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Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Maps -- Acknowledgements -- 1. The Context -- 2. 'Absolutely Astonishing': The War Committee and the Military -- 3. Decision-making, January-February -- 4. Decision-making, March-June -- 5. 'Grasping at the Shadow': Planning for the Somme, February-June -- 6. 'Favourable Results Are Not Anticipated': Preparations for Battle, June -- 7. 'A Short Life': VII & VIII Corps on 1 July -- 8. 'The Enemy's Fire Was So Intense': X Corps on 1 July -- 9. 'Wave after Wave Were Mown Down': III Corps on 1 July -- 10. 'Cowering Men in Field Grey': XV and XIII Corps on 1 July -- 11. Reflections on 1 July -- 12. 'Ill-Considered Attacks on a Small Front', 2-13 July -- 13. 'Cavalry Sharpening Their Swords', 14 July -- 14. 'We Are a Bit Stuck', 15-31 July -- 15. 'Something Wanting in the Methods Employed', 1 August-12 September -- 16. 'A Hell of a Time': Pozières and Mouquet Farm, July-August -- 17. Summary: 15 July-12 September -- 18. The Politicians and the Somme Campaign, July-August -- 19. One Division's Somme: The First Division, July-September -- 20. 'An Operation Planned on Bolder Lines': Tanks and the 15 September Plan -- 21. Lumbering Tanks: The Battle of 15 September -- 22. 25 September -- 23. 'The Tragic Hill of Thiepval', 1 26-30 September -- 24. 'A Severe Trial of Body and Spirit': The Somme, October -- 25. 'We Must Keep Going!': The Politicians and the Somme Campaign, September-October -- 26. The Political Battle: Beaumont Hamel, 13-19 November -- 27.

Sommario/riassunto

In the long history of the British Army, the Battle of the Somme was its bloodiest encounter. Between July 1 and mid-November 1916, 432,000 of its soldiers became casualties--about 3,600 for every day of battle. German casualties were far fewer despite British superiority in the air and in lethal artillery. What went wrong for the British, and who was responsible? Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson have examined the entire public archive on the Battle of the Somme to reconstruct the day-by-day course of the war. The result is the most precise and authentic account of the campaign on record and a book that challenges almost every received view of the battle. The colossal rate of infantry casualties in fact resulted from inadequate fire support; responsibility for tactical mistakes actually belonged to the High Command and the civilian War Committee. Field-Marshal Haig, the records show, was repeatedly deficient in strategy, tactics, command, and organization. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers died for a cause that lacked both a coherent military plan and responsible political leadership. Prior and Wilson decisively change our understanding of the history of the Western Front.
