

German Infantrymen on the Frontline with Weapons at the Ready (1914)

Abstract

Whereas stasis was the characteristic feature of the Western Front from November 1914 onward, the earliest months of war had seen a great deal of mobile warfare, as German troops occupied Luxemburg, overran Belgium, and pushed deep into French territory by early September. In this photograph, German infantrymen ready for attack are positioned behind a small embankment in an open field. This simple configuration in no way foretells the elaborate system of trenches that would come to define the Western Front in the four years that followed. According to the German Schlieffen Plan, a quick victory in the west was to decide the war before the Russians could mobilize in the east, thereby sparing Germany a two-front war. This plan was foiled, however, by an Entente counter-offensive, which stopped the German advance about 40 miles east of Paris in the Battle of the Marne (September 6-9, 1914). The front line was first extended in the “race to the sea” and subsequently shifted only a few miles thereafter.

Source



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