

A Frontline Soldier on Poison Gas Warfare (May 10, 1916)

Abstract

In the Battle of Ypres in April/May 1915, the German Army Command used poison gas on a large scale for the first time. The following year, F. Tholl, a miner who had been drafted into the field artillery, wrote about the inhumanity of gas warfare in this letter, which he wrote while wounded in hospital.

Source

[...]

Hopefully this mass murderous war will soon come to an end. Apparently, the English, after a successful gas attack by the Germans, have carried away their dead by the carload, losing thousands in one or two hours. The number of people destroyed by artillery fire is said to stand in no relation to this at all. Thus, war technology is well on its way to destroying whole armies “without bloodshed,” by suffocating or making them fall asleep. What humane warfare. [...]

Source of original German text: Bundesarchiv Rep. 92, Nr. 271 (Letters collected by the Union of Miners), Bl. 248Rs. Excerpted/reprinted in Bernd Ulrich and Benjamin Ziemann, *Frontalltag im Ersten Weltkrieg. Wahn und Wirklichkeit*. Berlin, 1995, p. 95.

Translation: Insa Kummer

Recommended Citation: A Frontline Soldier on Poison Gas Warfare (May 10, 1916), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:document-5484>> [September 26, 2025].