

Explosion in Lille on January 11, 1916 – Crater and Destroyed Factories (December 12, 1916)

Abstract

On January 11, 1916, a munitions repository in Lille (France) exploded, destroying several streets as well as some adjacent factories. This postcard shows the massive crater and ruined buildings left behind. (The printed caption leaves no question that this is a professional postcard.) By putting the enormous destructive capacity of the war on display, images of this sort satisfied a certain public craving for sensation. The captions, however, often made clear that enemy troops were responsible for the destruction. In this case, no guilty party is named, although according to a German army report, the explosion – which killed seventy people and left forty grievously injured – was caused by a British attack.

The postcard reads as follows:

(Postmark December 12, 1916)

Dear Nurse Christine!

Thank you very much for your Christmas wishes and for the tea cake you sent me. I will make sure to thoroughly enjoy it. In general, things are going alright with me; we have an insane amount of work to do here. Many greetings to all my acquaintances and especially to you. M. Kessler

Source



Source: Photographs and postcards are courtesy of the Mauch and Roller families, Weil im Schönbuch, Germany.

Recommended Citation: Explosion in Lille on January 11, 1916 – Crater and Destroyed Factories (December 12, 1916), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:image-2189>> [September 26, 2025].