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WWI-Western Front

ALLIED OFFENSIVES, 1915

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

CONTENTS

General Sources.....p.
Neuve Chapelle (10-13 Mar).....p.2
Second Artois (9 May-18 Jun).....p.3
Third Artois (Loos/Artois) (25 Sep-Oct).....p.5
Second Champagne (25 Sept-6 Nov).....p.6
Aftermath.....p.7

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NEUVE CHAPELLE

There were four major Anglo-French attempts to break through strongly-fortified German trench lines to break the stalemate that developed along the Western Front from the North Sea to the Swiss Border. The first was a solely British attempt to break the German trenches at Neuve Chapelle and capture the village of Aubers, less than one mile to the east. In four days, the British took a salient 2,000 x 1,200 yards, and captured 1,200 German POWs. Commonwealth casualties were 7,000 British and 4,200 Indian troops (Martin Gilbert, The First World War: A Complete History, p. 133).

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Loos & Neuve Chapelle

SECOND ARTOIS

French troops launched an attack toward German positions on Vimy Ridge, the villages of Vimy and Givenchy-en-Gohelle. A coincidental British attack at Fromelles and La Bassée again attempted to take Aubers Ridge, which they had been denied two months earlier at Neuve Chapelle. The French also made a diversionary assault on the Somme at Serre, 17 Jun, but none of these attempts were successful.

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Allied Offensives, 1915

p.4

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-Hebuterne

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THIRD ARTOIS (Loos/Artois Offensive)

Isolated actions, such as the late July contest for the tactically-advantageous Hooge Crater, failed to break the Western Front stalemate. Partially to achieve this goal and partially to serve as an antidote to the failed Gallipoli campaign, the British high command planned a late September attack at Loos. This attack commenced with British troops releasing 150 tons of chlorine gas in advance of a push to the Lens-La Bassée Road, crossing it opposite Hulluch and the Bois Hugo. The advance halted, but only after five attempts to break through stifling German machine gun fire with even the German troops halting their fire from disbelief that they would continue to move forward.

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Loos & Neuve Chapelle

SECOND CHAMPAGNE

Coincident to the British Loos campaign, the French launched an assault in the Champagne Region. Although early successes, such as the capture of La Courtine, were reversed, Marshall Joffre announced at the end of the campaign the capture of 25,000 Germans and 150 heavy enemy guns, and declared a French success.

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AFTERMATH

On 12 October, Germans in occupied Brussels conducted the very-public execution of the British nurse, Edith Cavell on charges of espionage. The next day they launched the heaviest to date air assault on London, where 5 Zeppelins dropped 189 bombs, killing 71 civilians.

Particularly during and after the Loos and Champaign offensives, the yet-to-be-defined concept of the "Lost Generation" began to take shape. Attitudes of British luminaries such as Robert Graves, Roland Leighton and John Kipling, the latter two killed in action, became part of very public discourse on the wisdom of pursuing armed conflict in Europe.

A shell shortage among the Allied forces forced them to begin seeking American manufacturing support and question their own leadership. In late December, Sir John French, Commander in Chief of British forces in France, was replaced by Douglas Haig, ushering in a renewed offensive phase of the Western Front war in 1916.