

Allied Supreme Commander Ferdinand Foch

Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929) was born on 2 October 1851 in Tarbes, the son of a civil servant. He resolved to become a soldier early in life, joining the army in 1871 where he served in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71.

Having enrolled at the French army college, Ecole de Guerre, Foch proved so impressive that he was asked to remain as a teacher. His lectures there were published as *The Principles of War* and *De la Conduite de la Guerre*. Foch further served at the Ecole de Guerre from 1907-1911 as director.

With the onset of war Foch was given command of the Ninth Army during the Battle of the Marne following crucial early successes in Nancy; at the Marne he led the French counter-attack. He was subsequently promoted and given command of the Northern Army on the Western Front in October 1914. In this position he saw service during the Somme offensive in 1916 (and for which he was sacrificed as a French scapegoat, banished for a while to the Italian front).

With the arrival of the hero of Verdun, General Philippe Petain, replacing Robert Nivelle, Foch was recalled from relative obscurity and made Chief of the General Staff in 1918.

Following intense persuasion and negotiation from Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister, Foch was given overall control of the Allied forces in March 1918, serving as Allied Supreme Commander, in which role he frequently conflicted with Pershing over the disposition of U.S. forces.

Foch stopped the advance of the German forces during the great push of Spring 1918 at the Second Battle of Marne in July 1918, mounting the counter-attack that turned the tide of the war. Foch accepted the German surrender in November 1918. Earlier this year, in July, Foch was made Marshal of France.

Following the conclusion of the war Foch played a major advisory role at the Paris Peace Conference.

Ferdinand Foch died in Paris on 20 March 1929