

General haig and the battle of the somme



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1. The message that the cartoonist and the headliner are trying to give is that the British army with its big fist is stopping Germany dead in its tracks and hitting it right on the nose. The expression on the man's face is shocked and bewildered. The cartoonist has drawn a face of the Kaiser Wilhelm II in the line of the western front which is very informative for the British public (since this is a British newspaper) to see what's going on there the face, especially his eyes show he is tired and exhausted with big bags under his eyes.

This paper was published on the night of D-day, you could say it was proper propaganda before D-day to raise morale and show that we are beating the Germans. However there are sources to suggest that this wasn't proper propaganda and was what the cartoonist was told as in source 4 where it is D day and General Haig has reported " Very successful attack in the morning...

. All went like clockwork...the battle is going very well for us and already the Germans are surrendering freely. The enemy is so short of men that he is collecting them from all parts of the line our troops are in wonderful spirits and are full of confidence" which was not true as they had lost 50, 000 men with 37, 000 men injured and 20, 000 men dead that day, it was the worst loss of men in British military history in one day.

Another point is that on source A, the Kaiser is about to eat Verdun when the British army first hit the Kaiser, which is also another form of propaganda.

2. I think that the British launched an attack on the Somme because they wanted to relieve pressure on the French at the battle of Verdun because they had been fighting for over 5 months and were losing. It also says this in

source B when Sir William Robinson, a senior General in the British army said, "the necessity of relieving pressure on the French army at the battle of Verdun remains, and is more urgent than ever". Another main objective of the British army was to kill as many Germans as possible by using tactics to seize important points as General Haig says in his instructions to his commanders at the battle of the Somme "first objective: to turn Pozieres Ridge into a position to best account against hostile troops and after that if eastwards is not advisable to advance into, then we will probably transfer our main efforts rapidly to another position of the British front". Those two objectives are what the British wanted to achieve at the battle of the Somme and did to a certain extent.

3. I think that both sources are useful in their own way but source H makes more sense to me because it is from a man that was there living the moment and not from some digitally retouched or staged scenes in source I because in that source half of the pictures are staged 5 miles behind the front lines. We know this because the trenches seen in the picture on source I are not deep enough to be real trenches and there are no duck boards, dugouts and the infantry have no backpacks on and in the battle of the Somme there were heavy backpacks as they were told they could walk across no man's land without being shot. So this picture couldn't possibly be real which means that source I could be fake altogether so it is not as reliable as source H.

However on the other hand the person in source H is a very old man and he is trying to remember an event in his life 55 years after it had happened so this also cannot be reliable, the text is only brief and doesn't tell you a lot

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about the battle but where in source I a picture tells you a thousand words. The text is source H again could also be reliable as it is from a man's honest memory and he may not have forgotten as it was such a vivid memory in his life so this could also be true. I think that source H is more reliable because it is an honest man's story and not from a film which is made to attract audiences. 4. General Haig was a good commander in many ways before the battle of the Somme; he won many battles before the Somme such as his conquests in India and the battle of Ypres in France with the B.

E. F (British Expeditionary Force) which led to him being promoted to controlling the British army in France on 22nd December 1915 but it is when he commanded the battle of the Somme which was his major downfall and led to him being named "the butcher of the Somme". This battle had come up early in General Haig's command of the British army and was not what he wanted to fight but at the battle of Verdun the French were losing and the Germans were breaking through forcing him to fight at Somme. General Haig was a cavalryman and did not know much about infantry warfare so was not experienced for this type of warfare. His first mistake was his plans to blow the barbed wire separating the two factions to enable the British to move forward to the German trenches but as it says in source F "any Tommy could have told them that shell fire lifts wire up and drops it down often in a worse tangle than before" this shows that the General did not have any communications between him and his troops at the end of June 1916 a scout troop went into no man's land and saw "barbed wire neatly rowed and untouched", General Haig dismissed this as cowardice and the soldiers

being scared of their first taste of warfare which could be perceived as him being arrogant.

After this information General Haig sent out a message back to England and his troops in source E: 30th June 1916 the day before the attack started " the barbed wire has never been so well cut, never the artillery preparation so thorough. All the commanders are full of confidence" This could be proper gander to the troops and to England, which again show arrogance of the General, which is not good for a leader of the British army. His second mistake was that his knowledge of the German trenches and of the British artillery was not as detailed as it should have been, if Haig had sent spies or other expeditionary forces out to the battle of the Somme, he would have found that the Germans had too much time on their hands and had dug themselves in so deep that artillery couldn't touch them in some of the places, such that there was concrete in parts of the German line and were twice as efficient as the British trenches which were deliberately made uncomfortable on the orders of the British high command as they thought it would keep officers on their toes which was in fact completely untrue. The other major factor his missed was the British shells themselves were not big enough to penetrate the German defences; a third of these shells didn't even explode.

This all contributed to Haig believing that the Germans were obliterated and to tell the men to walk across no mans land where they were slaughtered by the German machine gunners who had come out of their heavily fortified trenches. General Haig was either a butcher or a hero in peoples minds but I think he was neither he had many conquests prior to the Somme and was a <https://assignbuster.com/general-haig-and-the-battle-of-the-somme/>

well established member of the British army, winning in all four corners of the world with his cavalry men. After the wars he had won, warfare was very different with different tactics; cavalry was no longer needed and it was about the infantry which Haig had never worked with before and was now in charge of the whole western front with no infantry experience at all. At the battle of the Somme, his tactics do not work and he is ridiculed for the orders he gave to the British troops but after later deliberation this battle might have won the war for the allied forces with Verdun being relieved of German forces and being concentrated at Somme, the French army were able to seize Verdun stay in the war and help to win. Sir General Haig was neither a butcher or a hero he was a well ranked general doing his job the best he way he knew how it had worked before but times had changed too much for the horse riding cavalry men and the tactics just didn't work which crushed his reputation so he should be remember as neither.