

Haig and the somme

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Source A was written by Haig in June 1916. This source goes a long way when proving that Haig did not care about his men. Constantly throughout the extract, he mentions men dying and casualty lists.

" The nation must be taught to bear losses."

In this first sentence, Haig tries to convince the nation that men will be lost and they will have to learn to deal with deaths. This shows that if he is trying to teach them a lesson, then he doesn't care if he shoots his men himself. However he may be showing some sincerity for the soldiers because he states that they lose their lives for the country.

" The sacrifice of men's lives."

This quote does show that they are being sacrificed but it is brought across as though he is sacrificing their lives without them having a choice, which shows that he doesn't care about his men. Source B on the other hand does give a very believable case that Haig did care for his men because in both extracts, he mentions how well his men are doing, that they are spirited and confident and he continues to heap praise on them. Sources A and B are very different personalities of Haig. Source A was written by Haig to either state his plan of action or to prepare the nation for plenty of deaths. If Haig is preparing the nation for deaths because he cares about the British people and the soldiers then he is actually a very caring general. But if Haig is writing this because he knows that his tactics will mean that a lot of his men die, then this would show that Haig was in fact the butcher of the Somme.

Bradley Jones

" The men are in splendid spirits ... All of the commanders are full of confidence."

Repeating these words shows that not everything is ok because after a day of battle, spirits and confidence would not be good. They wouldn't have high spirits because some of their friends would have died and they would be demoralised as they would be worn out. This shows that they are nervy and tries to cover up his mistakes. Another reason that that source C is more trustworthy is because it tells a completely different story to source B and is still written by an Englishman, Private George Coppard. This shows that one of them is lying and being as though it is Haig's head on the line, I would rather take my chances with George Coppard. Haig claims that the enemy are short of men but George Coppard states that the British have hundreds of dead soldiers. This shows that Haig is trying to cover up the fact that a lot of his soldiers, under his command, are already dead. The only factor that goes against source C is that it is from an interview years after the battle, which means that George Coppard may have lost some of his memory even though he was there at the time. Whereas source B was written on that exact day so it is likely to be the complete and whole truth.

Bradley Jones

I don't agree completely with the historian because no source is useless. Source D gives some relative information despite the fact that it is a TV series designed to make people laugh. The relative speech is

" You mean are we all going to get killed? Yes. Clearly field Marshall Haig is about to make yet another giant effort to move his drinks cabinet six inches closer to Berlin"

This quotation shows that Haig is never actually at the scene and all he is bothered about is getting closer to winning the war. It also shows that Haig doesn't care about his troops because like the soldier from say ` are we all going to get killed? Yes. `

Source E is very similar because it does actually back up the last source. This source is useful because it states that there are three differences between a rehearsal and the real thing. One of the differences is the absence of the general. This shows that Haig was never actually out there with the troops on the front line. He was always sitting at the back and not pulling his weight.

Bradley Jones

Sources G & H do prove that source F is wrong because source F constantly slates Haig and his strategy. Whereas sources G & H, one written by a British General and another from a " German Official History of the First World War", both go on to say how brave Haig was to even attempt these tactics and had he not done so, there was no way Britain would have won the war. In source G it says:

" If the Battle of the Somme had no great importance in the strategic sense, its consequences nevertheless were great."

This quotation is from the German Official History book and although it agrees by saying that no strategy was used, it does say that it worked. This <https://assignbuster.com/haig-and-the-somme/>

proves that source F is wrong because source F reads that Haig had no chance of a breakthrough but in actual fact his "slaughter" tactic, as source F states, was great. Source G says:

"Germany's spirit of resistance was broken, mainly by the courage and resolution of Haig's armies, which had complete confidence in the leadership of their commander."

This quote shows that because of Haig's tactics the German's spirit was destroyed because they had lost so many men. This again proves source F to be wrong because it shows that by killing more Germans than they could kill of our men, they were completely demoralised and therefore it made Haig's tactic a good one.

Bradley Jones

I think that sources I and J differ about the Battle of The Somme because whilst the war was being fought, he had keep spirits up by congratulating Haig and what he had done so far. But once the war was over he could finally express his true feelings about the Battle of The Somme because it was over and it didn't matter anymore with regards to how soldiers and Haig. Source I is Lloyd George writing to Haig.

"I congratulate you most warmly on the skill with which your plans were laid."

This quotation shows Lloyd George praising General Haig, however, in source J:

" I expressed my doubts to General Haig ..."

This quotation shows the difference and change in his opinion because whereas at first he acts as though he is happy with the way the battle is going, he then shows his true colours and claims that he expressed his doubts to Haig and was worried that the Somme would be a huge failure.

Lloyd George wrote source I because he had to agree with what Haig was doing and get fully behind him to show that he was in full confidence of Haig and the soldiers. On the other hand, source J was written because Lloyd George could reflect on what he really thought, as it was his memoirs. This meant that Lloyd George could show the nation that he was with them all along and that he never really supported Haig's plan but at the time he had no other choice.

Bradley Jones

" Haig was an uncaring general who sacrificed the lives of his soldiers for no good reason"

Source A is in total agreement with this comment because it is Haig's written work and in it, it reads:

" The nation must be - taught to bear losses

- prepared to see heavy casualty lists"

This quotation shows that Haig did not care about his soldiers because before the war has even begun, he is telling them to prepare for a high number of casualties or even deaths.

<https://assignbuster.com/haig-and-the-somme/>

Source B doesn't agree with the view because it does not mention any British casualties, it only quotes that the Germans have lost men and that British spirits are up. However, the source may not be completely reliable as it was written by Haig and he was never actually on the front line and will want to make a good impression anyway.

Source C does support the view at the top. In the source it claims:

" Hundreds of dead were strung out on the barbed wire like wreckage washed up on high water."

This shows that it supports the view because on the first day of the attack, Haig had already lost hundreds of men for no reason.

Source D also supports the comment because it says:

" You mean are we all going to get killed? Yes. Clearly Field Marshall Haig is about to make another giant effort ... "

This quote is from the TV series Blackadder. Although classed as a comedy, this shows that the writers of the programme agreed with the statement and the fact that many men would be killed without Haig's stir.

Source E doesn't really have any connection to the comment. The only thing that it does note is that Haig will never be on the front line with the men, he will always be taking a back seat.

Source F is another source that completely supports the view because it is from a book with the title `British Butchers` so straight away you can see that it is going to agree with the statement and slate Haig. It says:

<https://assignbuster.com/haig-and-the-somme/>

The principle that guided him was that if he could kill more Germans than the Germans could kill his men, then he would at some time win the war."

This quotation proves that the source agrees with the view because it is stating, in black and white English, that Haig was just feeding soldiers to the enemy and sending them to their deaths without a care in the world.

Bradley Jones

Source G disagrees with the statement because it is saying that although Haig's tactic had no great importance in the strategic sense he did actually give the Western powers confidence and morale was high meaning that the tactics consequences were actually great.

Source H disagrees with the view as well. It is written by a British general and he is writing about the war and Haig. In the source he claims that all of the soldiers had complete confidence in Haig and in what he was doing.

Source I also disagrees with the statement because it is a letter from Lloyd George to General Haig congratulating him on his tactic and what he had achieved so far.

Source J agrees with the view but does try to blame Germany for some of it and not just General Haig.

" I expressed my doubts to General Haig"

" It killed off far more of our best. If it had not been for the stupidity of the Germans."

These quotes are from Lloyd George, who in the last quote praised Haig, writing in his war memoirs. The quotes show that he believes there were two reasons why Britain lost so many men. The part that agrees with the statement is where he claims to have expressed doubts and talks about killing the best men.

In conclusion, based on the points produced, it is unfair to say that Haig did not care at all but it is fair to say that he didn't care to some extent. This is because five of the sources agree with the view and five disagree with the view meaning that Haig didn't completely discard his soldiers.