Dr Philip Orr, from Ireland, talked about why the Great War continues to have such a deep significance as an identity narrative in Ireland. Two hundred thousand Irishmen served in the Great War with the British Army, all of them volunteers. The Irish had a language, and culture of their own, that is Celtic. As in Algiers, India, the Irish too suffered from famine. Yet many Irish from Ulster took part in the July attack at the Battle of Somme.

Dr Samuel Berthat said that the First World War intensified the process of globalisation process in many ways, such as, the displacement of populations around the world or the transfer of technology and natural resources. According to Berthat the representatives of the Indian nationalist movement, when confronted with tightened control in British soil, shifted their bases to France, France, on its side, to control Indian nationalists on its soil 'agreed to relinquish part of its sovereignty to satisfy the British concerns.'



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In the Ravin des Vignes (vineyard gully), the cantonment of the 7th battalion of the 1st Marching Regiment of Moroccan Infantrymen. Moroccan soldiers enjoy a little rest and a cup of coffee, east of France, March 1918.

We then heard of bombardment by biplanes, bayonets, shrapnel, and explosives. Twenty-one million soldiers died at the Somme. The Balkans and the Near East also saw gas and gasmasks, not only for the soldiers but also for horses employed by the cavalry. Tanks and cryptic messages on the radio and through doves were routine elements. Elsie Knocker from Belgium, nurse Edith Cavell from England the Russian Amazons had their own battalion and propaganda This was also the time of the famous dancer cum spy Mata Hari (Margarthe Zelle, originally from Holland). By April 22, 1915 gas war toxic masks were used for breathing. By 1917 Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Lawrence of Arabia as written by TE Lawrence in "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" in 1917; there was the Battle of Passendale, when German soldiers entered their tunnels and trenches. Eight million fought and 6.6 million died. Many were injured in the hospitals.



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Annamese infantrymen (tirailleurs annamites) at the French camp of Zeitlenick, on the Eastern Front. Thessaloniki (Solanica), Macedonia, Greece, May-June 1916.

The War and Colonies event was the brainchild of Olivier Litvine, Director Alliance Française. It has no doubt, enlightened many, on the far reaching impact of a war that shaped the world as we know it. ■