The Brusilov Offensive (June – Sept. 1916)
- To relieve pressure on France & Italy (worked)
- "Distributive Pressure"
- Preparations (Trenches & Hurricane barrage)
  - 570K attack 460K
  - Battle grows to 1.7M against 1M
- Huge Russian gains
- German reaction
- ≈1.8 Million casualties (≈1.1M Austrian)
Silesia concept originally envisioned Suvorov making main attack with Braslaw supporting. Events ultimately caused Suvorov to make the MA.
The Brusilov Offensive

- Ended the German assault on Verdun
- Ended the Battle of Asiago
- Brought Romania into the war
  - Oil & Wheat
  - One year extension???
- Essentially destroyed the offensive capability of the Austrian army
- Demonstrated many of the basic tactics that would ultimately defeat trench warfare
Western Front 1915

- The French are (sort of) in charge (Joffre)
  - No unified command!!!!
  - 5/6 of the front
  - The Noyon Salient
- The Germans are on the defensive in the west
  - The East is the “Theater of Decision”.
- Winter Operations
  - Champagne & Grivenchy (Dec 1914 – Mar 1915)
  - Neuve-Chapelle (March) (Missed lesson)
Western Front 1915 (2)

- Spring battles
  - 2d Ypres (Apr-May) (German attack)
  - 2d Artois & Festubert (May-June)
- “Ammunition Break”
- Loos, 3d Artois, & 2d Champagne (Sept - Oct)
- Casualties (Allied–640K; German-313K)
- NOTE!
  And the line doesn’t move!
Two major battles, both designed to win the war
Verdun

- Verdun (Feb – Sept: German assault)
  - “Bleed the French Army white”
- Massive preparations
  - 2.5M shells & >100K soldiers
  - 1240 guns
- Complete air superiority and therefore surprise
- Confusion and poor execution
  - Real objective???
  - West bank of the Meuse
  - Surprise
- Petain, troop rotation and the Voie Sacree
  - Sept – Dec: French assault (Nivele)
Battle of Verdun
21 February 1916 – 16 December 1916

- Fort
- Battery

"Voie Sacrée"
(to Bar-le-Duc)
Fort Douamont

Before

After
Cost of the Battle (Verdun)

- Battlefield of < 6 miles square
- 23M shells fired @ 100/min for 303 days
- French losses: 550,000 casualties
- German losses: 434,000 casualties
- Total: About 1 Million casualties of which about half were dead or missing
- New generals (Nivele and Hindenburg)
Verdun, before and after
Somme

- 6 British Corps & 1 French (Fayolle)
  - “Kitchener's Army”
- Haig’s Strategic Objective
  - Win the war
  - Two possible ways to achieve victory
- July – Nov (12 major & 23 “minor” battles)
  - 330 German counter-attacks
Somme (2)

- Massive artillery preps
  - > 4M shells (maybe 1/3 failed)
  - Fired 3/sec for one week
  - Complete failure

- 3 British assumptions
Day one on the Somme – 1 July, 1916

“The worse day in the history of the British Army”
Somme (3)

- Raw troops & “flexible” defense
  - The third tier
  - Redoubts and pillboxes

- Allied Results:
  - Little gain
  - British took 420K casualties
  - French took 200K casualties

- However, the Germans
  - took 465K casualties
  - and never recovered from these loses
Haig and Fayolle at the Somme

- Attrition
- Politics
In the 5 month period of June to November 1916, while the battles of Verdun and the Somme were both in progress, deaths averaged 5 men per minute.
End of 1916 Summary

- Serbia & Romania out of the war
- Several armies are about worn out
  - French, Russian, Austrian, Italian
- Huge movement battles in the east with no strategic result
- Huge battles in the west with little or no movement
End of 1916 Summary (2)

- English & Germans are now the main combatants and the west is now clearly the “Theater of Decision”
- Importance of these battles revisited
  - (Terraine and Philpott)
- Germans recognize that they are losing a war of attrition
  - Haig and Joffre are right
  - A new approach is required
Questions?