

Maurice Pellé (Douai 1863 – Toulon 1924)

Teacher's Guide Level C



Source: Viktor Stretti: General M. Pellé, archive of the Military History Institute in Prague (VHÚ).

I. Top Student in His Class, Bright and Quick Learner in Life

Maurice was the second eldest son of Charles Henri Joseph Pellé, a French military officer, in the city of Douai in northern France. Maurice was lucky: besides strong moral and religious values, his family also encouraged the development of the boy's intellect and artistic talents. Already in high school, the prestigious catholic St. Stanislaus College, it was evident that Pellé was talented not only in mathematics, but also in drawing. His intelligence as well as his father's example predestined him to study at École Polytechnique in Paris, which he started attending in 1882. He knew already then that he would follow in his father's footsteps to become a professional soldier.

École Polytechnique.

1883-84

*Liste, par ordre de mérite, Des Élèves Déclarés
Services publics, le 11 Août 1884 avec indication de
chacun d'eux est classé.
(Cette liste ne sera définitive qu'après l'approbation)*

Noms		Noms		Noms		
1	Chapuy	M.in.	36	Guillaux	G. M.in.	
2	Coque	M.in.	37	Bernheim	G. M.in.	
3	Pellé	A	38	Roche	G. M.in.	
4	Bernard	M.in.	39	Vormand	G. M.in.	
5	Maurit	M.in.	40	Ripard	G. M.in.	
6	Pelloux	M.in.	41	Marbriot	G	
7	Santenoid	M.in.	42	Mégard	G	
8	Vieille Charles	P.C.	43	Fayrabort	"	
9	Nadal	M.in.	44	Corpet	"	
10	Pouquet	"	45	Risler	"	
11	Godard	P.C.	46	Robin	A	
12	Hoozog	P.C.	47	Troceni	A	
				71	Perret	G
				72	Mange	"
				73	Bornet Joseph Edmond	G
				74	Chaon	G
				75	Calbat	"
				76	Defrance	G
				77	Maugny	G
				78	Franck	G
				79	Courier	G
				80	Villecloux	G
				81	Renaud	A
				82	G. Lourdain	A

Source: Ranging of Graduates from Pellé's Class at École Polytechnique; VHÚ, AM, PP.

- From the document head find out in what academic year was the ranking compiled. Compare the information with the introductory text and find out how many years did Pellé study at the Polytechnique.

Pellé spent two years at École Polytechnique (1882/83 – 1883/84).

- In the left column find Pellé's name. Where did he rank in the list of the best graduates?

Pellé placed third in the academic ranking of 1883/84 graduates.

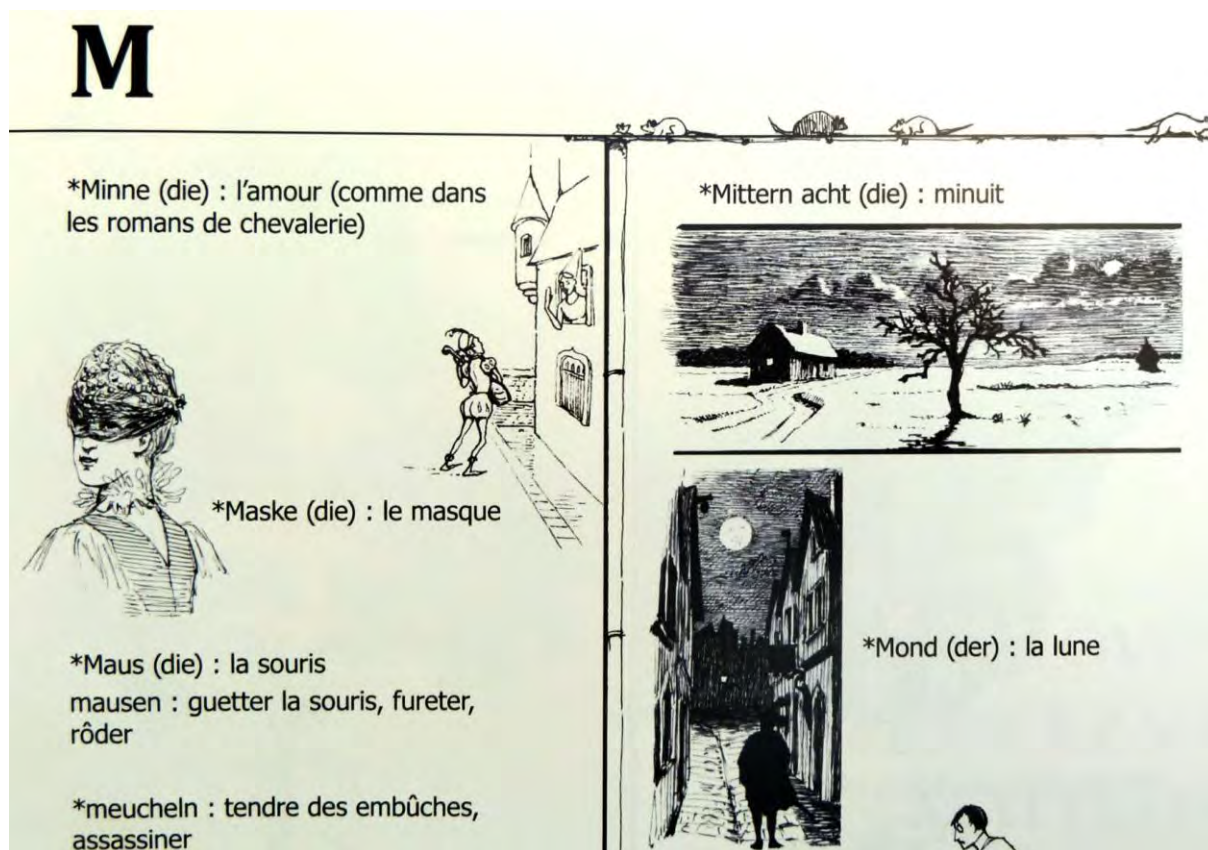
- Think about the meaning of the term POLYTECHNIQUE. From which two words is it composed? In your opinion, what subjects could have been taught at this type of institution?

The prefix "POLY" means many; "TECHNIQUE" implies an education in the field of technology or natural science. The subjects taught there included mathematics, physics, chemistry,

mechanics, astronomy, etc. Graduates of the Polytechnique received a good theoretical foundation for their future specialization. Pellé continued his studies at the School of Applied Artillery.

Pellé completed his studies at the War College (École supérieure de guerre) in 1895. His original illustrated French-German dictionary dates back to this time. The notebook is inspired by monolingual type of dictionaries where students could write and draw their notes into the indicated spaces.

DOC 2: An excerpt from Pellé's Illustrated Dictionary¹



Source: SANDIFORD-PELLÉ, I. *Generál Pellé, obrázkový deník*. Praha: MO ČR, 2010, p. 71.

- *Observe carefully the illustrated DOC 2 and think about the main advantage of picture dictionaries. What purpose do pictures serve? Do you have your own proven method that you use to study a foreign language?*

A picture dictionary was used already by J. A. Komenský (John Amos Comenius) in his textbook *Orbis pictus*. It's a method that stimulates imagination and concretizes the given (abstract) vocabulary through visualization. The image itself then serves to facilitate memorization of a concrete term.

The goal of this task is to motivate students to think about their learning style – the so-called formal way of learning, i.e. explore and find out how to learn.

¹ In the right column on top the word "Mittern acht" is spelled incorrectly. The word was left in the form in which it appeared in the original version. However, the correct form of the word is "Mitternacht".

- Take a careful look at Pellé’s drawings and evaluate them from an artistic point of view (on the left: chivalric romance; mask; on the right: midnight; moon).

Pellé’s talent for drawing is reflected in his illustrated dictionary. His drawings show artistic quality (theme, composition, technique). Students are led to an independent evaluation of work of art, expressing and defending their opinion.

II. Professional Soldier – Maurice Pellé and the “Great War“

In January 1871, the German Empire was proclaimed at Versailles and Wilhelm I received the German crown. Prussian troops paraded down the Champs-Élysées... Young Maurice, son of a French brigadier general, belonged to a generation that considered it their duty to atone for the humiliation of the Franco-Prussian war. Pellé transferred from the Polytechnic Institute in Paris to the School of Applied Artillery in Fontainebleau. After graduation (1886) he became the commander of an artillery regiment and obtained the rank of lieutenant. For his intelligence, good judgment and moral qualities he was chosen by the future Marshal Joseph Joffre as an orderly officer. After the outbreak of the First World War, Pellé was called to the very top of the military hierarchy of command – the General Staff. Here he was promoted to brigadier general and in 1918 he was appointed divisional general for his achievements at the front.

DOC 3: General Joffre about Pellé, His Subordinate in the General Staff in Chantilly

Pellé was perhaps the man of the brightest and most sophisticated intellect whom I met in my life. He was endowed with miraculous diligence, devotion that withstood every trial, broad range of knowledge and wit, which made him not only an excellent officer but also an admirable diplomat.

Source: JOFFRE, J. *Paměti maršála Joffrea*, II. Praha, 1933, p. 353.

- List Pellé’s qualities that General Joffre emphasizes in the text.

He values Pellé’s diligence, devotion, intelligence, knowledge and wit.

- What other role, besides that of a military officer, was appropriate for Pellé according to Joffre?

Pellé’s kind and tactful behavior naturally balanced General Joffre’s fierce temper. In this way, Pellé was also acting as a diplomat in the General Staff in Chantilly.

DOC 4: Brigadier General Pellé, Commander of the 153rd Division, at the Front in April 1917 (second from the left)



Source: Pellé in the Trenches, April 1917, VHÚ, AM, PP.

... I marched for five hours [Pellé, author's note] to see the trenches. I returned with mud behind my ears (...) I entered the passageway full of water and performed acrobatic tricks to prevent myself from getting wet. That lasted until the moment I slipped and the water poured into my boots, making a squishing sound with each step. Then I basically swam in liquid mud until my return [to the command post, author's note]. However, at the end of the promenade I was able to wash myself and change my clothes. Imagine what those who don't leave the trenches and sleep in a hole for four or five rainy days must look like!

Source: SANDIFORD-PELLÉ, I. quote, p. 146. (Original Source: Personal Letter from General Pellé from October 15, 1917. Translated.).

DOC 5: An Order Issued by Pellé to his Unit on April 13, 1917

... Tomorrow you will attack. (...) The enemy must be defeated in such way that he won't be able to rise again and his retreat, commenced on the Rivers Somme and Oise, will be final. Forward, children, long live the 153rd division!

Source: THOMASSON, R. *Le Général Pellé*. Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1933, p. 56. Translated.

- *Look at the image and read the text to DOC 4. Find General Pellé on the photograph and describe his appearance in your own words. Imagine yourself in a place of a French soldier and write a short letter home (4-8 sentences) about the conditions in the trenches and about the relationship between the soldiers and their commanders.*

In 1917, Pellé (second from the left) found himself in the muddy trenches as a front-line commander. The mud stains on his boots and military uniform pants are clearly visible in the photograph. After the National bloodshed at Verdun (1916), the French Government intervened and called for a change of command at the General Staff. As a result, Joffrey was

removed and Pellé sent to the front. During the Allied offensive in the spring of 1917, Pellé with his 153rd Division successfully penetrated the German lines at Chemin des Dames, thus demonstrating his strategic art directly in the field. Unfortunately, the global penetration of the French divisions failed, and Pellé and his troops had to withdraw. In spring 1918, Pellé – already as a Division General, prevented with his 5th Army Corps the German breakthrough in Paris.

Students should use their imagination and put themselves in the shoes of an ordinary soldier at the front. After reading the motivational DOC 4 and 5 texts, they should describe with a few sentences the life in the trenches (mud, stench, lack of space in the bunker, etc.) and the relationship between the soldiers and their superiors (either reserved and cold or altruistic and friendly as in Pellé’s case).

- *To whom is Pellé referring in the last sentence of his quote in DOC 4? Compare it with the expression “forward, children” in DOC 5. Can you tell from these examples what type of a commander Pellé was, considering that he cares about the conditions of his subordinates and addresses them as “children”?*

By comparing both documents it is obvious that Pellé was the type of commander who cared about his subordinates. He was interested in their living conditions, he sympathized with them, and he addressed them in a friendly, fatherly way as “children”.

III. Diplomat in the Service of the French Republic

In the years 1909–1912, Pellé served as a French military attaché in Berlin. He was predestined for this post due to his tactful demeanor, art of communication, the ability to predict and critically analyze events and of course his excellent knowledge of German. Thanks to his social awareness and perfect education he soon entered the higher circles of Berlin society; he maintained good relations with the German emperor and was invited to numerous social events (e.g. deer hunt). After so-called Moroccan Crisis (1911), Pellé kept a close eye on the changes in German legislation in favor of armament, i.e. the preparation of the imperial army for war. Pellé reported his findings to his homeland and proved himself as an excellent predictor of future events.

DOC 6: The Duties of a Military Attaché

An attaché must closely monitor the press, reports from government meetings, debates in the parliament...and must expertly analyze the content of military laws. Besides that, he should also penetrate the mentality of the military circles and predict the reaction of the public.

The difference is that espionage is a hostile activity, while military attachés are part of a diplomatic mission [i.e. under the leadership of an ambassador, author’s note]. Espionage is targeted against the economic and military interests of another country. The duty of military attachés is only to evaluate the state of affairs.

- *From what public resources does a military attaché draw information for his reports?*

A military attaché analyzes public documents, i.e. legal sources of news: press, reports from meetings of the parliament, new laws, but also resources such as the reactions and moods of the public.

- *What is the difference between espionage and the intelligence provided by a military attaché? What is the goal of either of them?*

Espionage is an illegal activity in the territory of a foreign country. Its goal is a political, economic and military harm to the enemy. On the other hand, a military attaché serves on the diplomatic staff of an embassy. His role is to maintain diplomatic relations with high government and military officials of the country to which he is sent. His objective is to influence the representatives of the host country in collaboration with the government of his homeland, and in this way contribute to mutual understanding. All information is obtained in a legal and transparent manner.

DOC 7: Pellé Analyzes the Situation in Germany in a Report to Raymond Poincaré from May 26, 1912

I repeat that all signs point to the fact that most Germans desire peace... I am convinced that today the supporters of war belong still to a minority. I would, however, like to draw attention to the signs indicating that the situation may at some point change rather quickly...

Opportunity – a spark that can ignite a barrel of dust – may arise from any incident between France and Germany or from external causes, such as the crisis in the Balkans. It is even more likely to result from an inept and brutal diplomacy, which is subjected to different pressures and from which a confrontation is expected.

(...) According to this hypothesis [after the enactment of the new German military law] (...) common sense tells us to get to work without any fuss and be prepared the best we can from the military, governmental, diplomatic and financial perspective before the deadline [i.e. within one year].

Source: POINCARÉ, R. *Au service de la France. Neuf années de souvenirs, I*. Paris, 1926–1933, p. 135–136. Translated.

- *How does Pellé describe the German public opinion regarding preparation for war?*

Pellé points out that in 1912 the majority of Germans still desire peace. Those who expect and look for a justification of war belong to the minority.

- *According to Pellé, what two possible causes might trigger the outbreak of war between Germany and France?*

One of the causes could be an inept diplomacy between France and Germany (in a dispute with Germany over the influence in Morocco, France – with the support of Britain – came out

favorably: in 1912, Morocco became a French protectorate). The exterior cause, according to Pellé, could come from anywhere, for example the Balkan conflict.

- *Find the term “Balkan crisis” in your history textbook. What kind of conflict took place in the Balkans between 1912 and 1913? Explain why were the Balkans known as the “powder keg of Europe”?*

Between 1912 and 1913, two so-called Balkan Wars took place at the Balkan Peninsula. Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro fought in these wars alternately on different sides of coalitions (objectives: territory, control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits). The tense situation in a region with Austro-Hungarian, German, Russian as well as British interests certainly could have triggered an international conflict.

- *Prove the correctness of Pellé’s predictions regarding the epicenter of the conflict, which eventually resulted in World War I (use your knowledge, your history textbook and a historical atlas).*

Pellé’s inclusion of the Balkan region on the list of “possible causes” of an international conflict proved to be correct. That’s what happened on June 28, 1914, when the Serbian radicals assassinated the future Austrian Emperor Ferdinand d’Este in Sarajevo (the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a territory controlled by Austria-Hungary since 1908). A month later Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, which put in place the military agreements of European nations, who few days later declared war on their enemy: Allies (Britain, France, Russia) vs. Dual Alliance (Austria-Hungary, Germany). Later other countries joined and the war became a truly global affair.

- *What measures did Pellé propose to the French government in response to Germany’s war policy?*

In response to the new German Defence Act of 1912, which radically increased the number of men in the German standing army, Pellé calls for military, political and financial measures. The suggested deadline was one year. By August 1913, France did indeed increase the compulsory military service from two to three years. Thanks to this measure, France was able to stop the German lightning attack in the summer of 1914.

IV. The Head of the French Military Mission in Czechoslovakia

On October 27, 1918, the Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary accepted the demands of American President Wilson regarding the self-determination of the nations of the Habsburg Monarchy. This triggered a number of national rallies and demonstrations and the next day, Czechoslovak independence was declared in Prague. On November 11, a truce was declared on the Western front. For France – a victorious nation and the strongest representative of the Allies – this opened the way for peace talks with the defeated states and for collaboration with the newly emerging countries, such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc. Military experts – the so-called French military mission – were called into Czechoslovakia in order to help build an army and train the domestic, i.e. Czechoslovak, commissioned military officers. General Maurice Pellé became the head of this mission.

DOC 8: Pellé Assumes His Duties in Czechoslovakia



PERSONNEL BULLETIN
Of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Defense

Year II. Published on February 22, 1919 No. 14

General Pellé – Chief of Czechoslovak General Staff

Based on the agreement between the government of the French Republic and the government of the Czechoslovak Republic, starting on February 17, 1919, General Pellé will serve as Chief of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak Army under the Ministry of Defense and simultaneously as a Deputy to Marshal Foch, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Armies.

No. 173 N. o. pres./parl. from the year 1919

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 73.

- To what position was General Pellé appointed and when was he supposed to take charge?

Starting on February 17, 1919, Pellé assumed the position of the Chief of Czechoslovak General Staff, i.e. the first army commander in the case of war.

- Pellé was a subordinate to two people. Who were they and what institutions did they represent?

Pellé was subordinate to the Chief Commander of the Allied Forces, Marshal Foch, as well as to the Czechoslovak Minister of Defense.

- Pellé's double subordination was a delicate situation. Could you explain why? Could a conflict of interests be the case? What interests and whose against whom?

Pellé had to respond to the demands of both the Czechoslovak (President and government) and the French side (Marshal Foch and the French government). Assuming a solid alliance of these two, Pellé didn't have to fear any major diplomatic conflicts. It turned out, however, that Czechoslovakia could take up arms in the conflict with Poland (also a French ally) over Teschen (1920). In this case, as we will see later, Pellé actually came into conflict with Foch and took the side of Czechoslovakia.

- Visit the webpage of the Ministry of Defense and find out the name of the current Chief of General Staff. What is his rank?

**<http://www.acr.army.cz/struktura/veleni/nacelnik-generalniho-stabu-57546/>
[12/17/2014]**

Une crise profonde agite les officiers de l'armée tchéco-slovaque. C'est la grosse question du moment, la plus difficile à résoudre sans doute parmi celles qui intéressent la future organisation de l'armée.

Pendant la guerre, ces officiers ont combattu dans les deux camps: les uns, ceux qu'on appelle les "Légionnaires" sont rentrés dans le pays avec l'aurole de la victoire. Libérateurs de la patrie opprimée, toute la popularité va à eux, surtout aux officiers des régiments "français", c'est-à-dire à ceux qui portent notre uniforme et ont combattu sur notre front.

Par contre, les officiers d'origine tchèque, qui sont restés jusqu'au bout dans les rangs de l'ancienne armée autrichienne, ont subi la dépression d'une effroyable débâcle. Restés au service, ils y sont en butte aux attaques et aux suspicions de tous. Les soldats ne les saluent pas dans la rue. Les officiers "légionnaires" réclament leur expulsion de l'armée (tout au moins celle du plus grand nombre d'entre eux). Les hommes politiques ne sont pas mieux disposés en leur faveur. Un Ministre faible, qui écoute le dernier qui lui parle, semble tantôt les sacrifier et tantôt les défendre.

Pourtant ces officiers constituent, au point de vue du nombre, la majorité du cadre actif; il y a parmi eux de bons éléments ~~de valeur~~, même des éléments de valeur.

... During the war, officers fought on both sides. One group, the so-called legionnaires, is returning home with the halo of victory. As liberators of the homeland they are reaping all the popularity, especially the officers of the "French regiments", i.e. those who are wearing a French uniform and who fought on our front. In contrast, the officers of Czech origin who stayed until the end in the ranks of the former Austrian army had experienced depression from a crushing defeat. Those who continue to serve face repression and suspicion from all. The legionnaires are demanding their exclusion from the army. Politicians don't have much regard for them either. However, these officers represent the majority of active officers. Among them can be found good, even valuable individuals.

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 78–79. (Original source: Rapports MMF 1918-1923, 1919, SHAT 7N 3094. Translated.).

- *With the help of your history textbook or the Internet, find out what government position held the recipient of Pellé's letter.*

Between 1917 and 1920, Georges Clemenceau served as the Prime Minister of France.

- *What two types of officers does Pellé mention in his report? How does the public feel about either of these types? Why do you think that the legionnaires are demanding their expulsion from the army?*

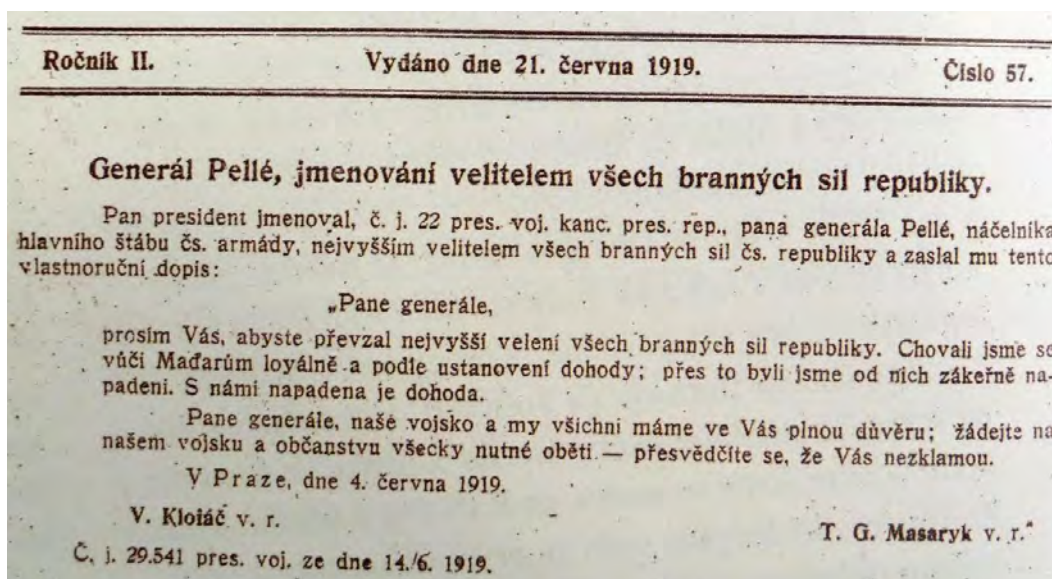
After the foundation of Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak army was composed of the legionnaires, who were celebrated by the Czechoslovak public, and the officers of Czech origin who served until the end of the war in the Austro-Hungarian Army. The Czechoslovak public was rather suspicious towards them and their subordinates did not respect them. The legionnaires did not find them trustworthy considering that according to the Allied agreements they stood against each other during the war.

- *It is logical that after the collapse of the Austrian army the newly formed Czechoslovak state faced an acute shortage of officers. Most were Austrians and as such unacceptable in the Czechoslovak Army Corps. How does Pellé describe these former Imperial-Royal army officers of **Czech origin** at the end of the text? It seems that the French General would like to count on at least some of them during the reconstruction of the army. Why? For their personal (patriotism, etc.) or professional qualities? Explain your opinion.*

Above all, Pellé needed quality professional soldiers, i.e. trained officers. Most of them could be found precisely among the former Austrian staff. Pellé appreciated mainly their professional knowledge and experience and he was not afraid to use them during the formation of the Czechoslovak army, despite the opposition of the legionnaires.

In the autumn of 1918, an armistice with Austria-Hungary and Germany was signed; however, that didn't mean the end of fighting in Europe. Especially the new, so-called successor states, which emerged after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, had to assert themselves and defend their borders. Pellé found himself between a rock and a hard place, obliged to balance the conflicting interests of the Allies, respectively France, and the newly formed Czechoslovakia, where President Masaryk appointed him as commander of all military forces. As such, he distinguished himself in the war with Hungary over Slovakia and the Teschen conflict.

DOC 10: Pellé's Appointment by the President of the Republic in Reaction to the Invasion of Slovakia by the Troops of the Bolshevik Hungarian Soviet Republic



General Pellé, Appointment as Commander of All Armed Forces of the Republic

Mr. President appointed, doc. No. 1, MO of the Pres. of Rep., General Pellé, the Chief of General Staff of the Czechoslovak Army, the Supreme Commander of all Armed Forces of the Czechoslovak Republic, and sent him this personal letter:

“Mr. General,

I ask you to take over the supreme command of all armed forces of the republic. We treated the Hungarians with loyalty and according to the provisions of the agreement; despite of that they treacherously attacked us. With us the agreement was also attacked.

Mr. General, our army and we all have complete confidence in you; demand of our army and our citizens all necessary sacrifices – you will see that they will not disappoint you.

In Prague on June 4, 1919.

V. Klofáč, m.p.

T. G. Masaryk, m.p.

Doc. No. 29,541 MO from June 14, 1919

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 110.

- *To what position was Pellé appointed and by whom? Who do you think is the Commander during peacetime (base your answer on what you learned in your Civic Knowledge class)?*

In June 1919, President Masaryk appointed General Pellé the Chief Commander of Czechoslovak Armed Forces. By doing so, the President delegated his constitutional power to Pellé. It's logical that when facing a military threat the President entrusts his authority to a military professional. After a truce with the Hungarians (June 30), Pellé resigned from his position and returned the command of all armed forces back to the president.

- *The appointment was signed by the President of the Republic and the Minister of Defense. Find out their names from the document.*

Václav Klofáč (Minister of Defence) a Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (President).

- *Who was attacked (2 subjects) and by whom (1 subject)? Find in the document a quote that proves the close cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the Allies, and the readiness of the Czechoslovak nation to make sacrifices.*

According to Masaryk together with Klobuč, both Czechoslovakia and the Allies were attacked. Hungarians were the aggressors. "...With us also the Allies are being attacked. (...) ask for (...) all necessary sacrifices – you will see that they will not disappoint you."

- *The war of Slovakia lasted from the end of May until June 30, 1919. Although the Allies did not intervene militarily, it enforced ceasefire and negotiations with the Hungarians (led by Pellé on behalf of Czechoslovakia). For each of the following "STATEMENTS" decide whether it represents the "INTEREST" of the Allies or rather of Czechoslovakia.*

STATEMENT:

INTEREST OF:

(Allies /Czechoslovakia)

- *To prevent the bolshevization of Central Europe*

Allies

- *Preserve Czechoslovakia's unity according to the borders determined by the Peace Conference*

Allies / Czechoslovakia

- *Adjust Slovakian borders in order to preserve the Slovakia–Ruthenia railway connection.*

Czechoslovakia

- *Don't let Czechoslovakia fall but teach it a lesson for occupying a part of Hungarian territory on its own.*

Allies

- *If possible, increase the territory of Czechoslovakia at the expense of Hungary.*

Czechoslovakia

- *Strengthen its political influence in Central Europe and use its new allies to limit the influence of Germany.*

Allies

- *Don't antagonize too much the "defeated" Hungary, which could become Western allies' future partner in Central Europe.*

Allies

The result was an adjustment of the Czechoslovak border (in the spirit of subtle variations of Pichon demarcation line² from 1918), in order not to disrupt the railway network on the Czechoslovak territory.

When the war over Slovakia ended in June 1919, Pellé was experiencing a period of great popularity among the Czechoslovak public. Under the General's command, the Czechoslovak army proved its combat readiness and regained its honor. Pellé intended to use this in his favor when promoting his concept of a permanent Czechoslovak army (i.e. officers and regularly recruited soldiers) as part of the Allied army. He intended to reflect this in the new Czechoslovak National Defense Act (1920). Although it contained the acknowledgment that it is "built on the basis of militias" (which was enforced by the socialists), it secured a permanent army by temporarily establishing a two-year and later eighteen-month long military service.

² Between 1917 and 1920, Stephen Pichon served as French Minister of Foreign Affairs. During the peace negotiations in Versailles (1918-1919), Pichon determined the theoretical borderline between Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

DOC 11: Pellé to Clemenceau about Antimilitary Tendencies in Czechoslovakia, December 20, 1919

Under the Austro-Hungarian rule, military was considered as an instrument of the Habsburg oppression in Bohemia. Leading thinkers – such as Professor Masaryk and his pupils or the current Minister of Defense Klobuč – professed pacifism and openly anti-military doctrine... Soon after the overthrow (October 28, 1918) the government promised that the national defense would be based on the system of militias.

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 150. (Original source: SHAT 7 N 3098. Translated.).

DOC 12: Pellé's Reflection on the Role of Czechoslovakia in the Alliance System, October 23, 1920

Czechoslovakia can be considered a base in Eastern Europe – organized according to individual peace treaties – on which lean all the policies of the Allies, France especially... Czechoslovakia, isolated in the center of Europe and threatened by siege, can escape the subjugation and enslavement by Germany only by faithfully and truly committing to the policies of the Allies.

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 150. (Original source: SHAT 7N 3109. Translated.).

- *Why did the army lose the trust of the public, according to DOC 11?*

Czechoslovaks did not have a great confidence in the army as an institution, for until 1918 its activities were closely connected with the “hated” Austrian state apparatus, where Czechs could not achieve the positions of top officers.

- *Mention two supporters of Czechoslovak anti-militarism from DOC 11. What kind of national defense system was supposed to replace the Imperial-Royal army? What does the term mean? Use a dictionary or search for its meaning on the Internet.*

We can only understand how difficult it must have been for Pellé to promote his ideas regarding the future Czechoslovak army when we realize that the President himself, as well as the Minister of Defense, were both anti-militarists and advocates of the militia system. According to them, Militia or Territorial Army was to replace a standing army. Military service was to last only a few months; a set number of soldiers, i.e. recruits in arms, would not exist.

****Militia: (in countries without a standing army) a military organization of armed citizens; voluntary military units in some wars. Source: Slovník spisovného jazyka českého, <http://ssjc.ujc.cas.cz/>, [12/17/2014].***

- *Compare DOC 11 and 12 and decide whether Pellé was a supporter of a militia system or a standing army.*

Pellé's responsibility in Czechoslovakia was to start building a modern army, which would be fit to fight alongside the Allies, i.e. France. Pellé considered the militia system inappropriate for Czechoslovakia.

- According to Pellé, what kind of danger is the newly formed republic facing? What is, according to Pellé, the only reasonable solution to this danger?

The newly formed Czechoslovakia was indeed an island in Central Europe surrounded by revisionist neighbors (Hungary, Poland, Austria and Germany). According to Pellé, the German threat can be avoided only if Czechoslovakia will go hand in hand with the policies of the Allies.

- Pellé's point of view prompts us to ask: how will Czechoslovakia benefit – and how will the Allies benefit, particularly France – “if Czechoslovakia faithfully and truly commits to the policies of the Allies”?

ALLIES

Gaining a new ally in Central Europe

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Help from a stronger and more experienced ally, i.e. France.

DOC 13: Pellé on Borders and a Czechoslovakia's Possible Defense Strategy, December 20, 1919

The shape of the territory is just as unfavorable as the political circumstances. It's a strip of land [of croissant shape] whose length is nearing 1000 km (more than the distance between Prague and Paris). The width does not exceed 150 km near Brno and 100km to the east of Košice. All forces actually guard the border and it is easy to infer what kind of difficulties will confront the strategic development [of the army in space].

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 151. (Original source: SHAT 7N 3098).



Source: Europe After World War One <http://modernworldhistory2010.wikispaces.com/World+War+One> [12/17/2014].

Modified.

- Based on DOC 12, 13 and the attached map of post-war Europe after 1918, argue in your own words why did Pellé advocate for a standing and modern Czechoslovak army that could operate even outside of the Czechoslovak territory in coordination with the Allies. Why did he find the shape of the territory as unfavorable as “the political circumstances” (i.e. relationship with neighboring countries)?

Pellé had a clear opinion about the military and political conception of the young Czechoslovak state: neutrality (like in Switzerland, for example) was out of the question for two reasons. First, in a case of invasion, Czechoslovakia would not be able to defend itself (the croissant shape of the country is unfavorable to the development of military; the only ally was Romania, otherwise Czechoslovakia was exposed to a potential threat along most of its borders). Second, the Allies relied on the armies of the new successor states, which would block off the threatening bolshevism on one side and the German expansionism on the other.

Pellé expressed his pro-Czechoslovak attitude in the spring of 1920, when he decided responsibly to command at any cost the Czechoslovak army during the imminent Czechoslovak-Polish conflict over Teschen (Těšínsko). By doing so he was risking the disfavor of his superior – Marshal Ferdinand Foch, as well as the entire French government. At last, the conflict was resolved diplomatically at the time when Poland fought for its own existence after the Soviet army pushed the Polish army all the way to Warsaw. Based on the final decision, the Karviná region and the Košice-Bohumín railway was incorporated into the Czechoslovak territory in July of 1920.

DOC 14: Pellé to Marshal Foch about the Eventuality of a Czech-Polish Conflict, May 23, 1920

Even though a Czech-Polish conflict might seem unlikely to you, (...) its possibility is increasingly occupying the government and the public opinion... Personally, I have decided to – in the extreme case – make use of the presented opportunity [of French officers choosing to serve at their own risk in the service of a foreign country, after asking their French superiors for vacation] and in the case of conflict remain in the service of the Czechoslovak army.

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 180. (Original Source: SHAT 7N 3103).

DOC 15: Marshal Foch to General Pellé, June 12, 1920

In the case of a Czech-Polish conflict, the French government would not be able to allow (...) the officers of the French mission to be entitled (while on a vacation leave) to lead Czechoslovakia’s (our ally) military operations against Poland (our ally). Should such conflict occur, it seems that the only solution would be – on the contrary – the simultaneous withdrawal of our military mission from both Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 180. (Original source: SHAT 7N 3103).

- Which option did Pellé choose in the case of war between Czechoslovakia and Poland? What was he risking?

Pellé as chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff stood firmly behind his soldiers and informed his superior, Marshal Foch, that in case of a Czech-Polish military conflict he would remain at his own risk in the command of the Czechoslovak army. This was risky because in the eventuality of the command to withdraw French missions from both Czechoslovakia and Poland, Pellé would defy the orders of the French General Staff.

- Why didn't Marshal Foch approve Pellé's loophole in the military service law? What did he suggest instead?

Marshal Foch could not allow a possible conflict between two French allies – Czechoslovakia and Poland – with the participation of the French mission in both countries. He disagreed with Pellé's proposal and proposed the exact opposite: an immediate withdrawal of the mission from both countries in the case of a conflict.

- After learning about the crisis situation in the Czechoslovak officer corps, think about the possible consequences of a withdrawal of the French mission, i.e. most top officers, from Czechoslovakia just before the outbreak of an imminent war.

The idea of a withdrawal of the French mission on the eve of the Teschen conflict was terrifying for two reasons. First, by transferring French officers and their advisors, the Czechoslovak army would lose overnight approximately 150 commanders and military experts, which would lead to the collapse of the command system. Second, a potential purge would cause that the highest military positions would be filled with – although Czechoslovak – poorly trained officers.

V. Two Homelands: “Mother and Daughter” and a Wedding

As Chief of Staff, General Pellé led the French mission in Czechoslovakia since the beginning of 1919 until the end of 1920, i.e. for almost two years. As a soldier and diplomat, he fully understood his unique position in Czechoslovakia: that of an intermediary between the Czechoslovak President (the Minister of National Defense) and the French military command (the French government and Marshal Foch). Several times, Pellé slightly overstepped his competences in Czechoslovakia's favor, or more precisely in his effort to build for France and its military mission a good reputation in the Czechoslovak public's mind. He also had personal reasons for this: after his arrival to Prague he met Jarmila Braunerová, whom he married in 1921.

Pellé celebrated a double triumph in Czechoslovakia: the first one after the defense of the Slovak border in the war with Hungary (June 1919) and the second one after the settlement of the Teschen conflict (July 1920), where he was personally involved to the extent that he risked a dispute with the French General Staff. At that time, Pellé was “doing magic”: thanks to the Teschen crisis he succeeded in pushing through a Defense Act that would guarantee a permanent corps of officers of the Czechoslovak army with a set number of soldiers, i.e. regularly replaced conscripts. On the basis of this law was established the first Czechoslovak military academy³, inaugurated in October of 1920 with the goal to train domestic high-ranking officers. Despite the volatile nature of politics of the French governments towards Czechoslovakia (in 1920, a change of course in response to the Bolshevik peril), Pellé stood firmly behind his opinion that Czechoslovakia must be a key partner for the Allies in Central Europe.

DOC 16: Pellé Was Present during the Vote for Defense Act in the Czechoslovak Parliament, March 19, 1920; Discourse by František Udržal⁴

I consider it my duty to thank warmly our Chief of Staff, General Pellé, the great son of our sister republic France, and the spiritual architect of our armed forces and the proposal of the government bill.

... A great soldier is certainly an enemy of long speeches...and if he could understand well, if he had already mastered our language, he would correct me and say that he is not a friend of the Czech nation, but rather that he sincerely and wholeheartedly feels to be a Czechoslovak, as he tends to say.

Source: Stenographic Reports from Meetings of the National Czechoslovak Assembly, Volume IV, Meeting 132 (*Těsnopisné zprávy o schůzích Národního shromáždění československého*, svazek IV, 132. schůze), Praha: PSPČR, 1920, p. 3957.

- *What title does the deputy František Udržal use to describe Pellé in connection with “our armed forces and the proposal of the government bill”?*

In his speech, Udržal calls Pellé “the spiritual architect of our armed forces” which is in connection with the new defense act a very accurate expression.

- *What does Udržal tell us about Pellé’s relationship towards Czechoslovakia? What are Pellé’s feelings?*

Pellé proved to us that he was a “Czechoslovak by heart” on many occasions: during the crisis over Teschen, the establishment of the military academy, his farewell to Czechoslovak soldiers and the marriage to Jára Braunerová in 1921. Czechoslovakia became Pellé’s second homeland.

³ It was founded in Hranice, where it de facto continued the activity of the Imperial-Royal Military Academy.

⁴ František Udržal was until the end of the Great War a deputy of the Austrian Imperial Council and later of the Czechoslovak Parliament. Between 1921 and 1925, he served as Minister of Defense and from 1929–1932 as the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia.

DOC 17: A Thank You Letter from the Participants of the First Course of Higher Officers Addressed to General Pellé

vzbudila Vaše věra slova v nitru našem nejen nezměrnou důvěru, nýbrž sesílila i naši opravdovou lásku k Vám, k Vaším milým soudruhům a k velikému národu francouzskému.

Řáďte přijmouti, pane generále, za svůj povznášející projev naše upřímné a srdečné díky a pevné ujištění, že budeme ve smyslu Vašich směrnic úsilovně pracovati pro čest a blaho naší máti Francie a její vděčné dcery Čecho-Slavie.

V Praze, dne 15. května 1919.

...your kind words awakened within us immense confidence, but also strengthened our true love for you, for your beloved comrades and the great French nation.

For your uplifting discourse, Mr. General, please kindly accept our sincere and heartfelt thanks and a firm assurance that we will work hard according to your directives for the honor and welfare of our mother France and her grateful daughters Czechia-Slavia.

In Prague on May 15, 1919

Source: A Letter to Pellé from the Participants of the First Officers' Course, VHÚ, AM, PP.

- Pellé was evidently able to fill his soldiers with enthusiasm. Notice how the Czechoslovak officers express their loyalty to their General and how they describe France and their native country (!). Quote from the document.

“...that we will work hard according to your guidelines for the honor and welfare of our Mother France and her grateful daughters, Czechia and Slavia”. The sense of belonging that the Czechoslovak soldiers felt towards the leading member of the Allied Armies is truly admirable. France was after all the first country that recognized the interim Czechoslovak government led by Masaryk and with its headquarters on Bonaparte Street in Paris (today the Consulate General of the Czech Republic, the Czech Center and the Czech School Without Borders in Paris – as of December 2014).

Soon after his arrival in Prague, the old bachelor Pellé fell for Jarmila Braunerová (born 1889), the niece of Czech painter Zdenka Braunerová. Pellé – known for his sense of culture and art – frequented the circles around artists such as Mucha, Kupka, Švabinský, Mařatka, etc. The young Jára also belonged to these circles, where she charmed the company with her singing and her grace. By 1920 the relationship was a serious one. Pellé's wedding with Jára Braunerová took place in Prague in the spring of 1921, when Pellé had already been exempt from the service in Czechoslovakia and served as a negotiator in Turkey. A few months later their daughter Maryška was born.

DOC 18: Jarmila Braunerová around 1920



Source: Young Jarmila Braunerová, VHÚ, AM, PP.

You will help me with your charm and all the qualities you possess. As the lady of the house and as a woman you will make the French residence pleasant and admired.

Source: SANDIFORD-PELLE, I. Op. cit., p. 157.

- *Based on the photograph and on the text in DOC 17, describe how did Pellé imagine the role of his future wife, Jára.*

When Pellé and Jára first met, he was nearly sixty, Jára thirty. As the future lady of the house, she was supposed to charm with her grace and her good qualities; and create a pleasant and admirable environment for the future “French” family, both culturally and language-wise.

DOC 19: The Wedding of Maurice Pellé and Jára Braunerová



Source: The Wedding of Maurice Pellé a Jára Braunerová, VHÚ, AM, PP.

- *From the text in the box find out when and where the wedding took place. How old were the groom and the bride?*

Pellé married Jára after a two-year relationship in the spring of 1921 in Prague. He was 58, she 31.

- *Do you know any other couple with a similar age difference? Do you know any mixed (international) married couple? What can be the advantages and disadvantages of such marriages? Discuss with your classmates.*

The objective of the question is to provoke students' interest and curiosity. During their discussion they shall compare the advantages and disadvantages of age difference, language barriers, cultural differences, raising children, etc.

In December of 1920, the French government summoned Pellé to Paris, where he was told that by the end of the year and in agreement with the Czechoslovak government, he should resign from his position of the Chief of General Staff. It seems that in the eyes of the French government our General proved to be perhaps too fond of the Czechoslovak environment, and therefore needed a change. Moreover, he would face a difficult task as the French negotiator in Turkey (1921-1923), with whom a peace treaty had not been achieved yet. It did not occur until 1923 in Lausanne, Switzerland, where Pellé was one of the signatories.

DOC 20: A Farewell Celebration Organized by E. Beneš at the Occasion of Pellé's Departure from Czechoslovakia, December 30, 1920

When [Beneš] spoke about the relations between France and Czechoslovakia, he aptly pointed out that the partnership must be based on friendship and consensus of opinion, which Pellé personified. The Minister of National Defense, General Husák, stated effectively: "The task of soldiers is to conquer... You conquered something that is very rare in a General's career. You conquered the soul of a nation".

Source: Srov. BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 199.

- *Recall what was Eduard Beneš's position in the Czechoslovak government in the 1920's.*

In the 1920's, Eduard Beneš served as Foreign Minister.

- *Based on DOC 19, how did Beneš describe Pellé's role in the French-Czechoslovak relations?*

According to Beneš, Pellé personified the friendship and communality between France and Czechoslovakia.

- *According to General Husák, Pellé succeeded in conquering something very "precious". What was it? How do you interpret this symbolism? (Compare with the texts you read previously.)*

According to General Husák, Pellé succeeded in "conquering the soul of a nation". Indeed, Pellé was popular both with his soldiers and the Czechoslovak public who paid a tribute to him on several occasions (after the war over Slovakia, the averted Teschen crisis, and his departure in January 1921).

DOC 21: Pellé's Last Salutation to the Czechoslovak Soldiers Proclaimed in Czech before His Departure for Paris, January 1, 1921.

It was an honor for me to be your General... Your homeland became my second homeland... Long Live the Czechoslovak Republic! Long Live President Masaryk! Salute, brothers!

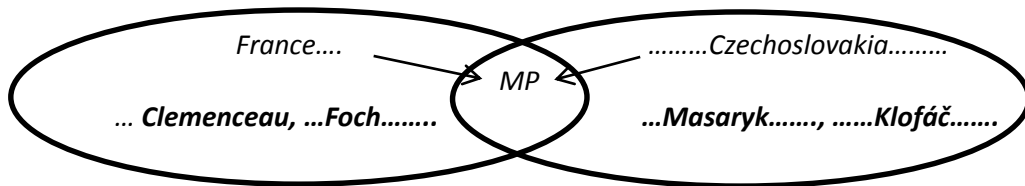
Source: Srov. BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 199.

- What expression does Pellé use to describe his feelings towards Czechoslovakia? What does that tell us?

Czechoslovakia became Pellé’s “second homeland”. This declaration proves his warm feelings towards the country and the Czechoslovak people.

VI. Summary

- Based on the diagrams (see below) explain what two **countries** influenced Maurice Pellé. In each diagram write the names of at least two historical **figures** under whose command Pellé served. Explain why is Pellé symbolized by the intersection of the diagrams.



The diagram demonstrates how General Pellé “personified the communality” of France and Czechoslovakia. Therefore, his name is marked in the intersection of the diagrams. Pellé was under a dual command: that of the French Marshal and Prime Minister and the Czechoslovak President and Minister of Defense.

- In each column of the table below list at least three attributes and two places of operation or – more specifically – battlefields that represent General Pellé (some of these attributes might be used in both columns).

Soldier		Diplomat	
...dedication	...Chemin des Dames	...kindness and tact	...Berlin
...intelligence	...Slovakia	...foresight	...Prague
...diligence		...range of knowledge	

- Think about and write down why was Pellé the best candidate for the head of the French mission in Czechoslovakia (hint: a professional, linguistic, moral point of view).

Pellé proved to be a reliable and experienced military commander (General Staff, 1914–1916), a military corps commander on the Western Front (1918), and a shrewd and far-sighted diplomat (attaché in Berlin, 1909–1912). In addition, he had an excellent command of German, a skill essential to his position in Czechoslovakia. He demonstrated an honorable and fair conduct (during his career growth, during negotiations with the Hungarians in 1919). As head of the French mission in Czechoslovakia and Chief of the Czechoslovak General Staff,

Pellé found himself “between a rock and a hard place” – between Foch and Masaryk. Using his diplomatic skills Pellé proved that France did not lose its prestige and influence in Czechoslovakia. For the young republic, Pellé created the foundation of its defense system according to the French model.

- *Based on the knowledge you have gained about General Pellé, write a short essay proving the truthfulness of his words: “Your homeland has become my second homeland... Long Live the Czechoslovak Republic!”*

Students should be able to either defend or refute Pellé’s claim. In their essay, they will justify their position.

In the essay, student makes references to the following concepts: French-Czechoslovak relations, Pellé’s interest in the Czechoslovak culture, Pellé’s attitude during Czechoslovak crisis (1919–1920), his marriage, etc.

Maurice Pellé (Douai 1863 – Toulon 1924)

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