

German Assault Troops of the First World War: Stosstrupptaktik - The First Stormtroopers

By Stephen Bull

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To many it would later seem as if the rule book of war had been torn up and thrown away. World War I is usually characterized as a static war of attrition, but by its end a new doctrine of fire and movement emerged, with the squad as the key tactical unit, marking a fundamental shift in methods of warfare. As late as March 1918, assault detachments used these tactics to destroy the British 5th Army and take 50,000 prisoners. Stephen Bull traces the development of German storm tactics in the context of trench warfare waged with new technology: vastly improved machine-guns, super-heavy artillery, flamethrowers, and gas. The legend of German stormtroops has proved powerful and enduring. They were central to Blitzkrieg, and Hitler styled them as elite soldiers—living examples of Nietzschean supermen. As demonstrated here, these tactics did not appear out of nowhere.

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German Assault Troops of the First World War: Stosstrupptaktik - The First Stormtroopers By Stephen Bull Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1558054 in Books
- Published on: 2014-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.10" h x .60" w x 6.10" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Stephen Bull is a specialist in military history and an expert on World War I. He has is the curator of military history and archaeology for Lancashire County Museums, and has appeared on the TV series *Battlefield Detectives* and *Instruments of Death*. He is the author of *An Officer's Manual of the Western Front*, *The Old Front Line*, and *Trench*.

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