

3-D Imaging Past & Present

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# STEREO WORLD

## Trench War

Dark Country

Shrivers & the APEC



# Trench War

## 1914-1918

by Ralph Reiley

The First World War is a vague memory in today's hectic world of 24 hour news cycles. It was envisioned to be a short and decisive war, but lasted four years and four months. For the last time, Soldiers sang patriotic songs as they marched off to battle. In August of 1914, they were all convinced they would be victorious and home by Christmas. They had faith in their presidents, kings, Czars, and Kaisers, some still ruling by divine right. Their leaders knew what to do, God was on their side, and just to ensure that they would sweep the enemy from the battlefield, priests were on hand to bless them as they marched to war.

Military technology had steadily advanced by 1914, but military tactical doctrine was still in the 19th Century. Military planners envisioned large numbers of men sweeping the enemy from the battlefield with grand maneuvers as Napoleon would have done. The French had some of the most modern field artillery in the world in

1914, but still sent its infantry to war wearing bright red trousers and caps. Cavalry, the most outdated of all the armed services, was the favorite of the high command, as most of them were old cavalry men. They were very impressive parading down the streets of Vienna, London, Berlin, and Paris in their dashing uniforms, but they would soon find that they were very out of place on the modern battlefield. No longer could the lancers save the day by a glorious charge, when in a few moments, one man with a machine gun could mow down an entire regiment of men on horses.

The War began on July 28, when Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia began mobilizing its army to aid Serbia. The Kaiser asked the Czar to stop, when he did not, Germany declared war on Russia on August 3. The French, pledged to help Russia, declared war on Germany later that same day. Germany, fearful of fighting a two front war with France and Russia,

declared war on Belgium on August 4, hoping to take a short cut through Belgium and deliver a quick and decisive blow to France. This act violated the 1839 Treaty of London, guaranteeing Belgian neutrality, that Germany had signed. The British, nervous at the threat of rapidly growing German navy, chose to uphold the treaty, and declared war on Germany late in the day on August 4. In just seven days Europe had chosen sides. Although they all said they did not want war, they all seemed eager to join in, and did very little to prevent war from coming. There were active fronts in France, Eastern Europe, Italy, the Middle East, China, Africa, and the Pacific islands. There were naval battles in the North Sea, the Mediterranean Ocean, the Indian Ocean, the South Pacific and South Atlantic. German submarines prowled the waters around England, the Mediterranean, and after 1917, the east coast of the United States. For the first time in history, battles



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*A glass photo by LSU, "Carency, Dejeuner Macabre" (Macabre Dinner near Carency). A French burial party takes time out for lunch, using coffins for tables. Death was always close at hand for the soldiers of the First World War, so much so that it had become part of the daily routine for them, and coffins would be seen as convenient tables for lunch.*  
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145 Krieg 1914-15. Im Schützengraben eingebautes Maschinengewehr.

A stereo card by NPG, *Neue Photographische Gesellschaft*, No. 145 "Im Schützengraben eingebautes Maschinengewehr" (in a trench with a machine gun). NPG was the largest German stereo view publisher. The photo was printed in 1915. The official news stated that victory was always just weeks away, and the Kaiser was always right. All wartime photos were listed as *Krieg (War) 1914*, or *Krieg 1914-15*. By 1917 the practice was dropped, as it was clear that war was not going to end soon, or ever, despite official news from the Kaiser. This is a highly posed portrait. The uniforms are very clean, the trench is very tidy, and the photo was taken well behind the front lines. A telescopic sight is mounted on the 1908 model Spandau machine gun, and was used for long range shooting. This gun is also fitted with a metal trench shield. The shield makes the usefulness of the telescopic sight and binoculars questionable, as it blocks their view. The Germans set up machine guns to fire obliquely across the battlefield, and could not fire straight ahead, depending on machine guns to either side for protection. In this way, No-Man's-Land was covered with overlapping fields of fire to deadly effect.

forward with their massive army, and crush the enemy with overwhelming numbers of men, even though many Russian soldiers did not have rifles, and some with rifles had no bullets. The British had no real plan for their army, they depended on the Royal Navy to preserve the empire. Their army was small, but extremely well trained. The tiny British Expeditionary Force, the BEF, was sent over to France, where they would muddle through somehow, the superiority of being British would bring them victory.

The Germans expected to move through Belgium quickly. Belgium put up a stubborn defense, slowing down the Germans, while they waited for the British and French

raged in the air, as well as on the ground and the sea. Germany and Austria prevailed over the Russians, and for a short time added Serbia, Romania and a large portion of Russia to their empires. In the end, the final outcome of the war was decided on the Western Front in France and Belgium.

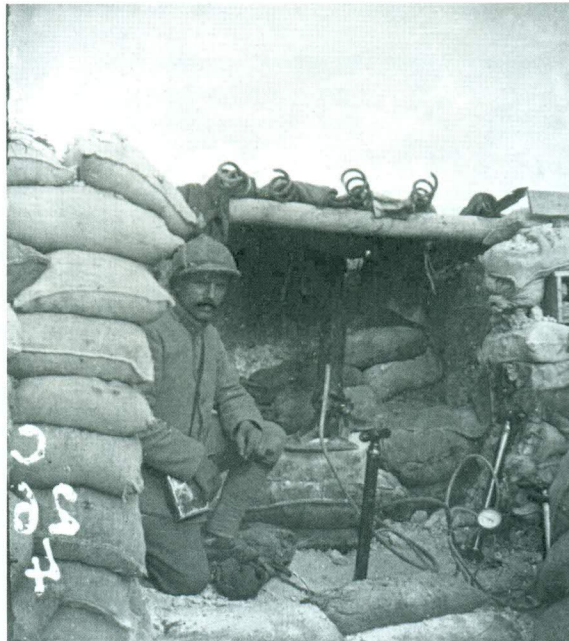
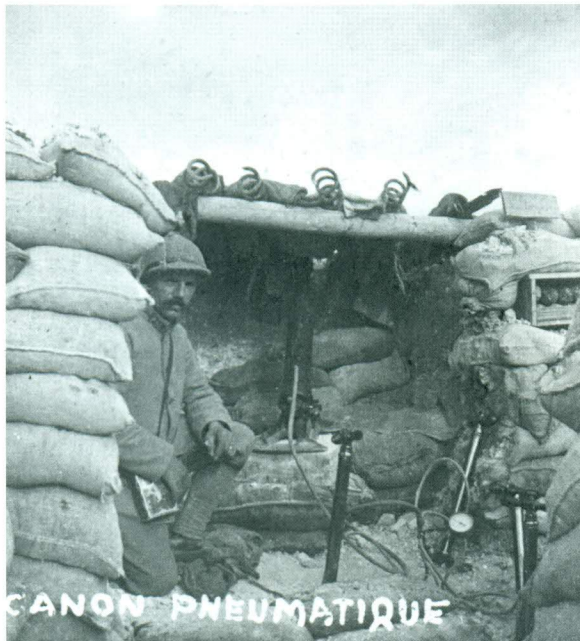
In 1914, each nation had a war plan. The Germans had the Schlieffen Plan, which called for a wide sweep through Belgium and France. There was a strict timetable to keep so that they would be victorious over the French in six weeks, the amount of time it would take Russia to fully mobilize. After defeating the French, the troops would be sent east, to handle the Russians, if everything ran on schedule. The French had Plan XVII, which was basically a mass frontal assault on the Germans, wherever they were. Plan XVII lacked much in the way of detailed

planning and depended on the Élan of the French soldier, whose bayonet charge was officially invincible, as decreed by the French high command. The Russians had a similar plan, just push

A glass view by LSU, No. 53 "Reischhaker Arbalete" (the Reischaker Crossbow). This view illustrates a spring activated grenade thrower, with a range of about 90 yards. The grenade was held in the cup strung between the upright metal rods. At the base of the cross bow was the winding mechanism. After reliable rifle grenade launchers were issued, bomb throwers such as this were removed from service, usually by tossing them over the parapets of the trenches along with all other disused and useless items.







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 A glass view by LSU, No. 264 "Canon pneumatique" (Air Cannon). A pneumatic mortar, complete with several air pumps to charge the air cylinder. These were relatively silent, and had a range of about 1000 yards. They were of limited use, requiring many hand pumps to charge the air cylinder or dragging heavy compressed air tanks to the front lines.  
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to arrive. The British did arrive, but the BEF was small, only a few divisions, and as valiantly as they tried, could not stop the Germans. The French were fully engaged with the German army on French and German frontier, and unable to aid Belgium. Belgium was finally overrun by an invader very angry at having their time table disrupted by an impudent little country and England's Contemptible Little Army, as the Kaiser described it. The cost for their stubborn defense was very high, and Belgian cities

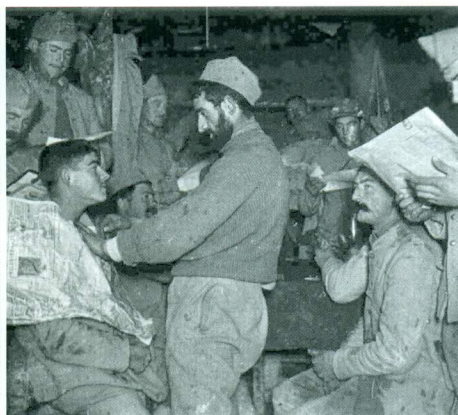
were looted and burned in retribution.

The scheduled German sweep through France ended with the 1st Battle of the Marne, southeast of Paris. It was the first of many battles where it was difficult to determine the victor from the vanquished. The German advance was stopped, so it is considered a strategic victory for the French. But the victory had cost an alarming number of French lives. A few more such victories would leave France without an army. The battle of the Marne did leave the German

right flank exposed. The Allies shifted their forces, hoping to turn the German flank. The Germans shifted their forces and tried to out maneuver the Allies. Each side tried to out maneuver the other, hoping to turn the enemy flank in a frantic period known as the Race to the Sea. By November of 1914, the race was over, they had both reached the beaches on the North Sea, and neither side had out maneuvered the other. Both sides had suffered massive casualties, and were desperately short of men and munitions, the soldiers uniforms and boots were in tatters, and winter was setting in. Neither side could advance one step forward, and neither side would retreat one step backward. The soldiers dug in for the winter, and waited for spring.

Around midnight on December 24, 1914, German soldiers put candle lit fir trees on the parapets of their trenches, and began singing Christmas carols. Christmas trees were a German tradition, and for many British and French troops, it was the first time they had ever seen one. Although they suspected some type of fiendish German trick, they held their fire, and kept a vigilant watch. They soon began singing carols of their own. The Germans came up out of their trenches, unarmed, and the spontaneous Christmas Truce of 1914 began. On Christmas day, after burying the dead, British and German soldiers played soccer in No-

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 A glass view by LSU, No. 367 "Solon de Coiffure" (The Barber Shop). A posed view showing soldiers making the best of things in the relative comfort of a dugout. A soldier gets a haircut while those next in line read the paper, write letters home or read their mail. Many dugouts were spacious, dry and relatively comfortable as in this photo. Others were cramped, damp, and not completely safe from a direct hit by a large shell. The longer the war went on, the more elaborate the dugouts became. In some areas whole networks of dugouts were developed, like small underground cities. Officer's dugouts often had wood paneled walls, electric lighting, and other comforts. As a general rule, the German trenches and dugouts tended to be more substantial than those of the Allies. The Germans were there to stay, while the allies intended to be there only long enough to drive the Germans out with the next Big Push.  
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A glass view by Brentano, "Un episode de la prise de Montdidier" (an episode during the capture of Montdidier). The photo was taken during the summer of 1918, as the French were retaking the city of Montdidier. Several gas mask canisters are visible, indicating that they are near the front lines, where gas shells could drop at any moment. The 2nd soldier from the left may be holding a camera, or binoculars. It is possible that this is a team of military photographers or artillery spotters, as the only weapons visible are pistols, and not rifles, indicating that these are not infantrymen. They are standing in a hastily dug entrenchment, but no entrenching tools are visible, indicating that those who dug the trench have moved on. This rough earthwork is the first stage in digging a proper trench, as it offers some protection from enemy fire. The goat is a complete mystery.



Allies, except for German East Africa, which held out for the entire war. The small 10,000 man Schutztruppe lead a brilliant hit and run guerilla campaign, tying up 100,000 British colonial troops combing bush trying to bring them to a decisive battle. On November 13, 1918, two days after the signing of the Armistice in France, the Schutztruppe was informed the war was over, and it surrendered undefeated.

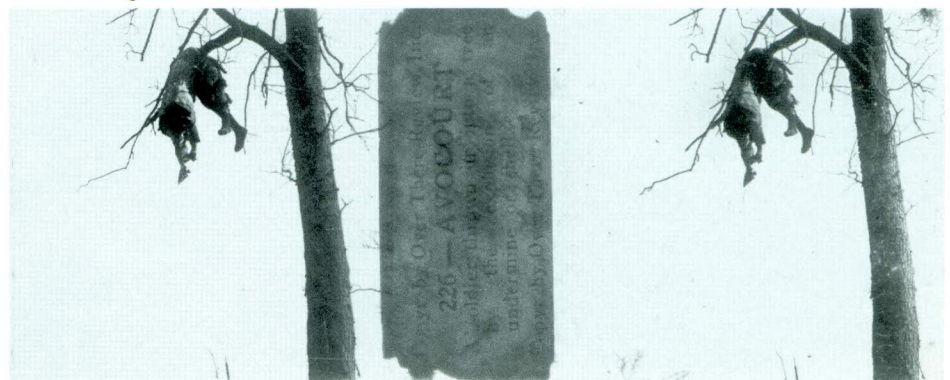
In France, trench warfare settled into a deadly routine, as the commanders searched for a way to break the stalemate. The trenches became a complex network of earthwork fortifications. The front line was protected by a belt of barbed wire, then several hundred yards behind that were the second line of trenches, often with its own

Man's-Land, although nobody kept score. They exchanged photos, hats, cigarettes, cigars, beer, rum, coffee, and other items. The French were more reserved, and did little fraternizing, but did refrain from shooting. The high command of all the armies were stunned, then horrified, when they learned that their soldiers had taken matters into their own hands, and stopped the war! After a few days of peace, they managed to get the war started again, but not until after new years day.

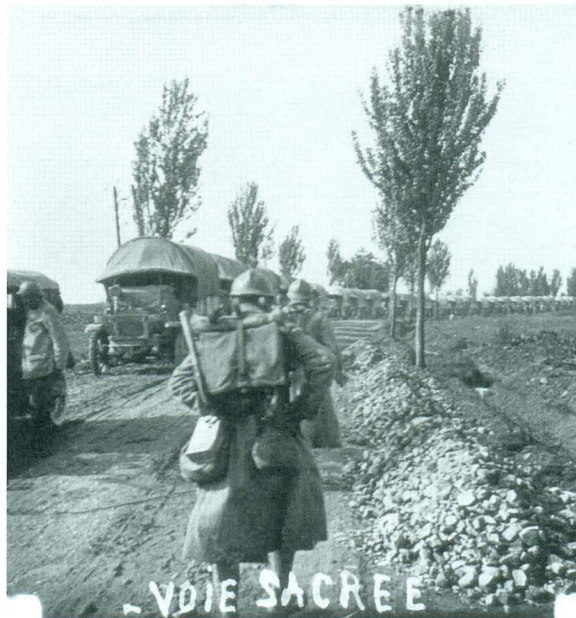
In 1915, the war widened to other fronts all over the globe, while bloody and pointless battles were fought in France and on the Eastern front. Turkey had been pulled into the war on the German side, despite 100 years of British support. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, planned an amphibious invasion of Turkey at Gallipoli, using British, French and Australian troops to open a land route to Russia through the Middle East. It was an epic disaster. After months of furious fighting and massive casualties, the Allies left Gallipoli leaving the Turks victorious, but severely shaken. A later campaign was launched from Egypt. It proved successful in defeating the Turkish army, but not until 1918, too late to help Russia. Italy, technically a German and Austrian ally, saw an opportu-

nity, and declared war on Austria, hoping to gain some territory at Austria's expense. Austria, whose soldiers were not doing very well fighting Russians or Serbians, did quite well fighting the Italians, until the last months of the war, when the Austrian army collapsed. Romania came in on the side of the Allies, and Bulgaria joined the Germans. Serbia was finally overrun by combined German, Austrian and Bulgarian forces. Romania held out until 1917, then surrendered to Germany Austria and Bulgaria. Also in 1915, all of the German colonial possessions in Africa, China and the Pacific Islands were picked off one by one by the

A French glass view from the Brentano, Over There Review series, sold in the USA, No. 68, "Verdun Avocourt cadaver projecte dans un arbre". (No. 226, A soldier thrown up into a tree by the explosion of an undermine, or a shell.) This was not a rare occurrence, as men and horses, or parts of them, were often seen hanging from trees or on roofs of buildings after a large shell exploded. Men could also be vaporized by the blast of a large shell, leaving no remains at all.







An unmarked French glass view, No. 4312 "Verdun Voie Sacree" (Verdun, the sacred way). Only one road into Verdun was free of German shelling during the battle, and became known as the Sacred Way. There was a never ending convoy of trucks and men going in and out of the city. If a truck broke down, it was pushed over and out of the way. The soldier in the foreground has his full kit, about 60 pounds of gear, including a two liter canteen on the right side and a metal canister holding his gas mask on the left side. The French were the first to issue steel helmets to their troops, the Adrian model 1915. It was made of sheet metal,

was cheap and easy to produce. It was based on a French fireman's helmet, and was also adopted by Belgium, Serbia, Italy, and Russia. It did an adequate job of stopping shrapnel balls, but little else. Shrapnel was then a type of shell that burst in the air, and was full of steel or lead balls that rained down like a shot gun shell.

belt of wire, and several hundred yards behind the second line were the third line trenches, with machine gun posts, artillery spotting posts, mortar emplacements, telephone exchanges, and underground shelters, all interconnected with communication trenches. Behind the front lines were thousands of guns, everything from 3" field guns, to massive 18" heavy artillery. Any enemy attack soon drew machine gun and mortar fire from the trenches as well as a devastating artillery barrage, and aerial bombardment. Behind the trench and the gun lines were the supply depots for food, equipment, ammunition, and men held in reserve. These depots were connected by roads and railways, so any area could be supplied quickly. Light gauge rail roads connected the supply depots to the trench

lines to speed the delivery of food, men, artillery shells, and other items.

A thin strip of land between the opposing trenches was created, and was apply named No-Man's-Land. In some areas this was strip was 20 feet wide, in others, it was as much as a mile. During an artillery barrage, No-Man's-Land, as well as the front line positions were transformed. Forests were reduced to splintered stumps. Towns and villages were reduced to rubble, some never to be rebuilt. Pastures and fields soon became so full of shell craters and devoid of plant life, they were more like the surface of the moon. A long bar-

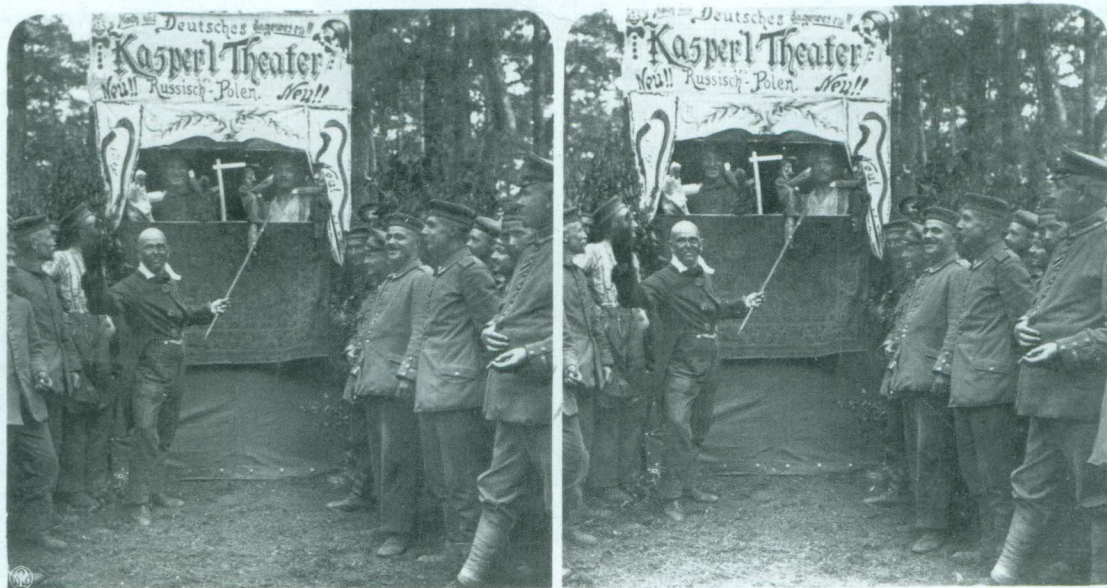
rage transformed well constructed trenches into a series of connected shell holes. When it rained, the front lines and No-Man's-Land became an impassible muddy swamp, capable of swallowing men, horses, guns and vehicles. If one did break through the enemy front line, the advancing troops left supplies and reinforcements far behind, while the enemy was being pushed back closer to his source of supply and reinforcement, allowing for swift counterattacks.

The Germans were not the first to introduce poison gas, but were the first to do so successfully. On April 22, 1915, the Germans intro-



A glass view by Editions STL, No 163 "Courcelles 1918 En pleine attaque no. 1." This view was taken in the summer of 1918, when the allies had pushed the Germans out of their trenches and back into open warfare. These soldiers are taking shelter in a sunken road. Shortly after this photo was taken, the area was shelled by the Germans, killing most of the men in the photo and knocking out the tank in the background. The photographer survived, and went on to shoot some very gruesome photos of the scene.





222. Krieg 1914-15. Kasperl-theater unserer Truppen im Waldlager.

duced chlorine gas at Ypres in Belgium. It was released from cylinders, painfully manhandled into the front lines, and released when the wind conditions were favorable. This was a calculated risk, if the wind died down, or changed direction, you might gas your own front line, or the gas cloud could drift harmlessly away. Later on gas was delivered in artillery shells and

A stereo card by NPG, No. 222 "Kasperletheater unserer Truppen im Waldlager" (Puppet theater entertaining the troops in a camp in the woods). In keeping with German censors, nothing in this photo from 1915 would be of use to the enemy, or upset the morale of the people on the home front. One would think that maybe a troop of scantily clad dancing entertainers would have been more important to soldiers far from home than puppets. Entertaining the troops became more important in keeping up moral. Popular stage entertainers and movie actors made the rounds entertaining the troops. When professional entertainers were not available, the troops would stage their own performances, as many soldiers had been performers and musicians before joining up and others were talented amateurs.

in canisters fired in large groups from banks of specialized mortars,

no longer dependent on a favorable wind. Before effective gas masks were developed, pads of gauze were issued with a neutralizing chemical to be poured on the mask from a bottle, then tied over the nose and mouth. If one's bottle of chemicals was empty, one could

Keystone view No. 18951, "A French Counter-Attack in Progress on 'Point X,' on the Fiercely Contested Battlefield of Les Eparges, 1915." Another view only found in the 1932 set of World War views. It is an official French military view from 1915 and may or may not have been taken during a counter attack. It does show that death was so prevalent and routine in the trenches that two dead men, tossed out of the way, did not even rate a glance by a passing squad of soldiers.

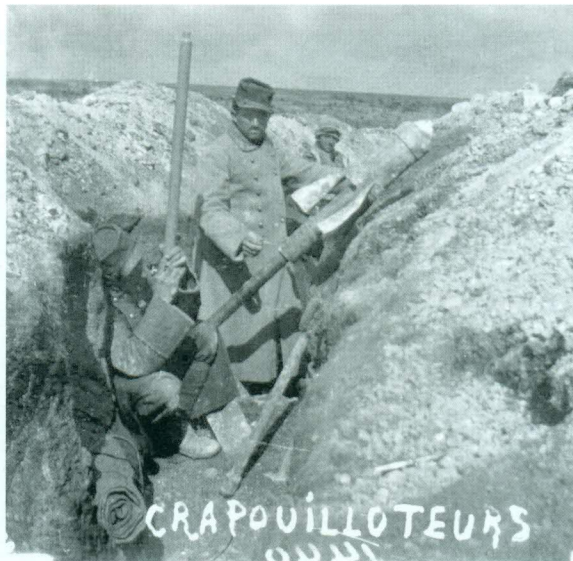


18951 A French Counter-Attack in Progress on "Point X," on the Fiercely Contested Battlefield of Les Eparges, 1915.

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An unmarked French Glass View, No. 1440, "Champagne 1915 Crapouilloteurs" (Champagne, 1915, Trench Mortar Crew). Crapoud is the French word for toad, a reference for the way trench mortars jumped upon firing. The 1915 campaign in the Champagne region led to high casualties and devastated the landscape for little to no tactical advantage for the French. Here a soldier sights in with a periscope while another adjusts the elevation of the mortar. In actual practice, the soldiers would fire the mortar from a safe distance with a lanyard.

urinate on the pad, as urine would offer some protection from chlorine gas. Other types of gas were introduced, such as mustard gas, that would blister the skin and cause blindness as well as burn the lungs. As a weapon, gas had little significance in the final outcome

Trench mortars were short range weapons, and feared by both sides due to the devastating amount of explosive they carried. While this mortar looks crude and flimsy, it was quite effective. The large finned mortar round was mounted to a rod that fit down into the barrel of the mortar.

of the war, but added to the misery of the front line soldiers.

Between the battles, there were long stretches of mind numbing boredom in the trenches. Snipers made sure that nobody showed themselves above ground during the day, leaving soldiers with little to do. They passed the time standing guard, watching the enemy through a periscope, playing cards, hunting rats, picking lice out of their clothes, cleaning their rifles, scrounging enough to eat and drink, trying to stay dry in the rain, and sleeping. The nights could be filled with activity; from patrolling No-Man's-Land, building

Keystone view No. 18962 "The Terrible Waste of the Bois de la Grurie, Where the 77th Division Stepped Off in the Argonne Forrest" from the 1932 set of 400 war views. This view is not the Argonne Forrest, but does show the devastation of what had been a forest. The Argonne was a very quiet sector for most of the war, and relatively undamaged. In late 1918, it was the scene of a massive attack by the American army, but the battle did not last long enough to devastate the forest as the one in this photo. For Americans, a photo of the Argonne Forest would be more interesting than one of some unknown place, so some creative license was taken by Keystone. By 1930, Keystone was the largest stereo view publisher in the world and had obtained rights to use many German and French views, including some released by the French Government. This view was only available in the somewhat rare 1932 set of war views. While this was their best set of war views, it did not sell well due to diminished interest in the war and the set's high price during the depression. The few that did sell mainly went to schools and libraries.







3. Kaiser Wilhelm u. Zar bei der Hofjagd in Borgsdorf.

bunkers, barbed wire stringing parties, laying out or repairing telephone cables, bringing up food and water from the rear area, reliving troops holding the line, and raiding the enemy's trenches. Some sectors were very quiet, and a live and let live policy was informally adopted. As the war went on, the front line soldiers felt very far removed from those they were defending at home. They found the only people who understood them and their experiences were their comrades and the enemy across No-Man's-Land.

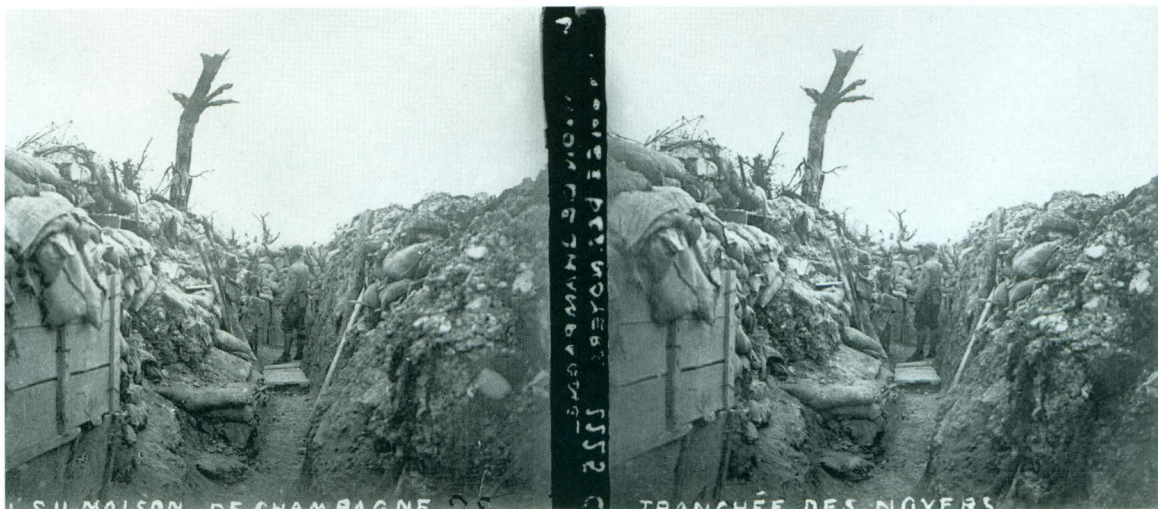
The high command believed that if one had "control" of No-Man's-Land it would demoralize the enemy. They ordered trench

A view by NPG, No. 3, "Kaiser Wilhelm u. Zar bei der Hofjagd in Borgsdorf" (The Kaiser and the Czar with alpine Hunter's caps). A photo from a series of views covering the state funeral of Franz Ferdinand of Austria, whose assassination in June of 1914 was the spark that set off the war. From the relaxed nature of these two emperors sharing a coach, one would not suspect that in a few weeks their nations would be at war with each other. Both of these men proved disastrously inadequate for the tasks ahead of them, and both would lose their thrones as a result of the war. The Czar would lose his life to revolutionaries, the Kaiser would leave for exile in Holland, never to return to Germany. The Kaiser, the Czar, and King George V of England were cousins, as all of them were grandsons of Queen Victoria, an indication of how close knit the aristocracy of Europe had become. Franz Ferdinand, the archduke of Austria, was not a popular figure with the Austrian people or with the aristocracy. He had married a commoner, and although he was next in line to be Emperor of Austria, none of his children could inherit his throne, as he had broken the royal blood line. Franz Ferdinand favored modifying the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary to allow Serbians under Austrian rule some amount of autonomy, making his assassination by a Serbian nationalist sadly ironic. It is also sadly ironic that the death of such an unpopular figure would be the spark that plunged Europe into a devastating war.

raids by squad and platoon sized units. The tools of the trench raid were pistols, trench knives,

grenades, clubs, and sharpened entrenching tools. These were brutal and vicious hand to hand bat-

A glass view by LSU, No. 2225 "Maison de Champagne Tranchee des Noyers", (Home under the walnut tree in the Champagne region). The skeletal remains of a house can be seen over the left parapet, as well as the remains of a large walnut tree. A photo of a trench that has been occupied for quite some time.







A glass view by LSU, No. 550 "Tranchee de 1re ligne" (A Trench of the front line). Taken in the early part of 1915, after the Horizon blue uniform replaced the dark blue overcoat and bright red trousers and field cap, and before the steel helmet was issued. One soldier stands guard with his rifle in a loop hole that is made of wood and built into the parapet of the trench. The soldier to the rear is stooping under a bombproof shelter. This was mainly a shelter from the rain

and shrapnel shells that burst in the air and were filled with steel or lead balls. This type of shelter gave little protection from high explosive shells.

tles, and in the end, did nothing to bring about the end of the war and only added to casualty lists. Patrolling No-Man's-Land was a common task, and troops would often run into an enemy patrol doing the same thing. A fire fight would begin in the darkness, then both sides would rake the area with machine guns, trench mortars, and artillery, killing friend and foe alike.

It was not possible to bury all of the dead, especially in No-Man's-Land. Soldiers smoked constantly to cover the odor of unwashed bodies, human waste, death and decay of the trenches. The dead attracted rats and clouds of flies. Rat hunts in the trenches and dugouts became a necessary sport on both sides.

Soldiers' wounds brought new medical problems. Sanitary condi-

tions in the trenches were primitive at best; the soldiers were very dirty, as were their uniforms. A bullet, shrapnel ball or shell fragment could drive a mud covered piece of fabric deep into the wound, causing Gas gangrene, which turned a serious wound into a deadly one. Standing in water or mud for long periods lead to trench foot, a condition similar to frostbite. Combat fatigue was not well understood at the time, and was called shell shock. Many men who suffered from this were con-

sidered malingerers, and were sent back to the front lines until they broke down completely into insanity.

In February of 1916, the Germans launched an offensive at Verdun, a place of great historical significance to France. General von Faulkenhayn, chief of the General Staff, planned the battle. He claimed, in a post war memoir, that the strategy was not to capture the city and its surrounding forts, but to maintain the appearance of nearly capturing it, so the

An Editions STL glass view, No. 772 "Artois Corvee de boue" (Mud detail in the Artois region). Much has been written about the mud in the trenches and battlefields of World War One. In this trench it is knee deep, and these soldiers have been detailed to clear the trench of mud, a Herculean task. Wounded and exhausted soldiers could sink and drown in the mud if there were no comrades to aid them. In some areas, the water table was very close the surface and the trenches were never dry. In the fields

of Flanders in Belgium, the water table was just inches below the surface of the ground, so trenches and bunkers were built up with sandbags on the surface of each side of No-Man's-Land. It was one of the few areas where earthworks were constructed above grade. If one's trenches were at a slightly higher elevation than those of the enemy, one could direct rain water drainage towards them, adding to their misery.





French would continue to send in troops, and the Germans could kill them. Whether or not this was the strategy, or just a way to save face after the war for a failed offensive, it is what happened. The strategy of "Bleeding the French White" did work, and damaged the moral of the French army. In the process, just as many German soldiers as French were killed, and the battle damaged the moral of their own army. Nearly one million men were killed or wounded during the battle of Verdun, and no tactical advantage was gained by either side. Bones and dud artillery shells are still turning up on the Verdun battlefield, ninety years later. As the battle raged around Verdun, the landscape became a poisonous swamp of mud and corpses. Men stuck in the mud could sink and drown when their strength gave out. A platoon in an advanced post would have a company sent to relieve it. When the company arrived, only a platoon sized group would have survived the journey to the front lines. The dead were everywhere, exploding shells continually covering and uncovering them.

To relieve the French at Verdun, the British planned an offensive on the Somme River. They had greatly expanded their small army with partially trained volunteers, eager to fight for king and country. The British soldiers, loaded down with sixty pounds of gear, went over the top on July 1, 1916, in a



An unmarked French glass view, "Front allemand devant Verdun Suivant l'alerte aux gaz" (Germans in Front of Verdun during a gas alert). A German photo in a French set of views. It is a photo of German soldiers at one of the forts around Verdun, possibly Fort Douaumont, which changed hands several times during the battle. Two of the soldiers are wearing the distinctive coal scuttle helmet, the model 1916 stahlhelm, based on a Medieval German helmet. They were first issued in February 1916, during the battle of Verdun. The soldier in the center is wearing the pre war Jager shako, with a cloth cover. Most German infantry wore the leather pickelhaube, the spiked helmet. Jagers, or Hunters, were light infantry who, in pre war times, acted as scouts and had their own distinctive leather helmet to set them apart from the infantry. In World War One, Jagers lost most of their pre-war functions, and manned the trenches as infantry. Two of the soldiers have the standard gas mask, the third soldier has a prewar naval breathing apparatus, originally intended to be used when fighting a fire onboard a ship. It was found to be unsuitable for the trenches. The French glass stereo view sets contained a few photos from Germany, but these photos never appeared in German sets of views.

massive assault. It had been preceded by a week long artillery barrage that did not fully clear the German barbed wire, or fully destroy the front line positions. It had alerted the Germans to exactly where the assault was going to take place. The British soldiers were told all they had to do was walk over and take possession of the empty German front line. On the first day the British lost 60,000 men, killed and wounded, and

reached none of their objectives, while German casualties were less than 8,000. As time went on, there were high casualties on both sides, in a landscape transformed into mud and corpses. Every success was followed by an enemy counterattack, and when the battle was over, more than a million and half men had been killed or wounded in four months of continuous fighting, again with no tactical advantage for either side.

1917 was a year of limited objective attacks, working out new tactics through trial and error. The errors still cost thousands of men

A glass view by LSU, No. 2130 "Chasse aux poux" (Hunting Lice). The unsanitary conditions of the trenches meant that all soldiers had lice. There was little to be done, except to go over every inch of one's clothing hunting the little insects and their eggs, and crushing them between thumb and finger nails. One never found them all, so it was a never ending task to engage in a louse hunt in one's uniform. When soldiers were relieved and sent behind the lines they could take a hot bath and have their uniforms de-loused, giving them a short break from the infestation of the tiny blood sucking insects.







A glass view by LSU, No. 140 "Boyau Krupp". I do not know how to translate this. Krupp was the premier German arms manufacture, Boyau means interior, intestine or tube. This is a very disturbing photo. The officer is very relaxed and calmly writing a report, and like the other men seems to take no notice that a man's legs, complete with muddy boots, are protruding from the

wall of the trench just behind him. One can only image the odor of the trenches, and the state of mind where a cadaver becomes just a piece of the landscape.

killed and wounded, but there were a few successes that lead to new tactics which were to be used in later campaigns and on a larger scale. It was also a year that nations and armies on the verge of collapse, did so. The United States entered the war. Russia left the war, having disintegrated into revolution and civil war. After a particularly botched offensive, the French army mutinied. The soldiers agreed to man the trenches,

but would no longer participate in futile assaults on the Germans, until a better way was found. Even the British army had a small rebellion at a harsh training camp in France. The Italian army, after two years of failed offensives against the Austrians, was overrun when the combined forces of Germany and Austria attacked at Caporetto.

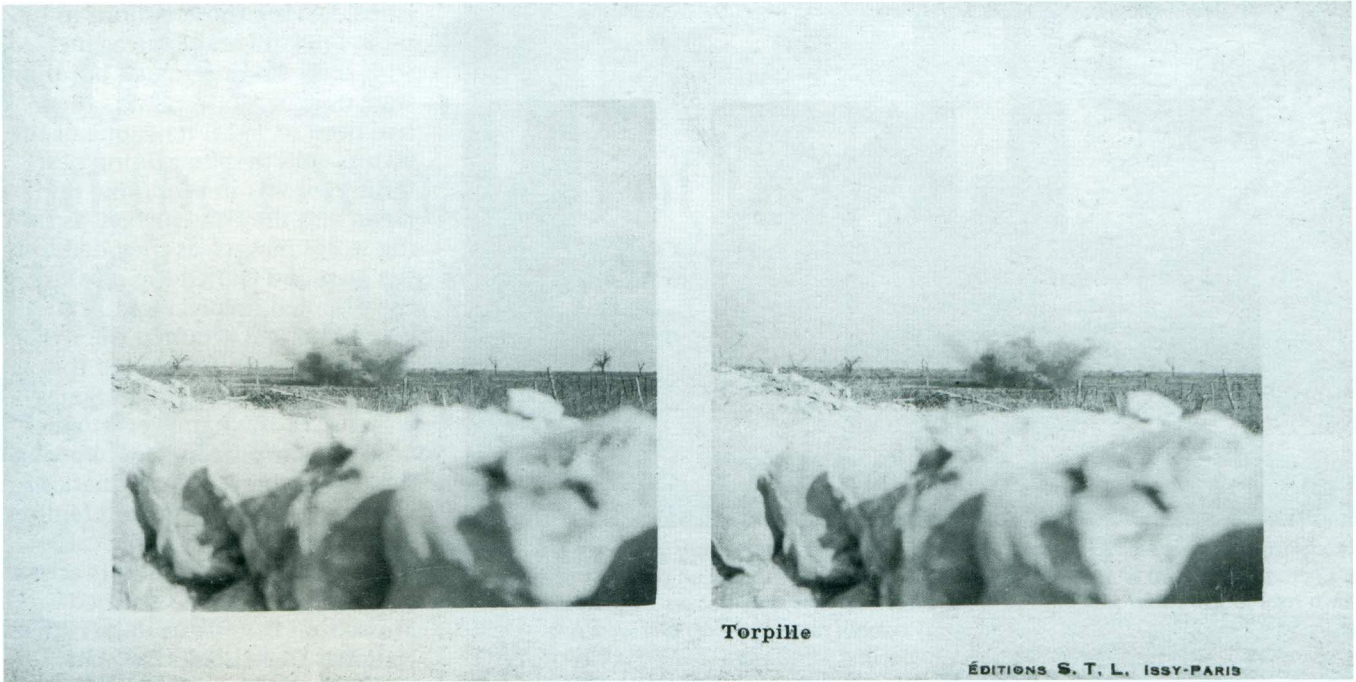
The campaign ended when the German troops were diverted back to France, leaving the Italian army in disarray, but not defeated. In Germany and Austria, things were not going well on the home front. The British naval blockade was taking effect. Everything was in short supply, including food, metals, wood and coal for home heating. The German potato crop failed, leading to the Turnip Winter of 1916. Most Germans spent the winter of 1916-1917 without enough food or heat in their homes. The German government could feed the army or feed the people, they could not do both. They chose the army, and bread lines grew longer while unrest grew stronger.

The Germans knew they had one chance left to strike before American soldiers arrived in massive numbers, and the blockade starved them into surrendering. Troops released from Russia were sent to France, giving them superiority in numbers for the first time since 1914. They had perfected new tactics in Russia and Italy. There was no long preliminary barrage, but a short but very intense artillery barrage the day of the attack, followed by a very swift infantry assault, infiltrating into the enemy line, while the artillery shifted the barrage to the rear and sides of the area under attack, preventing reinforcements from coming in. Ground attack aircraft were also used to support the advance. The next day it would be repeated, then the next, and the next, until the enemy line broke under the

An unmarked French glass view, No. 1000 "A L'Assault Mt des Singes" (Assault at Mt. des Singes). On September 16, 1918, the French attacked the German lines outside of Mt. des Singes and recaptured the area. If this is truly a photo taken during an assault, then it is a remarkable stereograph. The soldiers are advancing in open order, not packed shoulder to shoulder as they would have done in 1914. The soldier in front is an officer, armed only with an automatic pistol. The soldier behind him has a Chauchat light machine gun, officially known as the Fusil-Mitrailleur Mle 1915 CSRG. It was introduced in 1915, weighed 20 pounds, and was one of the first light machine guns, or assault rifles. It was intended to be used by one man, and fired from the hip during an advance. It was constructed as inexpensively as possible, and nearly 260,000 of them were made. It did not function well when it was dirty, and was notorious for jamming. The US army used this gun until the Browning BAR started to replace it in the last few weeks of the war. A soldier behind the machine gunner has a Viven and Bessier rifle grenade launcher attached to his rifle, giving the group of soldiers their own small artillery piece. During a battle there were few reliable ways to communicate with headquarters, giving a need for rifle companies to have their own machine guns and artillery to deal with an enemy strong point and bypass the long delays in communicating with headquarters for artillery support.







Torpille

ÉDITIONS S. T. L. ISSY-PARIS

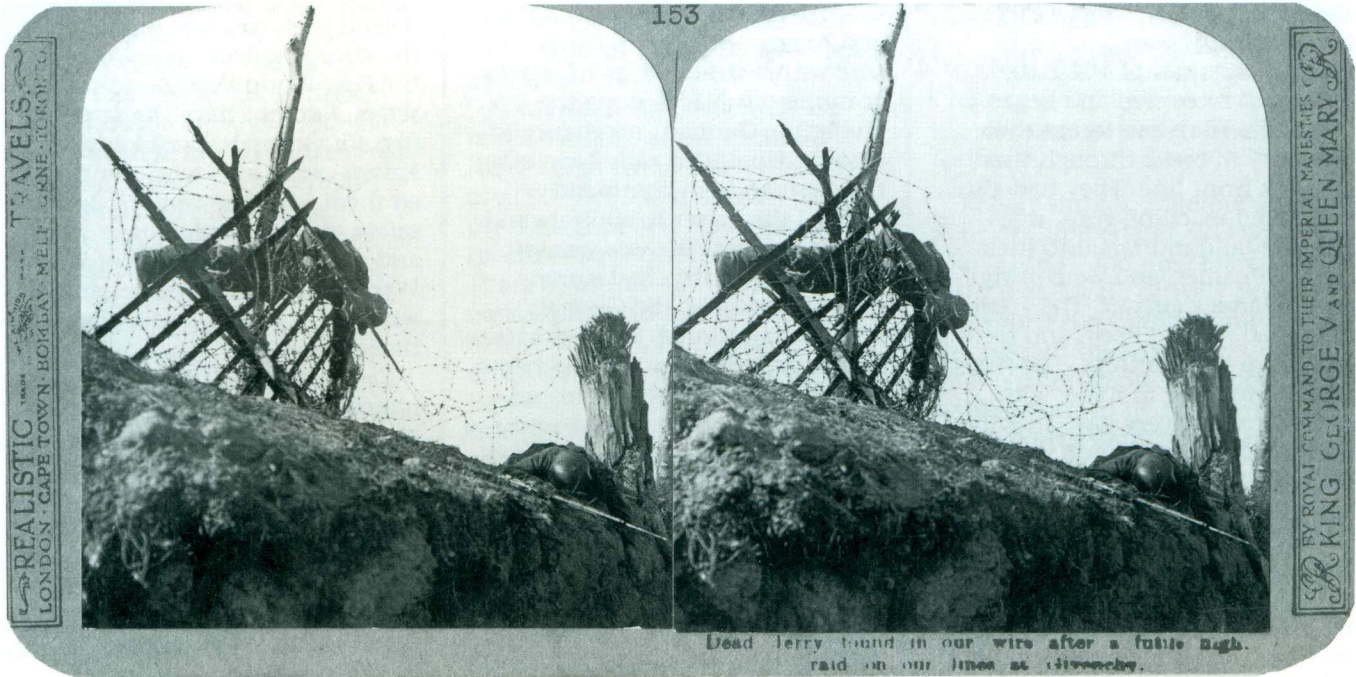
A French paper view by Editions STL "Torpille" (Torpedo). While the caption describes this as a torpedo, or mine, it appears to be a shell exploding near the photographer's trench. The barbed wire entanglement is clearly visible, giving a good view of No-Man's-Land, a flat desolate piece of ground, impossible to cross in daylight without being seen.

In March of 1918, the Germans unleashed a new offensive on the Western Front. The new tactics pried the Allies out of the trenches and back into open warfare. They were able to push the Allies back, in some places for 40 miles, and

pressure. The German army had also been reorganized so that the front line infantry units had their own machine guns, flame throwers, rifle grenades, mortars and light artillery integrated into the rifle company, giving them a massive amount of firepower. If one area managed to hold out, it was bypassed, and left behind, for the second wave to take care of, but

the first wave kept on moving forward.

A view by Realistic Travels of London, No. 153 "Dead Jerry found in our wire after a futile raid on our lines at Givenchy." The British army was very strict about photo censorship. Photographers and newsreel cameras were carefully guided to places where they could take photos in arranged photo shoots, and were never allowed into the front lines. While this is a posed photo, it is a classic image of the war. Realistic Travels was notorious for staging action shots to liven up their sets of war views but they were not alone in this practice. Their final set of war views was a truly massive 600 views. Keystone would reorganize their views when they expanded the size of sets. Realistic just added an additional box of 100 views to their previous set, with little to no organization to them.



Dead Jerry found in our wire after a futile night raid on our lines at Givenchy.





*Choromoplast-Bild Photo No. 332 (reproduced here in black & white), from a series of war views. Choromoplast -Bild, of Stuttgart, Germany, produced stereo views on cardstock with their own color process from 1910 to 1920, complete with their own Holmes style folding viewer. The viewer and stereo cards came in a very colorful cardboard box, and were relatively inexpensive. They were mostly known for nature and scenic views, but did publish war photos. The photos tended to be grainy and not very sharp, but they were in natural color, and not tinted. This posed photo shows a soldier standing guard, looking towards the enemy with binoculars. The photos of this series were taken well behind the front lines and at training camps. There are some official French war photos in color as well.*

nearly broke the Allied army. The British had issued orders for units to stand their ground, hold out to the last man. Clerks, cooks, and other noncombatants were given rifles and sent to the front line. The Germans had finally found a way to end the stalemate, they had the Allies reeling, but it was too late, there were no more men to continue the offensive. They had taken massive casualties they could not replace and the intense barrages had worn out the barrels of their artillery, also irreplaceable this late in the war.

In the summer of 1918, the Allies had recovered and began an offensive. They had found their own way to break through the enemy's front line. They had also integrated machine guns, rifle grenades and mortars into their rifle companies, and were using ground attack aircraft. The French army had refitted itself, and recovered from the mutinies. The Americans were there in force, with more arriving every day. The Allies had developed a weapon the Germans had not, the tank. The tank proved to be one of the lasting military innovations of World War One. After a number of failed attempts, they learned how to use the mechanical monsters effectively. Hundreds of tanks spearheaded

attacks over solid ground, not over ground broken up by long artillery barrages. They drove a path through the enemy barbed wire and took out machine gun positions with their guns, or by simply rolling over them. The allies were able to launch an attack anywhere on the 500 mile long front line, without a long preliminary artillery barrage. With little to no warning when or where an attack was to take place, the Germans could only pull back to a new defensive line. The French, British and Americans kept up the pressure with a steady series of attacks, at numerous places along the line, giving the Germans no chance to recover. Finally, in early November, the German high command advised the Kaiser to abdicate and leave Germany, the war was lost. Turkey and Austria had surrendered in October, the German navy had mutinied, the nation was collapsing into anarchy, and he no longer had the loyalty of his soldiers. The Kaiser abdicated, and a provisional government was hastily put together. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the shooting stopped.

Europe had used up an entire generation of young men in the war. The German, Austrian, Russian and Ottoman empires had van-

ished, leaving those nations in turmoil. England and France emerged with their empires intact, but they were not the world powers they had been in 1914. Italy, one of the victors, and despite gaining new territories, was in economic ruin. Japan and the USA emerged as rising world powers, as they had lost the least and gained the most in their limited involvement in the war. Japan had acquired the German colonies in China and the Pacific Islands. The United States emerged as a dynamic economic and industrial machine. Following the end of the war, many nations saw economic collapse and famine. A world wide flu epidemic came on suddenly, killed millions across the world, and then vanished. Mussolini's Fascists in Italy, Hitler's National Socialists in Germany, and Lenin's Communists in Russia, were reactionary political movements that grew as a direct response to the war and its aftermath. Ideas of nationalism and self rule in colonies still under European domination grew in strength. The course of the 20th century was put in motion by the First World War, and some effects are still unfolding. Who could have foreseen that one of the most far reaching effects of the First World War would be the end of the Ottoman Empire and the reshaping of the Middle East?

I have the highest respect and admiration for soldiers who put themselves in harms way to defend their country, especially in the circumstances the soldiers of the First World War found themselves. I do not have the same feelings for Generals, presidents, kings, Kaisers, and Czars who commanded them from the comfort and safety of their headquarters, offices and palaces. The soldiers of World War One war deserved better men, wiser men, to lead them, than those they had.

Each army had official photographers. The French sent out teams of them, including stereographers, to document everything. One of the uses for these photos was evidence to claim war reparations from Germany, and they were used for that purpose. The French military stereo views captured the true

*(Continued on page 33)*



# Trench War 1949-1918

(Continued from page 22)

nature of war, and were never intended to be made public. After the war, a number of French veteran groups demanded that they be released, so the truth would be known. Bowing to public pressure, the French government released them all, and in the 1920s, French publishers began selling them. They sold quite well, and reinvigorated stereoview sales for a few years. Then interest in the war declined, the world wide depression was on, and they faded into obscurity.

The French views outnumber all the others I chose for this article. I did not intend to focus on the

French army, but they tell a truth that the Keystone, NPG, Underwood, and Realistic Travel views do not. These photos illustrate what any soldier in any army faced in that war, and not just those of France. I am indebted to Robert Boyd and Doug Jordan, who were very generous in allowing me access to their impressive World War One stereo view collections. Robert Boyd's website [GreatWar-Photos.org](http://GreatWar-Photos.org) is an excellent source of information on World War One stereo views, and he is the author of *The Great War Through Keystone Stereographs*.

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