

# Why was the world war i not over by christmas? assignment

[History](#)



Whilst generals and governments planned for and hoped for a quick victory this was probably because the alternative of a long drawn out war was too difficult to consider. The topics I will discuss are trench warfare, the generals and tactics. Before doing so it can be noted that the idea of a short war was one held more by the public rather than military experts and governments. Were the generals to blame? In my view no. Whilst they did make mistakes which caused carnage this did not in itself lengthen the war.

This is because they were all roughly as good or bad as each other. Making all of them better generals would have cancelled the benefits out. This can be seen from WWI where generals had the benefit of learning from WWI, had better radios, tanks and aircraft and yet the war was bloodier and lasted longer. The British however see WWI as worse because we did much more of the fighting and suffered more deaths in WWI than WWI, and because the trench warfare seemed more horrific somehow than being killed in a tank in the desert. In WWI defensive weapons initially had the advantage.

Machine guns and artillery would always take a heavy toll of men attacking on foot because the speed of attack was so slow. This was shown in the initial months of the war before trench warfare had started where the casualty rates were the highest in the entire war. This was the period when armies attacked each other at ground level where they could be seen to be killed. In fact it was because of the power of artillery and machine gun bullets that soldiers dug in to find protection below ground level. This was the start of trench warfare. By November 1914 an unbroken line of trenches ran from

Switzerland to the English Channel. Once this was in place no quick victories could be gained. It took many years for the generals to work out better tactics, raise new armies and train them better and massively increase weapon production including that of artillery and shells. But each advance by the attacker was matched by the defense. Better trenches were developed, with concrete bunkers, and safe cellars for the men to hide from the artillery were developed. When gas attacks began it was not long before gas masks were developed. When tanks were developed it was not long before anti tank rifles were developed.

When submarine warfare broke out the counter move was the convoy system to protect ships. Each attempt by the generals was blocked by a counter move. The result was a war of attrition where the victor would be the side with the most men, most troops and most artillery. The result was Why Was the World War I Not over by Christmas? By a stalemate which was only broken by the British blockade to Germany which started to starve the country, by the entry of America into the war and because of the failure of Germany's last big attacks in 1918.

The view that WWI generals were uniquely stupid and bloodthirsty arose after the war and has clung on because WWI saw the most deaths and wounded of any war Britain has fought, because of the imagery of trench warfare, gas, mud and barbed wire and because of the war poets who captured the public imagination as well as popular films of the time such as 'All quiet on the western front'. Were the trenches to blame? In my view the war would have continued beyond Christmas anyway because of the size of

the forces involved but it is true that the trenches helped save the Allied forces in 1914 at Hyper for example.

They did this by protecting the defenders from shellfire and machine gun bullets allowing us to stop enemy attacks. However when it became the allied turn to attack from 1915 the Germans then had the same advantages which proved very difficult and costly to overcome. Were tactics to blame? In my view partly. It took time to develop new infantry tactics to attack trenches successfully, to develop new weapons like light machine guns, grenades and tanks, ND more and better artillery.

New tactics like infiltration, using tanks to flatten wire and rolling artillery barrages to keep the defenders heads down took time to develop and introduce. This was especially true for the British Army. By Christmas 1914 most of our small peacetime army was dead or wounded and new armies had to be raised and trained from scratch including most of the officers. It should be no surprise that these armies were clumsy and their tactics simple. It is a tragedy that in in WWW this meant that our armies had to learn by doing which inevitably meant a heavy price in deaths and wounded men.

The tragedy was made worse because many of the units were pals battalions which meant they were all recruited from one town. When disaster struck many of these battalions in their first attack at the Some battle in 1916 the horror for individual towns and cities was very bad. Conclusion There was almost no chance of the war being over by Christmas due to the evenly matched sides and the size of forces involved. Trench warfare helped all

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sides to defend, but wars can only be brought to an end by attacking which puzzle took years to overcome.