heritage objects, putting them in context and providing explanatory comments on 23 panels, in an overview of the seven armistices and some of their consequences:

- in 1917, Brest-Litovsk on 5 December, then Focsani on 9 December;
- in 1918, Salonica on 29 September, Mudros on 31 October, Villa Giusti on 3 November, Rethondes on 11 November and the Treaty of Belgrade on 13 November.

The Musée de l'Armée put the exhibition together by drawing on its own collections of documents and objects, as well as those of its partners, such as La contemporaine, the Musée Clemenceau in Paris and the Library of Congress in Washington, and on private collections.

Brest-Litovsk, the first armistice



Photograph of the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, on 5 December 1917, between the Russian Bolsheviks and the Central Powers.

© Paris, Musée de l'Armée

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was the first of seven armistices and conventions signed between 5 December 1917 and 13 November 1918, which together put an end to the First World War. The mandated delegates signed the treaty, thereby committing the powers they represented to respecting the different clauses covering the cessation of hostilities on land, at sea and in the skies, withdrawal of troops according to a set schedule, surrender of arms and military equipment, reparations and financial compensations, territorial losses and gains, and border demarcations.

This photograph appeared in *Le Miroir* and *Excelsior* (5 January 1918). The photographs published by French newspapers were sourced from Russian and German newspapers.



Marshal Foch's Waterman fountain pen
© Paris, Musée de l'Armée, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais

Marshal Foch used a Waterman fountain pen to sign the Armistice of 11 November 1918.

The pen is displayed in the rooms dedicated to the First World War at the museum, close to the bugle used by Corporal Pierre Sellier from the 171th Infantry Regiment to sound the ceasefire on 7 November 1918 at 9pm, allowing the German representatives to cross French lines. Pen, ink and paper are ordinary objects, but absolutely essential to signing an armistice. Some of them were kept by eyewitnesses, then carefully preserved by their families.



German and French soldiers together on 11 November 1918 on the Lingekopf
© Private collection

This photograph, entitled *11 novembre 1918 à Lingekopf*, was taken on the Lingekopf ridge in the Alsatian Vosges. It shows French and German soldiers posing together after the Armistice of 11 November 1918 was announced. The soldiers present in this conflict zone represented different nationalities. We could imagine that the German combatants included soldiers from Alsace and Lorraine, since their territory had been annexed by the Reich in 1871. When the armistice and peace treaty were signed, Alsace and Lorraine were one of priorities for French military commanders and politicians; it proved to be a thorny issue, causing endless conflicts with the Germans and sometimes even the Allies.

The Armistice ushered in the demobilisation phase for over four million French soldiers, a period marked with joy as well as exasperation and delays. Demobilisation required a level of transport and financing that was lacking. The French government wanted to maintain a powerful army until the peace treaty was signed, on 28 June 1919, and because it was still waging war on other fronts, in the Levant, Russia, and Eastern and Central Europe.

The French people then entered a phase of grieving and disillusion, which the state and veterans' organisations attempted to channel into commemoration of the dead and homage to the soldiers who took part in the Great War. Armistice Day continues to be celebrated today in France, Belgium, Canada, Commonwealth countries and the USA, part of a broader and more pacific perspective that pays tribute to veterans of all wars.

DID YOU KNOW?

“Fake news”

American newspapers announced the armistice on 7 November 1918, when the German plenipotentiaries were still on their way and no official announcement had been made, as illustrated by the drawing opposite, produced by William Allen Rogers for the *New York Herald* and published on 7 November. The inhabitants of New York immediately began to celebrate the end of the war, filling the city streets with music and confetti. At 1pm, even trading on Wall Street was halted.



Press cartoon by William Allen Rogers (1854–1931) published in the *New York Herald* in November 1918
© Washington, Library of Congress

Partners

The exhibition is organized with the support of ARQUUS and the First World War Centenary Partnership Program.



Exhibition curator – Musée de l’Armée

Sylvie Picolet, historical research, educational action and mediation division

Virtual serials

The museum is providing a taste of the exhibition with a number of virtual serials showing on its website starting on 26 July.

Practical information

Free exhibition running from 24 July to 30 September 2018, every day from 10am to 6pm, evening opening on Tuesday until 9pm.

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#ExpoArmistices



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