

Maurice Pellé (Douai 1863 – Toulon 1924)

Worksheet Level B

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.



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

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. M.	36	Guillaux	G. M. M.	
2	Coque	M. M.	37	Bernheim	G. M. M.	
3	Pellé	A	38	Roche	G. M. M.	
4	Bernard	M. M.	39	Vormand	G. M. M.	
5	Maurit	M. M.	40	Ripart	G. M. M.	
6	Pelloux	M. M.	41	Marbais	G	
7	Santenoid	M. M.	42	Mégard	G	
8	Vieille Charles	P. C.	43	Fayrabort	"	
9	Nadal	M. M.	44	Corpet	"	
10	Pouquet	"	45	Risler	"	
11	Godard	P. C.	46	Robin	A	
12	Hoozoug	P. C.	47	Troceni	A	
				71	Perret	G
				72	Mange	"
				73	Bonnet Joseph Edmond	G
				74	Chaon	G
				75	Caillat	"
				76	Defrance	G
				77	Magny	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.
- In the left column find Pellé's name. Where did he rank in the list of the best 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?

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?*
- *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).*

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".

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.*

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

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. Draw your own soldier in a trench and in a speech bubble write a short fictional text expressing his feelings and mood.*



- *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”?*

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.

Source: BŘACH, R. *Generál Maurice Pellé. První náčelník hlavního štábu*. Praha: MO ČR, 2007, p. 26.

- *From what public resources does a military attaché draw information for his reports?*
- *What is the difference between espionage and the intelligence provided by a military attaché? Write the following sentences into the corresponding columns of the table below.*
 - *Performs illegal activity in the territory of a foreign (enemy) country.*
 - *Cares about good representation because s/he is a member of the diplomatic corps.*
 - *Uses unofficial practices and structures and surreptitiously collects information about the enemy.*
 - *Looks for information in the press, legal codes and reports from foreign government meetings.*

- Provides exact data regarding the number, equipment and deployment of enemy troops.
- His mission is to infiltrate high-level political circles of a foreign country in order to soak up the local atmosphere and get acquainted with their mentality.
- Receives specific orders to harm the economy and the army of a foreign country.
- Uses only legal methods in his/her reports.

<i>Military Attaché (Diplomat)</i>	<i>Spy</i>

DOC 7: Emperor Wilhelm II and Pellé Hunting Together



Source: Pellé hunting, VHÚ, AM, PP.

Observe carefully the photograph in DOC 7 and examine the relationship between the two leaders. Are they in close or distant contact? What can you tell from the looks on their faces? What does that tell us?

DOC 8: 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.

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?*
- *According to Pellé, what two possible causes might trigger the outbreak of war between Germany and France?*
- *Find the term “Balkan” in your geographical or historical atlas. Prove the correctness of Pellé’s predictions regarding the epicenter of the conflict, which eventually resulted in World War I. What conflict triggered the war and where? (Use your history textbook or historical atlas.)*

IV. The Head of the French Military Mission in Czechoslovakia

On November 11, a truce was declared on the Western front and World War I was over in Europe. For France – a victorious nation and the strongest representative of the Allies (France, Great Britain, Italy, and others) – 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 9: 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

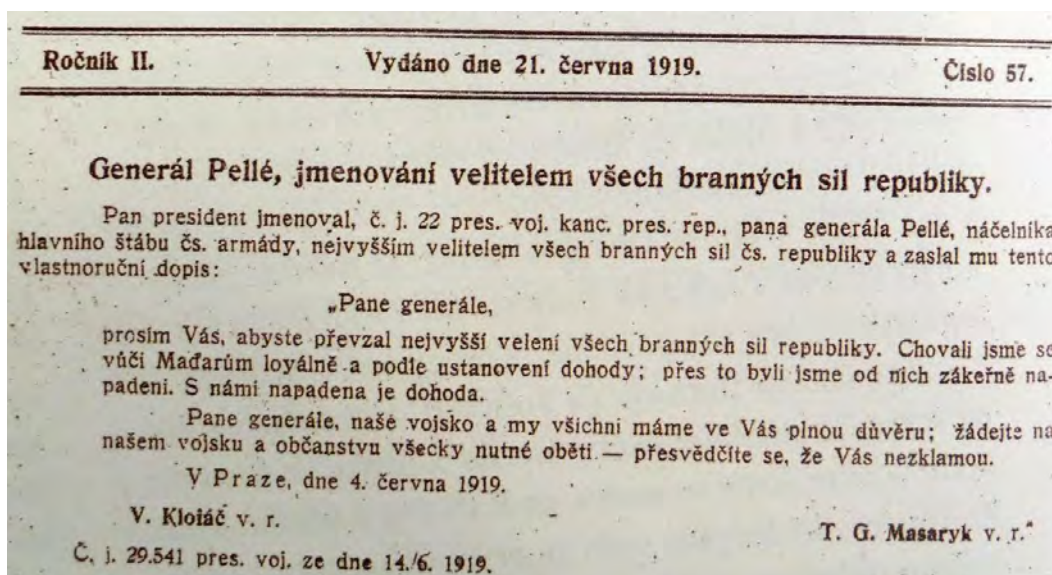
Source: BŘACH, R. Op. cit., p. 73.

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

- *Pellé was a subordinate to two people. Who were they and what institutions did they represent?*
- *Visit the webpage of the Ministry of Defense and find out the name of the current Chief of General Staff. What is his rank?*

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

DOC 11: Pellé Receives the Czechoslovak War Cross on July 14, 1919 (to the right of Pellé are General Mittelhauser and Col. Šnejdárek).



Source: Pellé receives Czechoslovak War Cross, VHÚ, AM, PP.

- *Find President Masaryk and General Pellé on the photograph.*

- *Remind yourself of what happened on July 14, 1789 in Paris (now a French national holiday). If you don't know, use the Internet to find out. Why do you think that the war heroes were honored by Masaryk on the occasion of this anniversary?*

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, which he essentially achieved in 1920.

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.)



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

- *Read DOC 12 carefully and observe the attached map of Europe. Find Czechoslovakia and its neighboring countries. 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?*
- *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”? In other words, what was France's and what was Czechoslovakia's objective?*

ALLIES

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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.

Based on the Defense Act was established the first Czechoslovak military academy², inaugurated in October of 1920 with the goal to train domestic high-ranking officers.

DOC 13: Pellé Was Present during the Vote for Defense Act in the Czechoslovak Parliament, March 19, 1920; Discourse by František Udržal³

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

² It was founded in Hranice, where it de facto continued the activity of the Imperial-Royal Military Academy.

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

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

V Praze, dne 15. května 1919.

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.

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 15: 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 15, describe how did Pellé imagine the role of his future wife, Jára.*

DOC 16: 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?*
- *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.*

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.

DOC 17: 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. (Use your history book or the Internet.)*
- *Based on DOC 17, how did Beneš describe Pellé's role in the French-Czechoslovak relations?*
- *According to General Husák, Pellé succeeded in conquering something very "precious". What was it? How do you interpret this symbolism?*

DOC 18: 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?*

VI. Summary

- *Fill in the blank. Choose your answers from the following list:*

President of the republic, Marshal Foch, Military Academy in Hranice, Chief of General Staff, Slovakia, General Rastislav Štefánik, Czechoslovak War Cross

President Masaryk named Pellé . During the times of a threat of war (June 1919), Pellé served as Supreme Commander of Czechoslovak Armed Forces. However, in time of peace this position is held by the . After the war over in July 1919, Pellé was decorated with the . Pellé's French superior was . Pellé had a decisive influence on the establishment of the in 1920.

- *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

- *Try to explain in a few sentences the truthfulness of Pellé's words: "Your homeland has become my second homeland... Long Live the Czechoslovak Republic!"*

Maurice Pellé (Douai 1863 – Toulon 1924)

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