

GENERAL

MAX HOFFMANN

T A N N E N B E R G

"AS IT REALLY WAS"

with
Two Original Maps

Translated by
Captain, Infantry

Published by Kulturpolitik
Berlin 1926

OCT 2 '35

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T R A N S L A T O R ' S N O T E

Wilnaver Army and Warsaw Army in the text have been translated FIRST ARMY and SECOND ARMY respectively.

Numbers in parenthesis, e. g. (1) indicate that the preceding translation pertains to page 1 of original text.

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CHAPTER I

THE PRELUDE AT GUMBINNEN

GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ and GAFFRON, Commander of the German Eighth Army, who at the beginning of the war had been assigned the mission of defending the eastern front of the empire against the Russians, was faced with an unusually difficult task.

The manner in which it could be accomplished had been taught us by GRAF SCHLIEFFEN, Chief of our great General Staff, in innumerable war games and problems.

Time and time again GRAF SCHLIEFFEN reiterated: A decision can only be reached if the weak German forces to be utilized in EAST PRUSSIA are so disposed that they can take advantage of the terrain, - i. e. the MAZURIAN LAKES, which will separate the approaching Russian columns into two forces, and take offensive action with our entire force against that Russian army which first comes within striking distance.

It is indeed tragic to contemplate that had the German Eighth Army followed the foregoing teaching of our genial instructor in strategy it could have annihilated both of the Russian armies, operating against EAST PRUSSIA in two strong blows.

If GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ had moved to the north not only the XVII but also the XX Corps from the southern border of EAST PRUSSIA and detailed only garrison and Landwehr troops for the defense of the southern border,

when it became evident that the Russian (7) First Army would reach the border sooner than the Russian Second Army, and had he then strongly echeloned troops on his left flank, placed his troops on the general line: AUGERBURG - thence generally north to INSTERBURG, and attacked on the 20th of August enveloping the north wing of the Russian Second Army, it would have been possible for him in a short time to have achieved decisive results.

Should the Russian Second Army then have advanced from the south and crossed the southern border, the situation would have been all the more favorable for the Germans the farther this army advanced into German territory. The Eighth Army could then swing to the southwest, strike it in the right flank, and drive it in the direction of THORN back against the VISTULA.

Naturally steps would have had to be taken to curtail the individual border fights and engagements of the I Corps. Had the decision been made to attack the Russian First Army with our entire force, there would have been no reason for retarding its (Russian First Army) advance; on the contrary the sooner it could advance to within striking distance of the Eighth Army the earlier a decision could have been secured and thus the danger of the threat from the Russian Second Army would have been lessened.

But Headquarters of the Eighth Army could not bring itself to carry out the solution of the great VON SCHLIEFFEN.

It left the XX Corps and the 70th Landwehr Brigade on the southern front. A motion by Deputy Chief of Staff, GENERAL GRÜNERT, to move at least the Landwehr Brigade to the north did not receive any consideration from GENERAL GRAF WALDERSEE, Chief of Staff. (8) In

addition, GRAF WALDERSEE had formed an incorrect picture of the disposition of the forces of the Russian First Army. He was of the opinion that this army would advance with the bulk of its forces south of the ROMINTEN HEIDE, as a result of which he believed the Russians would be south of the KÖNIGSBERG-KOWNO railroad. What caused him to gain this impression I do not know. As a result of this incorrect plan the German attack on the 20th August struck the Russian First Army frontally rather than enveloping its left flank. In spite of this the attack was successful on both flanks. The XVII Corps suffered a defeat in the center. This Corps made a hasty attack, without sufficient artillery preparation, against the organized Russian position and was driven back with heavy losses. Whether the XVII Corps was influenced in making this hasty advance by information it received on the 20th from the I Corps to the effect that the I Corps was in a very favorable position for an attack and that great results could be expected if the XVII Corps would make an energetic advance in the direction of SZIRGUPONEN (10 kilometers east of GUMBINNEN), is now very difficult to determine.

Twice during the course of the morning I transmitted the order by telephone to the Headquarters XVII Corps: "The Corps in its advance will echelon its right deep in the direction of GOLDAP." I distinctly recall our astonishment when the report was received: "The Corps is defeated and the situation is serious," and then pointed out that the Corps was disposed on its right wing (9) with its rear towards GOLDAP and had no reserves it could employ there. That this failure to take into consideration the enemy at GOLDAP did not bring on any serious con-

sequences is due to the direct and independent action of the divisions of the I Reserve Corps. At all events it cannot be proven off-hand that the above mentioned suggestion of the I Corps to the XVII Corps should have lead its commanding general VON MACKENSEN to receive the impression that the enemy on his front was about to withdraw and that it was necessary to prevent this withdrawal by a quick attack. Without the above incident the entry of this Corps into action without artillery support would probably not have occurred, especially if it had been echeloned to the right rear in accordance with orders.

In spite of the unfavorable situation of the battle and in spite of the defeat of the XVII Corps the situation on the evening of the 20th of August for the continuation of the attack had good prospects. Both wings had been successful.

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS halted his victorious troops of the I Corps in the afternoon and had to order a rest since his troops were, totally exhausted by the heat and the marches and the fighting and needed a rest very urgently.

On the south flank with his 3d Reserve Division GENERAL VON MORGEN stood ready at daybreak the 21st to drive against the flank and rear of an enemy which the I Reserve Corps had defeated the day before.

Even without the information which we have today of conditions on the side of the Russian forces, namely, that RENNENKAMPF'S (10) Army was about to fall to pieces, that his entire staff advised a retreat in order to avoid an overwhelming defeat, we could still on the 21st have

counted on fruitful results, since the German Army in the course of two or three days could secure maneuver room to the east and could utilize all its forces against the Russian Second Army.

GENERAL GRUNERT and myself were of the opinion that the battle at GUMBINNEN was going favorably and should be fought to a conclusion without considering the threat of the Russian Second Army, and for the reason that the Commanding General XX Corps, against whom the Russian forces were advancing from the direction of WARSAW, had not cried for help but on the contrary had stated quietly and reassuringly that there was no particular ground for concern, that his Corps had reckoned on an attack by about 3 hostile corps in two or three days and did not expect any assistance.

CHAPTER II

RECALL OF PRITTWITZ

Such was the situation of the BATTLE OF GUMBINNEN on the evening of the 20th. Still more disturbing, however, was the decision of GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ which reached us about 7:00 PM, namely, to break off the battle and withdraw the Army behind the VISTULA. That GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ had for several hours already considered this decision was not known to me until now, since he had not discussed it with his staff. (11)

The situation in the south opposite the Russian Second Army on the 20th was as follows: The plan of operation, drawn up under French pressure for quick action, provided that the First and Second Armies, without waiting for the arrival of reserves, should strike the German Eighth Army from the east and south respectively, the weak strength of which had been correctly estimated, enveloping it from the north and the south, cutting it off from KÖNIGSBERG and the VISTULA and annihilate it. The plan of GENERAL JILINSKI, the commander of the northwest front, provided that the Russian First Army should cross the border two days earlier than the Russian Second Army, continue its advance, and attack the German Army wherever it should find it. The Russian Second Army, crossing the border two days later, should strike the German Army from the rear and cut off from

the VISTULA that portion which was opposing RENNENKAMPF by a left envelopment. JILINSKI'S march tables for the advance of both armies did not take into consideration the unfavorable road conditions on the southern front. The time difference of two days, in which the armies should strike, was increased as a result of the road conditions. Another delay in the time at which the Second Army could strike was occasioned by SAMSONOW, who desired to move his army farther to the west in order to make the execution of his mission, to envelop and cut off (the German Army) from the VISTULA, more effective.

On the afternoon of the 20th the XX Army Corps reported that it had estimated the strength of the enemy which had reached the border on the line: CHORZELE - FRIEDRICHSHOF, to be two to two and one-fourth corps (12) and two light infantry brigades, and that GENERAL SCHOLTZ, the Corps Commander, had under consideration the movement of his Corps to the vicinity of NEIDENSBURG in order to strike in flank the Russian left wing and delay its advance. About 7:00 PM another report was received from GENERAL UNGER, the commander of the border defenses at SOLDAU, stating that at least a Russian corps from the direction of WARSAW had reached the border in the vicinity south of MLAWA. The situation of the XX Corps and of the border defenses at SOLDAU was therefore naturally rather serious. An attack at NEIDENBURG, indeed any offensive action on the part of the XX Corps to carry out its mission, was out of the question. The forces available to GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ were sufficient however to delay the Russian Army approaching from the VISTULA and such

action was necessary in order to permit the Eighth Army to bring the battle at GUMBINNEN to a successful conclusion.

Between 6:00 and 7:00 PM August 20th, I was standing in the street in NORDENBURG in front of the door of our Headquarters discussing with GENERAL GRUNERT the prospects for a favorable outcome of the battle (at GUMBINNEN) when new reports from the front of the XX Corps were received. At the same time the Army Commander, GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ, whose quarters were in the immediate vicinity, appeared with GRAF WALDERSEE. They had received this report at the same time we had. GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ requested us to come into the office and there he informed us: "Gentlemen, you have certainly received the reports from the south front, too. The army breaks off the battle and withdraws behind the VISTULA."

(13)

GENERAL GRUNERT and myself raised objections. We explained that the battle at GUMBINNEN, in spite of the reverses to the XVII Corps, looked favorable, and that it could be expected in two, or at the most three days to secure fruitful results. There was ample time available to the Eighth Army since the attack of the Russian Second Army could be delayed for days by the relatively strong forces on the southern front of EAST PRUSSIA. The Army Commander rejected our suggestions rather sharply with the reply that for the conduct of the operation and the tactical decision only he and the Chief of Staff were competent and responsible, not the Deputy Chief of Staff nor the 1st General Staff Officer (G-3). In spite of

that we both pointed out that a retirement to the rear of the VISTULA was out of the question, since the left flank of the Russian Second Army was closer to the VISTULA than the Eighth Army now engaged at GUMBINNEN and that at least measures would have to be taken to delay the advance of this wing, otherwise the Eighth Army would run the very danger against which the march Directive had warned it, namely: to permit itself being cut off at the VISTULA and bottled up in the FORTRESS OF KÖNIGSBERG. GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ persisted in his decision and left the office.

GENERAL GRAF WALDERSEE directed me to draft the order for the withdrawal of the Eighth Army. I pointed out to him again that it was impossible to effect a retirement behind the VISTULA without taking action against the Russian Second Army and requested instructions as to how he, as Chief of Staff, conceived how this order could be executed. (14) GENERAL GRAF WALDERSEE saw the correctness of our objections. In a new consultation with the Army Commander, who in the meantime had returned to his office, it was decided that it would be absolutely necessary to secure freedom of action and maneuver room for the Eighth Army by striking the left flank of the Russian Second Army.

It was decided to move the I Corps by way of the KÖNIGSBERG - DIRSCHAU - GRAUDENZ railroad and the 3d Reserve Division by way of the AUGERBURG - OSTERODE railroad, and employ these three divisions offensively on the right flank of the XX Corps. The I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps were to withdraw by marching

on a broad front, first behind the ALLE and then farther toward WEST PRUSSIA. Any other orders to these two corps was at this time impossible. Indeed the disengaging of the troops now fighting with the Russians would itself be difficult and certainly the commander of the Russian First Army, as soon as he learned of the withdrawal, would pursue with all his forces. GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ, after a struggle, decided to abandon the idea of retreat behind the VISTULA, to move the XVII Corps and I Reserve Corps, if they were successful in breaking loose from RENNENKAMPF, toward the XX Corps and to resume the fight east of the VISTULA.

The REICHARCHIV in its exposition in volume 2, page 103, is in error in stating that this estimate and decision to move the I Corps and the 3d Reserve Division up to the right flank of the XX Corps took place on the 21st. (15) The fact that the troop trains of the I Corps at DIRSCHAU moved behind the VISTULA was occasioned by technical railroad considerations and was effected only after consultation with MAJOR KERSTEN, Superintendent of the military railroads of the east, who was present at Headquarters. They were to be returned to the east bank of the VISTULA at GRAUDENZ. This is very clear and evident from the order of the Eighth Army dated 20 August, 9:30 PM: "I Corps to the vicinity of GOSLERHAUSEN - STRASBURG - BISCHOFSWERDER - FREYSTATT, the 3d Reserve Division to DEUSTCH - EYLAU, both to support the XX Corps." The mistake of the REICHSARCHIV is all the more mysterious to me, because, besides the whole of the official documents, it had at its disposal the written statements of the officers concerned, mine amongst others.

In spite of all this, why was GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ recalled?

During the time that the Army Commander had left his office, as explained above, he had gotten in telephone communication with Supreme Headquarters (GHQ) as well as with the corps commanders without informing any one on his staff, and in an agitated and despondent voice which indicated his own inward condition, informed them: "The Army retires behind the VISTULA!" And to GENERAL VON MOLTKE he is supposed to have said: "And we can only hold on the VISTULA if the army is reinforced." Now even after he had found occasion to change the decision of GENERAL GRUNERT and myself, in his excitement he had forgotten to inform his Chief of Staff or his 1st General Staff Officer (G-3) of this telephone conversation, so that the decision could be changed to correspond. But (16) since no one knew of the telephone conversation except GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ himself, nothing happened. And so the Supreme Headquarters (GHQ) recalled the army commander and his chief of staff, even though by his arrangements and preparatory orders on the evening of the 20th August he had laid the ground-work for the battle of TANNENBERG, without which the battle would never have been possible. According to the account of REICHSARCHIV, the telephone conversation between GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ and GENERAL VON MOLTKE is supposed to have taken place on the 21st. GENERAL VON MOLTKE wrote this down five days later. I consider that it is quite possible that he is in error about the time. After the decision had been made on the 20th to attack the left wing

of the Russian Second Army and preparations for the attack by means of warning orders had been started, GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ could not have discussed over the telephone a retreat behind the VISTULA because the favorable reports coming in created a confident attitude at Headquarters and we could no longer say that the army commander was excited or nervous.

On the 21st August Army Headquarters moved to BARTENSTEIN. Reports coming in stated that the breaking off of contact with the Russian First Army had been effected everywhere without difficulty. The Russians opposing the XX Corps, which GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ in the meantime had concentrated on both sides of GILGENBURG, had only continued their advance with their east flanks and had stood fast with their west flank. COLONEL HELL, Chief of Staff of the XX Corps, with whom I discussed the new situation (17) over the telephone, was absolutely composed and confident. An additional good tidings of the day was the report of the 1st Cavalry Division, stating that they had rejoined after a battle which was costly for the Russians. Army Headquarters had been beset with the fear that this Cavalry division, which had advanced around the rear of RENKAMPF'S army, would be lost, since it could not be informed of the retreat of the German Eighth Army.

On the 22nd August, Army Headquarters moved to MUHLHAUSEN via the ELBING - KÖNIGSBERG railroad. Also on this day incoming reports were generally favorable. RENKAMPF'S Army seemed to have suffered more in the battle of GUMBINNEN than was at first estimated. At least, it did not pursue. Entrainment was effected without difficulty.

During the forenoon COLONEL HELL called up and announced some anxiety about the left flank of the XX Corps. Because of the comparative strength (between the XX Corps and the opposing Russians) it was possible for the Russians to envelop this flank with superior forces before the detrainment of the I Corps was completed and thus opportunity would be given to attack. He therefore requested that the 3rd Reserve Division be detrained at ALLENSTEIN instead of DEUTSCH - EYLAU and to move it up on the left instead of the right flank of the XX Corps. This request was granted the corps commander and in conformity therewith the detraining point of the 3d Reserve Division was changed. On the afternoon of the 22nd I called COLONEL FREIHERR VON SCHMIDTSECK, Chief of Staff of the I Corps, by telephone, in order to orient myself on the progress of the rail movement. (18) COLONEL VON SCHMIDTSECK answered about as follows: "What do you really want, don't you know yet what has happened?" I admitted I didn't and asked for an explanation, whereupon FREIHERR VON SCHMIDTSECK answered: "If you don't know yet, its not my province to enlighten you, you'll learn it soon enough." I was about to report this unusual experience to GRAF WALDERSEE, Chief of Staff, when I encountered MAJOR KERSTEN, Superintendent of the military railways of the east, who with a rather woebegone countenance showed me a telegram which stated that a special train would arrive on the 23rd with a new army commander, GENERAL VON HINDENBURG, and a new chief of staff, GENERAL LUDENDORFF. GENERAL GRAF WALDERSEE brought this news to the deposed army commander. The telegraphic order of the KAISER which announced the recall of GENERAL VON

PRITTWITZ and GRAF WALDERSEE did not arrive until a half hour later. The manner in which these two officers who had served so well during times of peace, had been ordered home, was unusually harsh. On the other hand, the excited telephone call by PRITTWITZ, without letting any of his staff know about it, cannot be excused.

C H A P T E R I I I .

THE NEW ARMY HEADQUARTERS

The first orders which were put out by the new Army Headquarters had to do with the movement forward of reinforcements. Whether at that time the forward movement of the SCHLESWIG - HOLSTEIN Landwehr Division von der GOLTZ had been ordered, I do not know.⁽¹⁹⁾ A mixed brigade at THORN under the direction of LIEUTENANT GENERAL VON MUHLMANN was ordered to march on STRASBURG and the vicinity west thereof. For this latter arrangement, the orders or concurrence of the Supreme Headquarters (GHQ) was not necessary. In accordance with mobilization plans the Theater of Operations in the east as well as the fortresses with their garrisons were under the control of the Commanding General Eighth Army. The idea of moving more troops out of the fortresses had already been presented to GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ but had been rejected by him.

GENERAL VON MORGEN, for example, on complaint of the Commandant of the garrison at LÖTZEN, had to send back a heavy battery which he had taken with him when he advanced from LÖTZEN. Next an order was issued directing the various Corps under the control of the Eighth Army to take independent action in the eastern theater of war until the arrival of the new Army Commander on the 23d August. Thereupon the I Reserve Corps and the

XVII Corps directed that the next day would be a day of rest. The REICHSARCHIVS in its exposition of this point (Volume II page 113) explains this day of rest as though it had been ordered by the Supreme Command (GHQ) and GENERAL LUDENDORFF because of tactical considerations. This is indeed not correct. As far as the measure itself is concerned I cannot agree that it was correct unless the fatigue of the troops was so great that a day of rest was necessary in order to maintain their combat efficiency. The replies of the Commanding Generals (Corps) to the queries of the Supreme Headquarters (GHQ) do not mention such a condition of exhaustion. (20) On the other hand, the factor of greatest importance was the movement of both corps as quickly as possible away from RENNEKAMPF'S army in order to give them freedom of action to the south. During the course of the action we shall see that the loss occasioned by this day of rest had to be made up by forced marches. In the third place, Army Headquarters received orders to move to MARIENBURG where the Army Commander would arrive at 2:00 PM 23d August. As a result of this order Army Headquarters was moved to the rear. It had intended to remain in MUHLHAUSEN one day longer and then move to RIESENBURG behind the right wing. The impression created by this retirement of Headquarters to MARIENBURG was not favorable. This could have been avoided if either on the part of Supreme Headquarters (GHQ) or by the new Chief of Staff, telephone communication had been established, not only with corps commanders but also with Army Headquarters.

That the attitude of the army staff, at the time it reported at MARIENBURG, was cold and depressed, as recorded in the REICHSARCHIVS, can easily be explained by the facts and events in connection with the change in commanders.

After they had reported, GENERAL LUDENDORFF permitted the staff to go back to its duties but directed that the 1st General Staff Officer (G-3) explain the situation to him. I did this and found that he was greatly surprised that all arrangements that could have been made and all orders that could have been given for the contemplated attack against the Russian Second Army had already been made or ordered.⁽²¹⁾ And so during the discussion of the possibility of carrying out this battle, which I presented, there existed between GENERAL LUDENDORFF and myself the fullest accord. Whether it would be possible to move up the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps to participate in the battle depended on whether RENNENKAMPF followed-up or not. I also indicated during this discussion that the best direction of attack of the I Corps would be SEEBEN - USDAU.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONCENTRATION FOR BATTLE

The general situation in the Eastern Theater of War at this time was as follows: The Austro-Hungarian offensive could be expected to begin in about a week. The Landwehr Corps, WOYRSCH, placed under the Eighth Army and advancing on the left wing of the Allies had progressed as far as the vicinity of PIOTRKOW without a battle. A telegram from GENERAL VON CONRAD, the Austrian Chief of Staff, again requested that the German Eighth Army attack across the NAREW (River) in the direction of SIELCE in order to cooperate with the Austro-Hungarian Army. If GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ, in accord with the SCHLIEFFEN plan, had prepared his entire Eighth Army for a blow against the Russian First Army, and had he carried out this attack, then on the 23d of August he probably would have been through with that Army and would have been prepared to envelop the Russian Second Army from the left and drive it back against the VISTULA and THORN. Then it might have been possible to make the blow desired by VON CONRAD and assist the Austrian Army to a victorious advance. How (22) different then the campaign against Russia would have been! But with the situation as it was at present, naturally there could be no thought of such an operation. The Russian Second Army, consisting of at least five corps

and four cavalry divisions, had crossed the boundary of southeast PRUSSIA on the evening of the 22nd of August on a broad front, reached the main highway SOLDAU - ORTELSBURG and on the 23rd had continued the advance. Its center had approached so close to the XX Corps that an engagement could be expected on the 24th.

The XX Corps, reinforced by the 70th Landwehr Brigade and the garrison troops, to about three and one-half divisions, was located in an organized position along the line: southwest of GILGENBURG - LAHNA. The detrainment of the 3d Reserve Division at ALLENSTEIN was almost completed.

The departure of the I Corps was delayed as a result of technical railroad difficulties. By noon of the 23rd only the 1st Grenadier Regiment had arrived and it was not until the evening of the 25th that the arrival of the combat troops was completed. Opposite RENNENKAMPF'S Army the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps, as well as the ^{1.35,} ~~X~~ Cavalry Division, were located on and west of the road: NORDENBURG - INSTERBURG. The 1st Cavalry Division was completely exhausted and pleaded for a rest, which naturally could not be given.

Until now the Army of RENNENKAMPF had not made itself felt and remained apparently with the bulk of its troops on the battlefield of the 20th (August). But in spite of this, we could not definitely conclude that RENNENKAMPF would continue this complete inactivity but had to assume that as soon as RENNENKAMPF (23) had received information from his cavalry that the entire front of the ANGERAPP position had been abandoned, that

he would advance. But his inactivity up to the present engendered the hope that his follow-up would be slow and hesitating and that it would be possible to move parts of the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps against the Russian Second Army to secure a decision. The I Reserve Corps was therefore given the order to move by forced marches on the 24th, through SCHIPPENBEIL in the direction of BISCHOFSTEIN - SEEBURG and sieze as much terrain as possible while at the same time the XVII Corps should cross the ALLE at FRIEDLAND and then swing around to the south on BARTENSTEIN. Army Headquarters at that time did not believe that it would be possible to move the XVII Corps since it estimated that this corps, together with the 1st Cavalry Division, would have to remain behind the ALLE as protection against RENNENKAMPF'S Army. At any rate the time lost by these troops resting for a day would have to be made up by forced marches. The 6th Landwehr Brigade in LÖTZEN received an order to move via BISCHOFSTEIN on the I Corps.

CHAPTER V .

THE FIRST ENGAGEMENTS

For the 23d August the Russian Second Army had ordered only the advance of its center corps - the XIII and XV. The XIII was to advance on the line JEDWABNO - OMULEFOFEN, the XV on LYKUSEN - SEELESEN. The movement of the XV Corps led to the battle with the 37th Division. The 37th Division, which had been reinforced (24) with parts of the 70th Landwehr Brigade, was attacked on the line: KOWNATKEN SEE - LAHNA - ORLAU. At LAHNA and ORLAU it resulted in serious close combat which ended successfully for the 37th Division late that evening. Only the village of LAHNA in front of the position remained in Russian possession.

Headquarters of the XX Corps had moved up the 3d Reserve Division from ALLENSTEIN to the northern edge of the LANSKER SEE with the intention of striking in flank east of this lake the Russians who were attacking the 37th Division. But this bold attack never materialized when reports were received of the advance of the Russian XIII Corps through the forests northeast of NEIDENBURG in the direction of KURKEN. The order of the Eighth Army to the XX Corps contradicted the idea of an offensive action which in view of the relative strength could not have had any success. This order was based on the consideration that the reinforced XX Corps had to hold alone

against superior Russian forces until the 26th and that it would therefore have to conserve its strength and withhold the 3d Reserve Division in the vicinity of ALLENSTEIN. GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ therefore decided to withdraw his left flank in order to temporarily escape the hostile attack expected early on the 24th and to move the 3d Reserve Division to the vicinity of HOHENSTEIN as defense against the threat of an envelopment from the direction of KURKEN. The 37th Division was ordered to withdraw to a position on both sides of the MUHLEN SEE making a juncture with the left flank of the 41st Division at THURAU, its left flank to be in the vicinity of PAULSGUT. In spite of the fact that this order for the withdrawal of the division was issued very late, (25) it was possible to break off contact with the enemy and get the movement under way under cover of darkness without becoming more involved.

Headquarters of the Eighth Army moved to RIESENBURG on the morning of the 24th and the immediate staff went to TANNENBERG early, where a conference was held with GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ and COLONEL HELL. The attitude of both these gentlemen was serious, although reassuring. They both had the impression that the Russians had been beaten off only after heavy fighting and that the night withdrawal had added to their difficulties. One had to reckon with a continuation of the hostile attack on the afternoon of the 24th or at the latest, the morning of the 25th, whereupon the enemy reported to be advancing upon KURKEN could surely be expected to move via SCHWED-RICH on HOHENSTEIN. GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ therefore pro-

posed to refuse his left flank move and to bend the whole corps back to the line: GILGENBURG - MÜHLEN. He wanted to move the 3d Reserve Division toward his left flank to the vicinity of KGL - LICHTENEN. Then if the Russians desired to envelop the position they would have to move considerably farther to the north. The corps would thus gain time to assure its holding until the 26th, the day the I Corps would attack. The army staff agreed with the proposal of the Corps Commander but directed that the 3d Reserve Division should under no condition be moved closer to the flank but for the present should be left at HOHENSTEIN. The Grenadier Regiment, KRONPRINZ, the first regiment of the I Corps to arrive in LOBAU, upon the request of the XX Corps was placed at its disposal. (26)

The situation on the evening of the 24th was as follows: The 5th Landwehr Brigade MÜHLMANN had reached the vicinity between STRASBURG and LAUTENBERG. Strong Russian cavalry was reported to be in front of it and on its flank. The entrainment of the I Corps had been further delayed by the withdrawal of the main reserve of KÖNIGSBERG which made it necessary to entrain farther to the rear. A serious engagement on the new front of the XX Corps had not taken place but an attack on the entire front could be expected early on the 25th. The Russians could utilize about seven divisions for this attack and so attack the reinforced XX Corps with a 2 to 1 superiority. A further withdrawal of the corps was not to be thought of. It received the order to meet the attack and hold the position to the last man.

For Army Headquarters the situation on this evening was the most difficult of the whole battle. The decision was undoubtedly correct. For just as GENERAL LUDENDORFF informed Supreme Headquarters (GHQ), a further withdrawal of the corps would have the same effect as a defeat.

The 5th Landwehr Brigade was placed under the I Corps and received orders to be at LAUTENBURG at 10:00 AM. Units of the I Corps which had already arrived in that vicinity were moved forward to the heights of RYBNO. In case of a strong Russian attack against the reinforced XX Corps, these units could strike the Russian attack in the flank.

Having been detached from the bulk of the Russian Second Army, the Russian VI Corps in the meantime had advanced from ORTELSBURG and marched in two columns (27) on BISCHOFSBURG. The Russian II Corps east of the MAZURIAN LAKES was advancing on AUGERBURG. RENNENKAMPF'S Army was very cautiously advancing from the ANGERAPP but had already halted at noon.

The eastern group of the German Eighth Army consisting of the I Reserve Corps, the XVII Corps and the 6th Landwehr Brigade requested the opportunity, because of its superiority, of attacking the Russian VI Corps, which was marching alone to the north. It is true, that in order to do this the troops would have to execute forced marches. The delay caused by the day of rest now disturbed us considerably. The I Reserve Corps was to break camp early on the 25th and together with the 6th Landwehr Brigade, placed under it, march via SEEBURG and attack the enemy wherever found. One division of the XVII Corps

was to make a march of about 50 kilometers (in one stage) and reach BISCHOFSTEIN, the other was to march on GR. - SCHWANSFELD. Whether it would be possible to employ the 2nd Division of the XVII Corps in the battle to the south seemed very doubtful at present. It probably, together with the 1st Cavalry Division, would have to act as a covering force against RENNENKAMPF.

August 25th brought a series of favorable reports and events.

The report was received that the Supreme Headquarters (GHQ) had made available to the German Eighth Army the HOLSTEIN Landwehr Division, which until now had been used as a border guard against DENMARK, and that this division would begin arriving the 27th. Army Headquarters did not specify a detraining point for the division but held it in abeyance and let the division continue movement in the direction of the right wing. (28)

The night passed generally quiet on the front of the XX Corps and there were no indications of an immediate attack.

C H A P T E R V I .

THE RADIOGRAMS

At this time two radio messages in the clear were intercepted. The first one, from RENNENKAMPF'S Army, came in to Army Headquarters early in the morning and stated that the Russian First Army would not reach the line: GERDAUEN - ALLENSBURG - WEHLAU until the 26th. From this it was evident that RENNENKAMPF'S Army could not intervene in our attack against the Russian Second Army. The second radio message contained a pursuit order by SAMSONOW, who had interpreted the withdrawal of the XX Corps as a general retreat of all the German forces in the direction of OSTERODE.

Early in the morning of the 25th Army Headquarters went to Hill 168 southeast of MONTOWO for a conference with GENERAL VON FRANCOIS. At this time the radio message concerning SAMSONOW'S march objectives had not yet come in. Army Headquarters estimated that the XX Corps would be attacked by numerically superior Russian forces not later than the morning of the 26th. It was also of the opinion that it would have to launch the I Corps in an attack as soon as possible in order to be sure of avoiding a defeat of the XX Corps. GENERAL HINDENBURG therefore gave an oral order to GENERAL VON FRANCOIS to attack at 5:00 AM, 26th August, in the direc-

tion of USDAU, the same direction of attack that I had recommended in our first conference. (29) GENERAL VON FRANCOIS raised several objections, both as to the time and direction of attack. He pointed out that up to the very hour which Army Headquarters had designated for the attack, not even all the combat units of his corps would have been assembled, to say nothing of the ammunition trains. He believed that we could not assume the responsibility of precipitately launching an attack with a corps not yet entirely assembled. Likewise, he objected to the direction of attack. He proposed to attack further to the south, enveloping the right of the forces opposing him. GENERAL LUDENDORFF answered the objections of GENERAL VON FRANCOIS, in the name of the Army Commander, and cut short the conference by repeating the attack order for the 26th. The direction of attack stood - penetration and break through at USDAU.

The objection of GENERAL VON FRANCOIS to attacking before his corps was completely assembled was certainly justified. In spite of that, the attack had to be launched if the Russians attacked the XX Corps in the evening of the 25th or early on the 26th. Army Headquarters did not know at this time that the Russians would not do this. In the sharp refusal of LUDENDORFF certainly the feeling must have been present that, in view of the obstinacy of GENERAL VON FRANCOIS during the days at GUMBINNEN, the new Army Headquarters from the very outset, must show that it did not intend to permit the least deviation from its orders. As far as the direction of the attack was concerned, GENERAL VON FRANCOIS favored an envelopment. (30) The experience in the BATTLE OF GUMBINNEN had

shown him the decisive results of an envelopment of Russian forces whereas the failure of the XVII Corps had very clearly demonstrated the dangers of a frontal attack. Army Headquarters would have therefore gladly granted his wish for an envelopment, but according to the information of the enemy now before us it was clearly evident that strong Russian forces were in reserve in the vicinity of SOLDAU - MLAWA. If an envelopment was attempted it would have to be sought in the vicinity south of MLAWA. There were two things that militated against this; First, the necessary time was lacking, the precarious situation of the XX Corps required immediate action; and second, with such a wide envelopment these already weak forces would be widely separated.

After leaving GENERAL VON FRANCOIS for LOBAU, Army Headquarters stopped at the railroad station at MOLTOWA to telephone and ask if any dispatches had come in in the meantime. Here the radio order of GENERAL SAMSONOW to his Russian XIII Corps, which had in the meantime been intercepted, giving the march objectives for the bulk of his army for the 25th, was transmitted to me. The transmission of this order required quite a little time and I first received the written copy of the message after GENERAL VON HINDENBURG and GENERAL LUDENDORFF had driven off. I drove rapidly after them and pulling my automobile alongside of that of the Army Commander I handed the radio message over to GENERAL LUDENDORFF while the cars were still in motion. East of LOBAU the Army Commander halted, and here we studied the order in conjunction with the map. The most important fact was

that the (31) Russian attack certainly could not take place before the 26th. In addition, the order verified the already known information concerning the Russian strength and, what was still more desirable to know, the exact march objectives of the individual corps of the enemy. GENERAL LUDENDORFF forthwith sent copies of these radio messages to the Commanding Generals of the XX and I Corps. GENERAL GRUNERT went to GENERAL SCHOLTZ and I went to GENERAL VON FRANCOIS.

The certainty that the Russian attack could not take place before the 26th and perhaps later naturally was a great comfort to GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ. He could now figure that the I Corps would attack at the right time. Therefore he did not have to worry about his right flank, although he was still somewhat uneasy about the advancing envelopment against his left flank. He therefore proposed to Army Headquarters to withdraw the Detachment UNGER from his right flank, replace it with the 1st Grenadier Regiment of the I Corps, move the former to his left flank and place it in rear of the DREWENZ sector. He could then hold the 3d Reserve Division in reserve in rear of his left flank and use it offensively to oppose an envelopment. This request was approved.

C H A P T E R V I I .

ERRONEOUS ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION BY SAMSONOW

August 25th passed without any serious engagements. By evening the situation had become clearer. The Landwehr Brigade of MUHLMANN found LAUTENBURG occupied by Russian cavalry, (32) attacked and took LAUTENBURG, a result which was of course of much more importance since it served to raise the confidence and morale of Landwehr troops under fire for the first time. The advanced elements of the I Corps had at first reached KIELPIN and RYBNO, but three battalions of infantry and the mass of the cavalry and artillery had not yet arrived and would not get there until early the next morning. The XX Corps had already changed its aforementioned dispositions. It was disposed as follows: the 1st Grenadier Regiment of the I Corps was between the RUMIAN SEE and the great DAMERAU SEE, the 41st Division between the great DAMERAU SEE and LOGDAU SEE and there connecting with it, the 37th Division extended to the main highway to MUHLEN. Farther to the north was the 70th Landwehr Brigade and the garrison troops of UNGER in rear of the DREWENZ and at REICHENAU the 3rd Reserve Division. The Russian advance in front of the XX Corps was carried out very cautiously and WAPLITZ was not occupied until about 3:00 or 4:00 PM. The Rus-

sian XIII Corps continued its advance to the north on both sides of LAUSKER SEE and the Russian Army Commander apparently did not have the slightest inkling of the storm that was brewing in front of him. From the intercepted radio message it was entirely clear that he figured on a general German retreat. According to his order, to cut off the German Eighth Army from the VISTULA, SAMSONOW decided to assemble his troops on the left and move on the line: ALLENSTEIN - OSTERODE. However, the Army Group Commander, JILINSKY, ordered that the VI Corps on the right wing should not move on ALLENSTEIN but should remain at BISCHOFSBURG as protection against LÖTZEN. (33) And so SAMSONOW really had only three corps for the approaching battle. These were to make a short march to the north on the 25th but because of a misunderstanding in the XV Corps and its attached 2nd Division, the march did not take place. This was indeed an inconsistency.

When SAMSONOW perceived that the German forces opposing him were withdrawing and in addition had received orders to delay the withdrawal beyond the VISTULA of the German troops which had been defeated by RENNENKAMPF, he should have marched rapidly with all his forces. However, this inconsistency is explained by the condition of his troops. The Russian Second Army, as a result of its forced marches and deficient supplies, was completely exhausted. For example, the XIII Corps had marched 250 kilometers in 12 days in deep sand without a day of rest. All of SAMSONOW'S subordinate leaders explained that the troops could not march any farther. SAMSONOW saw that this was the case and ordered a day of rest, which how-

ever JILINSKI at this time had to revoke. Based on the reports of SAMSONOW, he too estimated that this Army would not be engaged in any large battle and believed that the main German forces were still in front of REN-NENKAMPF, and that these would again be engaged this side of the VISTULA. Therefore SAMSONOW was notified that his Army would be given a day of rest only after it had reached the line: ALLENSTEIN - OSTERODE. Only in this line could a threat be offered to the withdrawal of the German force now opposing RENNENKAMPF.

During the course of the 25th (August) SAMSONOW realized that the German troops opposed to him were not withdrawing toward the VISTULA.⁽³⁴⁾ Through identification both of the Landwehr and depot regiments, as well as reports concerning detrainments on the German right wing, SAMSONOW suddenly arrived at the conclusion that in the vicinity of GILGENBURG and to the west thereof, parts of the XVII Corps, the I Reserve Corps, and the XIX Corps had arrived or were arriving. As defense against the expected German attack, SAMSONOW reinforced his left wing with a large force consisting of the I Corps, the 3d Guard Division, the 1st Light Infantry Brigade and two cavalry divisions under GENERAL ARTAMANOW, the Commanding General of the I Corps. ARTAMANOW was ordered to counter the expected German blow by offensive action. On the morning of the 26 August, about four regiments of the Russian I Corps were in the vicinity of USDAU, two regiments were to advance farther to the south on HEINRICHDORF. The 3d Guard Division had reached SOLDAU, the light infantry brigade was still moving up; the two cavalry divisions were east and south of LAUTENBERG.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENERAL VON FRANCOIS AND ARMY HEADQUARTERS

The attack ordered by the Army Commander for the 26th did not take place. GENERAL VON FRANCOIS had already received the attack order, orally, at 8:00 AM on the 25th. The written order, a repetition of the oral order, did not reach him until midnight the night of the 25-26⁽³⁵⁾. Apparently GENERAL VON FRANCOIS hoped that the Army Commander, on the basis of the intercepted radiogram of GENERAL SAMSONOW and the inactivity of the Russian forces on the 25th, would accede to his request that the attack be postponed until all the troops of the corps could be assembled. Certainly this must have been the reason why warning orders for the early preparation of troops for the attack on the heights northwest of SEEBEN were not announced. The corps order, not distributed until midnight, directing that the 1st Division should capture these heights at 4:00 AM and at 10:00 AM attack USDAU; the 2nd Division to advance at 7:00 AM on GR. TAUERSEE from KIELPIN, and the 5th Landwehr Brigade to advance from LAUTENBERG through HEINRICHS DORF in the direction generally north of BORCHERS DORF at 7:00 AM, was impossible of execution due to lack of time.

It was not until 8:00 AM that the leading elements of the 1st Division arrived at the WELLE SECTOR west of SEEBEN. Here the Division Commander prepared his troops for the attack but at the same time reported that he would not be able to attack the fortified heights at SEEBEN until after adequate artillery preparation. Since the division at this time had only four batteries with it, it was very evident that the whole attack would have to be considerably delayed. In the meantime, GENERAL VON FRANCOIS having secured telephonic communication with the XX Corps and having learned that the entire situation in front of this Corps was such that a hasty attack could not be justified, agreed with the opinion of his division commanders and ordered that the 5th Landwehr Brigade and the 2nd Division should not advance beyond the line: KL. TAUERSEE - GR. KOSCHLAU for the time being.⁽³⁶⁾/

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS notified the Army Commander that the attack against USDAU would have to be delayed because of the late arrival of the troops. Since a report from the I Corps at 7:30 AM stated that the attack against the heights of SEEBEN was in progress, even though it lacked the necessary means, the Army Commander was of the opinion that the delay was just a matter of a few hours and definitely set the hour for the attack on USDAU at 12:00 noon. But to his great surprise, GENERAL VON FRANCOIS, upon the receipt of this order, reported that as yet not even the heights of SEEBEN had been captured.

On account of this belated correct report, the Army Commander gave VON FRANCOIS a rather unfriendly

reply and VON FRANCOIS gave up any opposition to the views of the Army Commander and gave orders to attack with the troops then at his disposal. The right flank of the I Corps reached the line: HEINRICHS DORF - RR STATION GRALLAU^{II} and the 1st Division, between 12:00 noon and 1:00 PM, took the heights of SEEBEN, which were held only by advanced detachments of the Russians. They continued the advance and reached the line: MEISCHLITZ - GR. GRIEBEN.

GENERAL VON CONTA, commanding the 1st Division, considered that it was impossible to carry through today the attack on USDAU as ordered. His troops, which had been on the march since early morning, were fatigued. Preparing the artillery for the attack would take so long that he could not assault before early evening. And as for an exploitation of the success any more today, that would be unthinkable. GENERAL VON FRANCOIS shared this opinion and directed that the attack on USDAU be delayed until the morning of the 27th. (37)

If the question is asked, who was right, Army Headquarters with its insistence on an attack on the 26th or GENERAL VON FRANCOIS with his passive resistance delaying the decisive attack upon USDAU 24 hours, we must answer: To attempt an attack against a prepared position before the combined combat elements of this Corps, especially the artillery and ammunition trains, had arrived and were available, was justified and necessary only if the reinforced XX Corps had been attacked by superior Russian forces on the 26th and was in danger of being driven back. According to the information of the enemy then at hand, this was not the case. In con-

sequence of which the Army Headquarters would have done well to accede to the many protests of GENERAL VON FRANCOIS and delayed the attack until all the combat elements of the I Corps had arrived. The method that GENERAL VON FRANCOIS used to secure a postponement of the attack certainly cannot be condoned. And yet one must acknowledge that the postponement which he secured, no doubt had a most significant influence upon the entire outcome of the battle. Had he complied literally with the order and taken the heights of SEEBEN early on the morning of the 26th and had he attacked USDAU at 10:00 AM at a time when only four batteries of the artillery of the 1st Division were in position, it is conceivable that this attack could easily have been a failure. But if the penetration at USDAU had not been successful, the attack of the XVII Corps and I Reserve Corps during the course of the next day might have resulted in the withdrawal of the Russian Second Army, although it would not have accomplished its destruction. (38)

C H A P T E R I X .

SUCCESSFUL ATTACK OF THE RIGHT WING OF THE XX CORPS AND THE MEETING ENGAGEMENT AT LAUTERN

The army order of the 25th directed the reinforced XX Corps to support the attack of the I Corps by advancing its right flank in the direction of GR. GRIEBEN - JANKOWITZ and to hold itself in readiness to attack on the entire front, as the attack of the I Corps progressed. The XX Corps, however, during the night, had received information through the telephone conversation of GENERAL VON FRANCOIS with COLONEL HELL, that an early attack by the I Corps in the direction of USDAU could not be relied on and as a result of this information had held up the advance of its right flank. The Russians kept themselves quietly concealed during the forenoon. The intelligence reports of the enemy disclosed the fact that a large gap existed between the Russian forces at USDAU and the Russian forces opposite the south flank of the XX Corps. The Army Commander at 1:00 PM decided to take advantage of this faulty disposition and to attack between GROSSEN, DAMERAU SEE and MUHLEN SEE with the XX Corps - making the main effort on its right. The plan of supporting the I Corps in the direction of USDAU was temporarily abandoned. When the army order was received,

(39) the Commanding General of the XX Corps already had the information that strong Russian forces were advancing on both sides of the MUHLEN SEE against the position of the 37th Division and the 70th Landwehr Brigade. The Commanding General (XX Corps) decided to carry out the attack order of the Army Commander by attacking only with the 41st Division and the southern Brigade of the 37th Division.

This attack, beginning between 3:00 and 4:00 PM, caught the Russian 2nd Division in flank by surprise while it was marching from south to north, and ended that evening on the line: GAUSHORN - FAULEN - MUHLEN after a successful attack by the three German brigades.

On the extreme left flank of the reinforced XX Corps the 3d Reserve Division had been ordered to cross the DREWENZ in the direction of HOHENSTEIN. GENERAL VON MORGEN, Commander of the 3d Reserve Division, had the impression that by this advance on HOHENSTEIN he would strike the front of the Russian XV Corps, and that his division would then simply make a frontal attack. He therefore decided, on his own, to remain at REICHENAU and await the advance of the Russians and then strike them in flank. He did not report this departure from the orders given him, so that at 6:00 PM the Corps Commander and Army Headquarters were still of the opinion that the 3d Reserve Division was advancing on HOHENSTEIN.

The training of our leaders for independent action had, as we see, also its disadvantages. One has the impression that during our tactical exercises in times of peace the so-called approved solution was always somewhat at variance with the assigned mission and it is

possible that this fact may have influenced our commanders during the early part of the war. (40)

Had the 3d Reserve Division gone forward as ordered, it probably would have struck the north flank of the Russian XV Corps, have enveloped it and perhaps defeated it. The Russian XIII Corps on the east side of the long stretch of lakes could not have supported the XV Corps.

On the 26th the German east group had a meeting engagement with the Russian VI Corps. As already stated, both corps had executed long marches on the 25th and their fatigue was increased by the necessity of leaving the main highways and marching via the adjacent sand roads because the main roads were jammed with fleeing inhabitants driving their cattle and moving all their worldly goods that was transportable. The I Reserve Corps during the evening had reached the vicinity of SEEBURG and the 6th Landwehr Brigade coming from LÖTZEN had reached LAUTERN. The leading elements of the 36th Division after a 50 kilometer march reached BISCHOFSTEIN and the leading elements of the 35th Division, after a still longer march, reached GROSS - SCHWANSFELD. (Both divisions belonged to the XVII Corps). The 1st Cavalry Division was west of GERDAUEN.

Army Headquarters until now had intended to leave the 35th Division in addition to the 1st Cavalry Division as covering forces in front of RENNENKAMPF. But in the afternoon of the 25th it decided to move the 35th Division here too, in order to seek a decision and ordered the XVII Corps and the I Reserve Corps, with its attached 6th Landwehr Brigade, to jointly attack the Rus-

sian VI Corps. Both corps commanders had established communication with one another and were in accord as to the method of the advance. The I Reserve Corps at SEEBURG was to attack on the 26th on a broad front in the direction of WARTENBURG, the XVII Corps was to advance east of the GROSS - LAUTERSEE and DADAYSEE against the flank of the enemy. (41) The attack of the I Reserve Corps was to engage and contain the enemy should he decide to leave BISCHOFSBURG and advance in the direction of ALLENSTEIN in order to rejoin his army. The agreement between the two corps commanders was not a complete success. GENERAL VON MACKENSEN was of the opinion that the I Corps would make an early advance and therefore, in spite of the fatigue of his troops, ordered that they break camp early. GENERAL VON BELOW, on the other hand, taking into consideration the fatigue of his troops, ordered his corps to be ready by 10:00 AM. He desired to give the XVII Corps time to come abreast and did not realize that this corps was in a position to start its movement so early.

GENERAL BLAGOWJESCHTSCHENSKI, commanding the Russian VI Corps, had orders on the 26th to leave the vicinity of ROTHFLIESS and BISCHOFSBURG and move in the direction of ALLENSTEIN toward the left flank of his own army. He thought the German forces were in retreat to the west and when his leading division, the 4th, suddenly encountered the leading elements of the XVII Corps in the vicinity of LAUTERN, he believed that they were a flank guard of the German troops retreating to the west from RASTENBERG.

Based on this assumption, he attacked at LAUTERN. The XVII Corps received the first reports of the advanc-

ing Russians through the 6th Landwehr Brigade, which in its march north of LAUTERN to join the I Reserve Corps, crossed the route of the XVII Corps. GENERAL VON HENNECIUS, commanding the 36th Division, decided to take up the defensive against the Russians now developing for the attack in order to await the arrival of (42) the rear division of the Corps (the 35th) as well as the attack of the I Reserve Corps. Both the arrival of the rear division and the attack of the I Reserve Corps were delayed considerably so that the left flank of the 36th, was temporarily in difficulty because of the Russian attack. The 35th Division, which GENERAL VON MACKENSEN had directed to envelop the hostile right wing in the direction of GR - KOLLEN, did not arrive. In view of the complete exhaustion of its troops it had to halt and rest and when its advance guard finally reached GR - KOLLEN it had to rest again. On the German side, the reports concerning the strength of the Russian forces created the idea that east of the GR - LAUTERN SEE the entire Russian VI Corps had entered the battle. When the I Reserve Corps completed its preparations along the line: ALT - VIERZIGHOFEN - KIRSCHDORF and the enemy had not yet advanced against it, GENERAL VON BELOW, in agreement with the XVII Corps, decided to send only part of the 36th Reserve Division via KL - BOSSAU to the support of the 36th Division against the left flank of the Russian fighting east of the LAUTERN SEE and to march with the bulk of his corps against the southernmost point of the DADAY SEE and cut off the retreat of the Russian VI Corps. The commander of the Russian 4th Division saw that he would be forced to send a covering force to the

vicinity of KL - BOSSAU in order to protect his left flank during the attack to the north. This covering force attracted stronger and stronger forces of the I Reserve Corps to itself until finally the mass of the 36th Reserve Division and the 6th Landwehr Brigade attacked at KL - BOSSAU and drove off this determined opponent (43) and so the Russians east of KL - BOSSAU were thrown back against the lake and some are supposed to have drowned. This certainly must be the source of the legend which was spread for many years that HINDENBURG in the battle of TANNENBURG had driven thousands of Russians into the lakes and marshes where they drowned.

The 1st Reserve Division, continuing its advance, ran into the leading elements of the rear division of the VI Russian Corps which GENERAL BLAGOWJESCHTCHENSKI had turned from its march westward to the north to support the 4th Division.

The dispatches which reported the arrival of the entire Russian VI Corps at LAUTERN were in error. The tendency of the troops to consider the opposing forces stronger than they really were, as well as the difficulty in the early days of the war of correctly estimating the strength of war strength units, is probably the reason for the mistake.

The Russian 16th Division retreated before the advance of the German 1st Reserve Division. The Russian 4th Division, impressed with the flank threat from BOSSAU, had already begun its retirement in the afternoon. The strong artillery preparation for the attack of the 36th Division fell on an abandoned position.

GENERAL BLAGOWJESCHTSCHENSKI led his troops south via BISCHOFSBURG.

The Germans could not avail themselves of the opportunity that the tactical situation offered of completely annihilating the Russian 4th Division. The responsibility therefor lay in the late arrival of the 35th Division of the XVII Corps together with the very tardy preparation of the I Reserve Corps for the ⁽⁴⁴⁾attack. The basic cause was the complete exhaustion of the troops of both corps as a result of the forced marches demanded of them in order to regain the time lost by the day of rest. The only measure for the prelude to the BATTLE OF TANNENBERG that GENERAL LUDENDORFF had taken without hearing the views of the staff of the Eighth Army turned out to be very ill-advised.

The I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps expected that they would have to renew the attack tomorrow morning. Aviators had reported the organization of a Russian position south of BISCHOFSBURG. It was estimated that the Russian VI Corps, perhaps reinforced by other Russian troops, might offer resistance here. The situation was made more difficult by the report of the Commandant of "LOTZEN, together with an intercepted radiogram to the effect that the Russian II Corps was advancing via ANGERBURG with the mission of marching west of the MAUER SEE south on the Russian Second Army. In spite of the possibility that the situation for both corps would be very precarious in the event that the Russian VI Army should make a prolonged stand, both corps joined and agreed to attack early on the 27th, the XVII to make a frontal attack and the I Reserve Corps to envelop the

left flank. Army Headquarters without hesitation agreed with this decision. It could not have done otherwise. Any hesitation would only have made the situation worse. During the discussion of the situation between GENERAL LUDENDORFF and GENERAL VON HINDENBURG, the former seems to have lost his nerve. To what else could the discussion of GENERAL VON HINDENBURG on page 87 of his book point: (45) "It is surprising that misgivings filled many a heart, that firm resolution began to yield to vacillation, and that doubts crept in where a clear vision had hitherto prevailed? Would it not be wiser to strengthen our line facing RENNENKAMPF again and be content with half measures against SAMSONOW? Was it not better to abandon the idea of destroying the First Army in order to ensure ourselves against destruction? We overcame the inward crisis, adhered to our original decision and turned in full strength to effect its realization by attack."

If it was impossible to give up a decision to attack which had already been made then naturally every effort should be bent to its speedy execution.

The I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps started the advance to the south on the 27th in order to attack the hostile position which had been reported. The 6th Landwehr Brigade and a small detachment of the XVII Corps were left in the vicinity of LAUTERN for protection from the immediate rear. Army Headquarters ordered both corps, as soon as the operation with the Russian VI Corps should be completed, to swing in a southwesterly direction against the right flank of the Russian Second Army.

About noon the report was received that the Russians had abandoned their position south of BISCHOFSBURG and were continuing their withdrawal. About the same time information was received from ALLENSTEIN that strong Russian forces had arrived there and occupied the town. Army Headquarters thereupon directed the I Reserve Corps which just now was marching in the direction of PASSENHEIM, to turn its mass to the west and march to the vicinity of PATRICKEN, south of WARTENBERG.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The future employment of the corps, whether to the west or in a southwesterly direction, was not disclosed. The corps was further directed to have a mixed detachment reach PASSENHEIM today without fail and to block the defile (PASSENHEIM).

GENERAL VON BELOW transmitted this latter order to the XVII Corps with the request that it execute it because his own troops were too tired to carry it out. The XVII Corps complied with this request. The bulk of this corps reached the vicinity of MENSGUTH, small detachments continued to pursue until late in the night and one of them reached PASSENHEIM about midnight. Reports on RENNENKAMPF'S army indicated that the southernmost corps, the II, had reached RASTENBERG. Further north Army Headquarters estimated that hostile infantry was on the line: SCHIPPENBEIL - FRIEDLAND. Russian cavalry had reached the vicinity of HEILSBURG and PR. - EYLAU. The weak Landsturm detachments still guarding the railroad stations certainly could not offer any serious resistance.

C H A P T E R X

THE DEVISIVE EVENTS OF THE BATTLE -

THE BREAKTHROUGH AT USDAU

In the forenoon of the 27th a decision was reached on the western wing with the breakthrough at USDAU and its exploitation by GENERAL VON FRANCOIS.

The Russian Army Headquarters had reached NEIDENBURG on the 26th. The Army Commander, SAMSONOW, had again reached the conclusion that he was opposed by only weak German forces and that he must attack quickly (47) in order to cut the line of retreat to the VISTULA of the troops now in front of RENNENKAMPF. This attack was to be made by the XIII, XV, and half of the XXIII Corps. The VI Corps was to advance via ALLENSTEIN against the left flank of the German forces, the reinforced I Corps was to protect his own left flank. On the evening of the 26th SAMSONOW was informed of the German advance against the flank in the direction of USDAU as well as the successful attack of the 41st Division against his own 2nd Division south of MUHLEN. Still he was of the opinion that the reinforced I Corps under ARTAMANOW was strong enough to parry the attack at USDAU and to assist the 2nd Division.

He persisted in his decision to attack even when he received the report of the failure of the VI Corps at LAUTERN - GR - BOSSAU. These reports certainly

should have made him cautious. On the evening of the 26th, dispatches lay before him stating that about three divisions were advancing against his left flank and that superior forces had defeated the leading division of his VI Corps and caused it to retreat. Even though he knew nothing of the strength of the forces of the DREWENZ sector, the length of time that the Germans held this line as far north as the road HOHENSTEIN - REICHENAU, must alone have indicated to him that still stronger German forces were opposing him, for those on the south wing were so strong that they were able to attack and overrun his 2nd Division. SAMSONOW'S decision to attack on the 27th was also a mistake. It might perhaps be explained that SAMSONOW reasoned with himself as follows: Even though the German forces are superior in numbers, I must so carry on (48) that under all circumstances I can hinder their retreat and hold them this side of the VISTULA and gain time for RENNENKAMPF to march up and strike the decisive blow.

In compliance with the attack order, the Russian XIII Corps, one and a half divisions strong, on the 27th marched on ALLENSTEIN and occupied it at noon without a fight. Reports stating that strong German forces were appearing two miles east of ALLENSTEIN were not believed. He concluded that these reports were of the Russian forces, namely, the VI Corps. There was no communication with this corps. As a result, he did not know of the defeat of this corps on the 26th or the continuation of its retreat on ORTELSBURG on the 27th. This latter information incidentally also did not reach the Headquar-

ters of the Russian Second Army. GENERAL KLUJEW, commanding the XIII Corps, in answer to a radio call for help from the XV Corps sent one reinforced Brigade to HOHENSTEIN. The withdrawal of the entire corps, which KLUJEW recommended to Army Headquarters and which they approved during the afternoon, was postponed by a series of difficulties until early on the 28th.

The Russian XV Corps under GENERAL MARTOS moved one brigade from its right to its left flank to assist the 2nd Division which had been defeated the day before and with the three remaining brigades and the brigade of the XIII Corps which had come via HOHENSTEIN, attacked the German forces occupying the line along the DREWENZ. This attack failed. The brigade sent to assist the 2nd Division reached the vicinity of WAPLITZ where it remained inactive, while the defeated 2nd Division, no longer capable of serious fighting, withdrew to the line: ⁽⁴⁹⁾ BUJAKEN - FRANKENAU - NEIDENBURG, where the Commanding General of the XXIII Corps, GENERAL CONDRATOWITSCH, halted it and reinforced it with parts of the 3d Guard Division, which belonged to the XXIII Corps.

The German Army order for the 27th directed an attack along the whole front and the movement was to begin at 4:00 AM. The I Corps was to be echeloned to the right in order to protect itself against the forces which were left behind the hostile left wing, attack USDAU, effect a breakthrough, and then with all available forces push on towards NEIDENBURG in order to roll up the Russian forces fighting in front of the XX Corps. The XX Corps was to directly assist this attack from the north in or-

der that the breakthrough might be effected as quickly as possible. As to the rest, they were to continue the attack already ordered for the 26th in which the 3d Reserve Division, held up in front of HOHENSTEIN, was to attack in the direction of WAPLITZ.

It was not until the distribution of the Army order that Army Headquarters learned that the situation on the left flank of the XX Corps was entirely different than they had understood it to be, and that the 3d Reserve Division had not advanced on HOHENSTEIN but had remained behind the DREWENZ. Corps Headquarters of the XX Corps was of the opinion that early on the 27th it had to deal with a strong Russian attack of not less than two corps and that the chance of the 3d Reserve Division advancing offensively against the flank of this attack had been lost because this division had remained behind (on the DREWENZ). It believed, therefore, that it would not recommend an attack by its left flank on the 27th (50) but that it was entirely feasible to have the 3d Reserve Division, which had remained behind the DREWENZ, move up abreast of the left flank of the garrison troops of UNGER and here then to defensively await the Russian attack. The XX Corps wished to attack only with its victorious right flank, for whose reinforcement troops should be moved to the south. GENERAL LUDENDORFF was not in accord with this plan but after various remonstrances had to approve it. I believe that under the circumstances the situation created by GENERAL VON MORGEN, by not advancing on HOHENSTEIN on the 26th, made it impossible for the corps staff of the XX Corps to do otherwise.

When the army staff left LOBAU early on the morning of the 27th to go to a small hill south of the DAMERAU SEE from which it could see the progress of the battle for itself, a message from the Commanding General of the I Corps was received stating that USDAU had been taken at 5:00 AM by the 1st Division and that he had ordered pursuit in the direction of NEIDENBURG and that the 5th Landwehr Brigade should take over the protection against (the threat) from SOLDAU.

Unfortunately it soon became evident that this report was false. The 1st Division had captured GUT MEISCHLITZ and had erroneously thought this to be USDAU.

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS had directed the main effort of his corps against USDAU, the left flank of the 2nd Division attacking from the southwest, the 1st Division from the west and northwest. The southern flank of the 2nd Division and the 5th Landwehr Brigade were to remain on the defensive for the present. The XX Corps had a mixed detachment of six battalions, two squadrons and two batteries under GENERAL VON SCHMETTAU that was to attack USDAU from the direction of BERGLING. (51) The attack scheduled for the artillery at 4:00 AM and the infantry at 5:00 AM was delayed. Part of the artillery of the 1st Division did not arrive until the evening of the 26th and joined the division during the hours of darkness. Preparations for the attack of the detachment SCHMETTAU were likewise delayed. When we arrived at our observation post we saw the village of USDAU about seven kilometers distant being heavily shelled by German artillery. Russian artillery was replying and the German infantry was driving back the advanced Russian detachments all along

the front. The assault on USDAU did not take place until 11:00 AM. German artillery fire had been so effective that the infantry encountered little resistance. GENERAL VON FRANCOIS directed the 1st Division to pursue in the direction of NEIDENBURG.

The erroneous report concerning the capture of USDAU had in the meantime caused a serious reverse to the south flank of the I Corps. When the report was received, Corps Headquarters directed the south flank, which until now had been held back, to advance. A strong Russian attack struck this advance from a southeasterly direction. The 5th Landwehr Brigade was brought to a halt west of SKURPIEN, the 3d Brigade during its advance on GR. - TAUERSEE was struck on the right flank by a Russian attack and thrown back with rather heavy losses. It was possible to bring the mass of the infantry to a halt near VON HEINRICHS DORF. Several units fled farther to the rear, one battalion became panicky and went as far as MONTOWO.

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS, upon receipt of the news of this retreat, took proper action. First, he halted the advance of his 1st Division on NEIDENBERG and turned this division to the south in order to drive back the enemy (52) at SOLD AU and thus gain for himself freedom of action for the next day. The Russian forces south of USDAU engaged with the 2nd Division, did not wait for the attack of the 1st Division and the detachment SCHMETTAU against their flank and rear but hurriedly withdrew on SOLD AU. GENERAL VON CONTA expected the retreating enemy to join up at the bridge at SOLD AU and expecting success, pressed to the south with all his forces. But the troops

as a result of the exertion of the last few days and the heavy battles were so exhausted that one could not expect them to engage in a new attack today. Therefore GENERAL VON FRANCOIS ordered the discontinuance of the pursuit at noon. The 5th Landwehr Division reached HOHENDORF, the 1st Division the vicinity south of BORCHERSDORF, the detachment SCHMETTAU reached SCHONWIESE.

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS planned to continue the battle the next morning and ordered his entire artillery to open fire at daylight the 28th against the Russian artillery positions at SOLDAU, as well as the preparation of his infantry for the attack. Aviation reports stating that the Russians were not thinking of a resumption of the battle or taking up a defensive stand but were in headlong retreat towards MLAWA and beyond, did not reach the Corps Commander (FRANCOIS).

The XX Corps had distributed the Army attack order for the 27th with a few modifications. It contemplated having its right flank continue the successful offensive, attacking in conjunction with the reinforced I Corps. It was somewhat restrained because it was to be (53) expected that the attack on USDAU would take some time and only after that could both corps make a coordinated advance. The 37th Division, reinforced with units of the garrison troops UNGER and the 70th Landwehr Brigade was to attack south of the MUHLEN SEE. The remainder of the garrison troops were to hold the DREWENZ sector north of the MUHLEN SEE and the 3d Reserve Division was to move up to the left flank to reinforce them. The 41st Division was not very well led. It moved out early, met no serious resistance and after a short advance, halted,

since the Division Commander, in accordance with his orders, wished to await the arrival of the I Corps or did not understand whether he was required to support this corps or not. The advance of the 37th Division was also effected without any serious hostile resistance. With practically no fighting it reached the line: KONTI - SEE - SEYTHEN - THYMAU and halted. Both German divisions found that they were opposed by the remainder of the 2nd Division which had been defeated the day before and which, with the advance of the German forces, had rapidly retreated to the east.

In the meantime, the Russian XV Corps moved to its attack against the German position north of MUHLEN SEE. The terrain of the DREWENZ sector, on account of the vast forests, is very difficult, containing much cover, and facilitated concealed preparation and the advance of the Russian troops to the attack. MUHLEN and the position at that place had been subjected to Russian artillery fire since daybreak. Farther to the north, against the 5th Reserve Division, which in the meantime had arrived in the vicinity of KIRSTIENS DORF, (54) indications of an impending attack became evident. GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ decided to let both his divisions, which had advanced south of the MUHLEN SEE, attack around the southern end of the MUHLEN SEE and strike in the rear the Russian forces which were attacking MUHLEN. The execution of this order was considerably delayed. The 37th Division, which already at 8:30 AM had started toward WAPLITZ, had reached the vicinity north of KONTI SEE by 9:00 AM and had there ordered a rest of an hour and a half. The 41st Division farther to the south had decided to attack in the direction of

USDAU and for this purpose had assembled troops on its right flank. Not until 11:00 AM did the division learn that the Russians at USDAU were in retreat and that the contemplated attack was now unnecessary.

C H A P T E R X I .

FRICTION IN THE XX CORPS

After the capture of USDAU about 11:30 AM Army Headquarters ordered what GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ had already decided on, namely, turning the 41st and 37th Divisions around east of the MUHLEN SEE and moving them both against the rear of the attacking Russians.

But this order was not executed. For at the same time that it arrived, a report was received by GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ that the Russians had broken through the German front at MUHLEN. North of MUHLEN German infantry and artillery was moving to the rear. The situation was momentarily a critical one. Reserves in considerable strength were no longer available. (55) GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ therefore decided to have the 37th Division march directly to the place of the breakthrough. For the attack around the MUHLEN SEE only the 41st Division on the south was available. It moved out in the afternoon and advanced slowly and halted in the evening on the line: JANUSCHKOW - southern end of the MUHLEN SEE. The reason for the early halt was due partly to the fatigue of the troops because of the bad roads and partly to the concern for the present condition of the defeated 2nd Division on the right flank.

If one will inquire into the reasons why the attack, which Army Headquarters decided and ordered the XX Corps

to execute "with utmost vigor", had so miscarried, one must answer that Army Headquarters was itself at fault, since it had sent oral instructions to the Commanding General XX Corps through GENERAL GRUNERT on the 26th to wait on the operation of the I Corps. Had Army Headquarters realized that the attack of the I Corps would take place earlier, which as it developed was actually the case, one would have to admit that the distance between USDAU and the 41st Division alone would seriously limit the XX Corps for some time.

In the meantime it developed that the report of the breakthrough at MUHLEN was a false alarm. It was an error which a telephone officer (communications officer) had transmitted in good faith. The attack which developed about 4:00 PM against the position at MUHLEN was, in the main, broken up by the defensive fires. A stronger Russian attack was being prepared against the left flank of the DREWENZ position through the JABLONKA forest. (56) The reports spoke of a strong envelopment of the 3d Reserve Division by units of the XIII Corps.

Since forenoon of the 27th, the Landwehr Division von der GOLTZ, coming from SCHLESWIG - HOLSTEIN had been detraining at BIESELLEN. Whether it would be able to participate at the right time to support the left flank seemed doubtful. GENERAL VON SCHOLTZ therefore decided to move the bulk of the 37th Division in rear of the extreme left flank. Since the marching capacity of the troops for this day had been exhausted, the execution of this movement was postponed until the morning of the 28th.

The Russian attack through the JABLONKA forest by

elements of the XV Corps and one brigade of the XIII Corps was not actually carried out, because the brigade of the XIII Corps got lost in the forest, whereupon all the attacking troops were withdrawn to the northeastern edge of the forest.

In spite of the fact that a greater success could not be registered by the reinforced XX Corps in the midst of the battle on account of various misunderstandings, nevertheless the 27th is the decisive day of the battle. It brought the decisive breakthrough at USDAU and gave Army Headquarters the assurance that in view of the victory at BOSSAU and of the retreat of the Russian VI Corps on ORTELSBURG, it would be possible to have the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps encircle the Russian center. The army staff left its observation post north of USDAU (57) at noon the 27th and drove to the command post of the XX Corps in order to effect a quicker and more energetic attack. The XX Corps could not wait on the action of the I Corps any longer, since it, as outlined above, was engaged with all its forces at SOLDAU. That this operation was not executed as intended and that it was not even possible to move the 41st Division to WAPLITZ is also narrated above.

At the same time the plans for the 28th were discussed with the Commanding General XX Corps. The results of both victorious engagements on the flanks would have to bear fruit on the 28th. And so the prime consideration dealt with the encircling and annihilation of the Russian center, consisting of about two and one half Corps. The half of the XXIII Russian Corps on the south wing had already suffered heavy losses. The XV

Corps had also suffered considerable loss of its combat forces in previous engagements. Only the XIII Corps was still intact. Army Headquarters estimated that this Corps (XIII) would be moved to the right flank of the XV Corps in order to make an enveloping attack against the DREWENZ position: At any rate, it was not improbable that SAMSONOW, after the disasters to both his wings, and the frustrating of his frontal attack today by his center, would give up the fight and order a retreat. And according to the situation up to the evening of the 27th, it indicated that such a withdrawal would lead to an annihilating defeat. (58)

C H A P T E R X I I .

THE ATTACK ON THE RUSSIAN CENTER

The Army Orders for the 28th anticipated that the reinforced XX Corps would attack at 4:00 AM, from the right wing, initially in the direction of HOHENSTEIN. The Landwehr Division (GOLTZ) which had finished de-training, should also advance at 5:00 AM to the attack from OSTERODE AND BIESSELLEN, in the direction of HOHENSTEIN. The I Reserve Corps to move north of ALLENSTEIN STATE FOREST, in rear of the enemy and pass through a mixed brigade that had gone forward via PASS-ENHEIM and KURKEN to block the defile at SCHWEDRICH. The I Corps and the XVII Corps were believed to be held by the enemy for the next few days at SOLDAU and ORTELSBURG, respectively.

This Army Order was changed in view of a report received from the I Reserve Corps. It (I Reserve Corps) reported that, at noon, on the 27th, a Russian Division had arrived at ALLENSTEIN, from the south. GENERAL VON BELOW considered it necessary to attack at once and by all means to prevent the march northward and junction of this force with the Russian II Corps, which had reached RASTENBURG. Through an attack of this kind it was planned to prevent the Russians from separating the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps. Corps Headquarters therefore suggested that together with the XVII Corps,

it would march on ALLENSTEIN in the morning and attack the enemy there. This suggestion was accepted and GENERAL VON BELOW was instructed to communicate with the headquarters XVII Corps, by any means possible since there was no telephone connection (59). In consideration of the change of the original order, the I Reserve Corps was ordered to suspend operations for blocking the defile at SCHWEDRICK, Army headquarters taking it for granted that headquarters I Reserve Corps would transmit these orders to headquarters XVII Corps.

Army Headquarters arrived at the command post XX Corps at FROGENAU at 7:00 AM on the 28th. Since 6:00 AM sounds of fighting were heard to the eastward, but a thick fog prevented any observation. Headquarters XX Corps had ordered the 41st Division to break camp early and to reach the line LUTTKEN - GANSHORN by 4:00 AM, from which to advance to an attack on PAULSGUT. Headquarters believed that defeated elements of the Russian XXIII Corps, which were on the right flank of the 41st Division, could be ignored. The division was cautioned against a possible surprise attack on its flank, by the enemy from the direction of BRUJAKEN, during their night march to the north, and it was directed to put out a strong rear-guard. As soon as the attack of the 41st Division had made itself felt, front line units of the 3rd Reserve Division should attack with both divisions under centralized control of the Commander 3rd Reserve Division. The 37th Division at 4:00 AM should stand ready, west of REICHENAU, to attack in the direction - KOLONIE PLATTEINEN. The time for this attack and likewise that of the center force depended upon the movement of the 41st Division to the attack.

The 41st Division did not receive its attack order until 11:20 PM. The time to prepare the troops for the night advance was very short. (60) The movement was a flank march in the presence of the enemy, which though defeated yesterday still constituted a threat. The division commander had serious doubts of its accomplishment. His troops were exhausted. Reports did not give him clear information of the enemy's location on his flank or his front. His remonstrations against the march, on WAPLITZ, which he again reiterated today, only brought unfriendly replies from Corps Headquarters, and believing that further remonstrations would be futile, he reluctantly carried out the undertaking. It ended in complete failure. The movement was delayed on account of some of the troops becoming lost on the poor roads through the woods. The advance was held up by encountering enemy resistance on both sides of WAPLITZ. Here the advance came to a standstill. Only two battalions of the 59th Infantry succeeded in crossing the MARANSE River, west of WAPLITZ, to drive the enemy back to the north and gain that terrain. In consequence of the thick fog, the success of this advance was not known, therefore the advantage gained was not exploited. As the fog lifted, the Russian artillery, from positions in vicinity of BRUJAKEN, opened fire on the rear of the troops engaged on the MARANSE River. At the same time the Russian infantry attacked the right flank and rear of the 41st Division. Its position was untenable. The division commander ordered the division to retire in the direction of its original position, in the region of KONTI SEE and THYMAU SEE. (61) The only reason that the retreat was successful and that the greater portion of the divi-

sion was not captured, was on account of the absolute unfitness of the Russians. Even in the face of heavy losses, the division was thankful to get back to the WRONOWO region.

C H A P T E R X I I I .

THE INDEPENDENT DECISION OF GENERAL VON MORGEN

Headquarters XX Corps and Army Headquarters had no information of the failure of the attack. They heard the noise of the engagement, from the direction of WAPLITZ, but did not see the participation in the action by the 41st Division. Corps Headquarters, therefore, wanted to hold back the attack on the front. The garrison troops on the front were placed under the command of the 3rd Reserve Division.

GENERAL VON MORGEN received reports during the night to the effect that the Russians had again evacuated the JABLONKA FOREST. The danger of his left flank being surrounded by the Russians was obviated by the arrival of the mass of the 37th Division on his left. GENERAL VON MORGEN'S troops had not as yet been engaged and were eager to attack. GENERAL VON MORGEN knew that the GOLTZ Division was marching at 5:00 AM from BIESSELLEN on HOHENSTEIN. He felt that it would not be wise to delay any longer and hold his troops idle, but that he should occupy the JABLONKA FOREST with his troops before the Russians again occupied it. (62) In consequence of this and upon his own responsibility, he ordered an attack and notified headquarters XX Corps, at 8:30 AM, that he had issued the order and

that his troops were attacking. From the confusion of the many orders, GENERAL VON MORGEN was not aware that the 37th Division had left three battalions in the MUHLEN region, when they marched from the right to the left flank. For that reason the active regiment behind UNGER'S garrison troops received no orders to participate in the attack.

Headquarters XX Corps was not pleased with the decision and action of GENERAL VON MORGEN but as the attack had been launched before the message was received, they were unable to stop it and, therefore, ordered the 37th Division to advance from REICHENAU, in direction of HOHENSTEIN.

UNGER'S right flank near MUHLEN did not advance; his left advanced slowly. The 3rd Reserve Division making a frontal attack all along the line pushed the enemy back, the left flank reaching HOHENSTEIN, between 12:00 and 1:00 o'clock. The resistance of the Russian XV Corps at DROBNITZ and SCHWENTEINEN was stubborn, but near HOHENSTEIN it gave way, as at this time the infantry of the GOLTZ Division, attacking from the north, had worked its way up close to this locality.

GENERAL FREIHERR VON DER GOLTZ, up to the morning of the 28th, had not entirely assembled his division. As a result of the railway collision, he was short five battalions and three batteries. The part that did arrive, seven battalions, four squadrons and one battery, was marched according to orders, to attack the Russian position at MOERKEN, east of HOHENSTEIN, in spite of a report of strong (63) enemy forces marching towards ALLENSTEIN, on his left. The HAMBURGER and SCHLESWIG - HOLSTEIN LANDWEHR attacked with great energy, although supported

by only one LANDWEHR Battery, which was located north of MORKEN. The left flank of the 3rd Reserve Division captured HOHENSTEIN, and its artillery then took the Russians in the flank as they evacuated the town of MORKEN, and the neighboring position. In the meantime the leading elements of the Russian XIII Corps, coming from ALLENSTEIN, had reached the vicinity of GRIESLIENEN, and developed sharpshooters against the flank and rear of the left flank of the GOLTZ Division. The 37th Division at this time was far to the rear, in the woods of the DREWENZ Sector and not until midday did it advance marching on the main HOHENSTEIN road, after it had received information of the successful attack of the 3rd Reserve Division. The attack which resulted from the initiative of GENERAL VON MORGEN was highly successful early in the afternoon. Only at MUHLEN did the enemy still hold.

At Army Headquarters, this independent decision and action evoked considerable satisfaction. We waited impatiently at GROGENAU for action by the XX Corps. When the report of the severe repulse of the 41st Division was received, on whose success the commander of the XX Corps depended for his frontal attack, the suspense was naturally very acute (64) since at this time there was no report of any kind as to how the battle of the I Corps at SOLDAU was progressing, nor what the Russian XIII Corps was doing in ALLENSTEIN. At any rate, in face of the attack by the I Reserve Corps, it was possible that the Russians would withdraw to the north. At 8:00 o'clock, in the morning, a wireless message was received which clarified this point. The Russian XIII Corps

marching on HOHENSTEIN, desired to reach GRIESLIENEN by noon. That MORGEN'S decision and action was not taken a second too soon and was justified, was proven during the fighting around HOHENSTEIN and MORKEN. At the same time that the intentions of the Russian XIII Corps were cleared up, a favorable report was received from GENERAL VON FRANCOIS.

At 6:00 AM GENERAL VON FRANCOIS assembled his troops for an attack to the south. During the night, he received messages clarifying the situation and showed him that he did not need his entire force for the attack. He had already sent six squadrons and one battery in the direction of NEIDENBERG, and intended the 2nd Division should soon follow. He thought the 1st Division, with MUHLMANN'S troops, to be sufficient to drive the remainder of the Russians back across the SOLDAU River. The 1st Division should then follow the 2nd Division in the direction of NEIDENBERG. Army Headquarters approved this plan. However, as soon as the report of the retreat of the 41st Division was received, Army Headquarters thought they should be quickly reinforced and ordered the 2nd Division to march immediately to RONTZKEN, to prevent a Russian penetration. (65) When the orders were received by headquarters, I Corps, the 2nd Division was already marching east and the remainder of the troops, including SCHMETTAU'S detachment, were attacking SOLDAU. The Russians had destroyed the crossings over the SOLDAU River and offered feeble resistance, while the mass of their troops was in hurried retreat towards MLAWA to the south. GENERAL VON FRANCOIS notified Army Headquarters

of his intentions and left only the MUEHLMANN Division and the SCHMETTAU Detachment at SOLDAU, and started the 1st Division on the march towards NEIDENBERG. From information received from the 41st Infantry Division, which was exaggerated and resulted from panic, Army Headquarters again gave orders to the I Corps at noon to support the 41st Division, which was retreating via WRONOWO, and, in addition, to pursue in the direction of LAHNA.

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS, writing in one of his articles on the Battle of TANNENBERG, states that he was surprised at the "direction of LAHNA" since the road led over broken terrain through the KAMUSIEN FOREST, which interfered with marching and artillery action. In spite of the fact that the order of Army Headquarters contained the additional statement, "The I Corps can furnish the greatest service to the Army, if it will act in accordance with the intentions (of this order)! Everything depends upon the I Army Corps," nevertheless GENERAL VON FRANCOIS did not change his orders, but adhered to his decision and correctly so, "Pursuit via NEIDENBERG."

Shortly after noon the general situation became clear to Army Headquarters. We were informed that the defeated 41st Division succeeded in its retreat (66) and was not followed up by the Russians. The attack of the 3rd Reserve Division was advancing victoriously. The Division GOLTZ by hard fighting had reached the line north HOHENSTEIN - MORKEN. Army Headquarters was of the impression that the enemy had been defeated and at 1:30 PM gave orders that the XX Corps would advance its right flank and shortly thereafter the I and XX

Corps should execute a coordinated pursuit. The objective of the I Corps was a continued advance via DEIDENBURG - MUSCHOKEN, on WILLENBURG, which was the direction GENERAL VON FRANCOIS already had given to his troops.

The 2nd Division at 3:00 PM, when about one mile from NEIDENBERG, came in contact with enemy outguards on the north. The division deployed and until evening slowly pushed them back behind the line SALLUSKEN - RONTZEN, and there came to a halt. The enemy force was a Guard Regiment of the Russian XXIII Corps, a part of the 6th Cavalry Division and a few batteries. The SCHMETTAU detachment arrived during the evening in the area east of NEIDENBERG, rested there, and during the night took up the pursuit. The detachment reached MUSCHAKEN at three o'clock in the morning. The 1st Division arrived in the vicinity of NEIDENBURG late in the evening.

For the 29th GENERAL VON FRANCOIS ordered SCHMETTAU'S detachment to reach WILLENBURG; the 1st Division, MUSCHAKEN; and the 2nd Division, GRUNFLIESS. In the afternoon new engagements developed in the neighborhood of HOHENSTEIN, in which the LANDWEHR Division GOLTZ became involved. The Russian XIII Corps, coming from GRIESLIENEN and the north, advanced against the LANDWEHR Division - (67) GOLTZ - gradually forced out of the KAMMEREI FOREST those units of the latter which had supported by fire therefrom the attack on MORKEN, and even occupied MORKEN, which the victorious LANDWEHR had evacuated when it passed through to the south.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, the 37th Division also approached HOHENSTEIN. This Division ar-

rived too late that afternoon to make an attack on the Russian XIII Corps. Whether the troops could not attack because they were exhausted from their march through the JABLONKER FOREST or were waiting for the attack against the Russian rear by the I Corps is doubtful. The Division was near HOHENSTEIN that evening and a portion of the LANDWEHR Division, which came out of the KAMMEREI FOREST, assembled themselves near it.

The 3rd Reserve Division defeated the enemy and immediately took up the pursuit. It proceeded in a southerly direction via NADRAU to cut off the Russians, who were retreating towards SCHWEDRICH. The effort did not succeed. A detachment remained at night in front of NADRAU, which was still held by the Russians. Army Headquarters diverted one brigade of the division in a more southerly direction to get in the rear of the enemy who, according to reports from the 41st Division, still held possession.

GENERAL VON SHOLTZ had ordered a pursuit on the entire front at 1:00 PM. The order for the 41st Division to proceed in the direction of ORLAU was not carried out. The division was at the end of its endurance and remained west of WRONOWO. MUHLEN was taken at 3:00 o'clock (68) in the afternoon, after bringing into action the three battalions of the 37th Division, which had been left behind, and the troops of UNGER reached the vicinity of GANSHORN - PAULSGUT.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EVENTS ON BOTH WINGS

On the basis of the orders of the Army to the I Reserve Corps and in order to transmit the orders to the Commanding General of the XVII Corps for the cooperation of the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps against the enemy at ALLENSTEIN, the Chief of Staff of the I Reserve Corps went personally to the headquarters of the XVII Corps to explain to GENERAL VON MACKENSEN the intentions of the I Reserve Corps. As already stated, it was impossible to have telephone communication between Army Headquarters and the XVII Corps. Army Headquarters had sent MAJOR DRECHSEL to the XVII Corps as liaison officer. In spite of the fact that he transmitted the order that both corps should make a coordinated attack against the enemy at ALLENSTEIN, but that part of the XVII Corps should pursue farther in the direction of ORTELSBURG and also that the decision must be secured tomorrow without fail and that therefore the I Reserve Corps could not delay its attack until the arrival of detachments of the XVII Corps, and in spite of the fact that GENERAL VON MACKENSEN initially was opposed to giving up pursuit of the enemy, turning his corps around and marching on ALLENSTEIN, for some unknown reason the two corps commanders reached an agreement which did not (69)

comply with the above.

Thereupon the XVII Corps turned about, marched north around the I Corps via WARTENBURG and north on ALLENSTEIN. Only a detachment pursued the defeated Russian VI Corps via MENSGUTH in the direction of ORTELSBURG. Everything else was moved via WARTENBURG.

The I Reserve Corps, contrary to the instructions of Army Headquarters, did not break camp until 10:00 AM. It could not reach ALLENSTEIN until 2:00 PM. Just as the Corps had started to march, it received information that only weak hostile forces were still at ALLENSTEIN. GENERAL VON BELOW estimated correctly that the Russians had not marched to the north, but in the direction of HOHENSTEIN, and decided to move to the south. Somewhat later he received an order from the Army with the instructions: That since the Russian XIII Corps was marching from ALLENSTEIN to HOHENSTEIN that he (GENERAL VON BELOW) should advance by the shortest route on the line: STABIGOTTEN - GRIESLIENEN.

This order contained no instructions for the XII (Translator's note: Should be XVII) Corps. Army Headquarters was in the dark as to just where the XVII Corps was at this time. It believed that part (of the XVII Corps) was pursuing in a southerly direction and part was following the I Reserve Corps.

As well as I can remember, it was considered self-evident that the I Reserve Corps would apprise the XVIII (Translator's note: Should be XVII) Corps of the change in the situation since the entire operation was to be executed by both corps according to their

agreement. Nevertheless it was certainly a mistake not to have indicated that the XVII Corps should now march to the south with all its forces (70) in order to encircle the defeated Russian forces.

Headquarters of the I Reserve Corps also failed to think about the XVII Corps. It was not until noon that GENERAL VON BELOW got into communication with him (GENERAL VON MACKENSEN) and proposed, correctly, that he turn about once more and march south via PASSENHEIM. Naturally it was a difficult decision for GENERAL VON MACKENSEN, after he had given up pursuit of the defeated enemy and at the suggestion of the I Reserve Corps had marched on ALLENSTEIN, to now again march around the rear of the I Reserve Corps and head south again. He therefore declined to accept the proposal of the I Reserve Corps. He decided to continue marching in the direction already selected, namely, in the direction of STABIGOTTEN and as senior corps commander desired that the I Reserve Corps should clear the main highway from ALLENSTEIN to STABIGOTTEN for the advance of the XVII Corps. He permitted his troops a short rest and sent a general staff officer by airplane to Army Headquarters with instructions to present his intentions and ask for direct orders.

When the staff officer arrived at Army Headquarters at FROGENAU with his message he was not given a very friendly reception. The army staff learned from him, first, that the I Reserve Corps had broken camp very late and in any case could not reach GRIESLIENEN at the proper time and, second, that the request of GENERAL VON MACKENSEN that the I Reserve Corps clear the

main highway for him would still further delay the movement of the I Reserve Corps so that it was questionable whether it could get into action at all today. (71) The situation of the Division von der GOLTZ, must therefore be a precarious one. Almost simultaneously with the arrival of the general staff officer and yet, as I remember, not until he had taken off on his return flight, telephone communication with the I Reserve Corps as well as the XVII Corps was established. The orders of Army Headquarters were transmitted to the general staff officer as well as by telephone and covered two points: First, the I Reserve Corps was to attack at GRIESLIENEN today under all circumstances, and, second, the XVII Corps was to turn around and bend every effort to march south to the vicinity of JEDWABNO in order to close the circle around the Russian army which the I Corps in the south had already begun along the NEIDENBURG - WILLENBERG road.

The I Reserve Corps was not able to attack on the 28th. Turned off the main highway on to poor, sandy roads, the advance was seriously delayed. The XVII Corps faced about and marched back in its former direction. Small detachments of infantry in wagons, with machine guns, cavalry and artillery preceded the columns and late in the night reached the vicinity south of PASSENHEIM and ORTELSBURG. Corps Headquarters reached PASSENHEIM.

In spite of the fact that the events of the 28th had not occurred as the Army Commander had planned and hoped, the morale during the afternoon was high. It was clear that the Russian Second Army was defeated

with heavy losses and that during the next few days these losses would be even greater. At the same time, the consideration of (72) what to do if the battle should end here, demanded our attention. Timely action would have to be taken to disentangle and regroup the completely disorganized combat units. This would have to be done on the basis of the future employment of the army, that is, the attack against RENNENKAMPF'S Army. The order for the pursuit which GENERAL LUDENDORFF issued at 5:30 PM 28th August at FROGENAU took this into consideration.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF, dictating the letter, began as follows: "FROGENAU, leave time blank." I invited his attention to the fact that it might be better to use the name of the historic village of TANNENBERG which was located a short distance ahead, instead of FROGENAU. He did this and as it developed later that this battle was named after the town used in the date line of the final order of the Army for that engagement. The order directed that the I and XX Corps, as well as the 3d Reserve Division, should initiate pursuit to the east. The Landwehr and garrison troops should assemble and stand fast. Army Headquarters wanted to halt the eastern group, i. e. the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps and move them to the vicinity of ALLENSTEIN and north thereof, in a position of readiness against the Russian First Army. The order, for the time being, was distributed only to the units of the west group since we had no clear picture of the situation of the I and XVII Corps. (73)

CHAPTER XV

THE INACTIVITY OF RENNENKAMPF

During the afternoon Russian dispatches were sent from which it appeared that RENNENKAMPF finally was willing to advance to the support of SAMSONOW.

This advance could no longer prevent the defeat of the Russian Second Army but it could change the final outcome of the battle. The desire of Army Headquarters to have some divisions on the defensive behind the ALLE can, therefore, be understood. The inactivity of RENNENKAMPF during the entire day is incomprehensible to the military mind. All publications which have appeared to date fail to give an adequate explanation of this inactivity. The heavy losses which his army suffered in the battle of GUMBINNEN; the belief that strong portions of the German Army had withdrawn into the vicinity of K^ÖNIGSBERG; the belief that SAMSONOW'S army was opposed by only weak forces, do not explain or excuse his (RENNENKAMPF'S) inactivity. The Russians were apprised of the actual total strength of the German forces in the Eastern Theater of War and therefore with their superior forces, if at all possible, they should have defeated the weak German forces east of the VISTULA. Therefore, I cannot rid myself of the thought which GENERAL LUDENDORFF frequently expressed to me, namely, that GENERAL RENNENKAMPF did not want to help GENERAL SAMSONOW. They

had become enemies during the Manchurian Campaign.

SAMSONOW charged the inactivity and poor leadership of RENNENKAMPF'S Army with the responsibility for his (74) (SAMSONOW'S) Siberian Cossack Division not being able to hold the YENTAI coal mines in the battle of LIAUYANG. After this battle both generals had a serious altercation in the railroad station at MUKDEN. Since SAMSONOW shot himself when he realized he was surrounded and defeated at TANNENBERG and RENNENKAMPF in 1918 at TAGAN-ROCK was murdered by the Bolsheviki, it will naturally never be explained whether my idea is justified or not. Nevertheless, I have offered it, since it seems to explain the incomprehensible inactivity of RENNENKAMPF. Naturally, I understand that RENNENKAMPF was not aware of the fact that his inactivity would eventually aid in the annihilation of SAMSONOW'S Army.

After the Army Order had been distributed the army staff moved forward in the direction of MUHLEN in order to see the victorious troops. Halfway between TANNENBERG and MUHLEN we had to stop since munitions, wagons, ambulances and supply transport were moving toward us (to the rear) in the wildest confusion. We realized from this picture that there was a panic in the columns and the trains. At MUHLEN Russian prisoners were being marched to the rear by Landwehr troops with fixed bayonets. Someone had shouted, "They come!", another repeated, "The Russians are coming!", a third turned his wagon around and started toward the rear and everything joined in the wild dash (to the rear). At the command of GENERAL LUDENDORFF we stationed ourselves across and along the main road in the form of a chain and with drawn pistols brought the flight to a standstill. The whole road, (75) however, was so thoroughly blocked by overturned and interlocked wagons that we abandoned our plan to go forward.

C H A P T E R X V I

CORPS FROM THE WESTERN FRONT

The Supreme Command (GHQ) had made reinforcements from the Western Front available for the operations against RENNENKAMPF in spite of the fact that the Army Commander had not requested them. On the night of the 26th, COLONEL TAPPEN, Chief of the Operations Section, phoned. GENERAL LUDENDORFF called me on the telephone and said: "The Supreme Command (GHQ) is calling, take the extension telephone and listen in." COLONEL TAPPEN said that they expected to send to the Eastern Theater of War within the next few days three corps, the Reserve Guard Corps, the Fifth and Eleventh Corps and the Saxon Cavalry Division and asked where the Army Commander desired to have these troops concentrated. In reply to this question, GENERAL LUDENDORFF stated that these reinforcements were not absolutely necessary, especially since they would arrive too late for the battle which was now under way. We expected to end this battle victoriously in a few days and then turn the Eighth Army against RENNENKAMPF'S Army. He requested therefore that the reinforcements be sent only if they could be safely spared from the Western Front. In case they were needed for the decision in the west, we would somehow manage without them.

Why the Supreme Command (GHQ) offered these Corps and then later actually sent two corps and one cavalry division (76) is still not entirely clear to me. GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ had certainly requested reinforcements in his fateful telephone conversation with GENERAL VON MOLTKE. The new Army Command had never reverted to this question, on the contrary the Supreme Command (GHQ) knew that the Eighth Army had every assurance of defeating SAMSONOW. Also the reference in Volume II page 203 of the REICHSARCHIV in which the chief of the Austrian General Staff shows that he was disappointed as to the deficiency of the depot (Ersatz) divisions originally designated for East Prussia does not seem to justify the decision. As unbelievable as it might sound today it certainly must have been a fact that as GENERAL TAPPEN writes in his book the Supreme Command (GHQ) on the basis of the reports received from the armies up to the twenty-fifth of August was obsessed with the belief that the decision in the west had been won.

On the evening of the 28th in our new headquarters at OSTERODE we awaited the final report of the Reserve Corps concerning the outcome of the attack at GRIESLIENEN so that we might issue further orders for the disposition of this corps and the XVII Corps in rear of the ALLE. About 10:00 PM that evening the disappointing information was received that the I Reserve Corps had not attacked that day, that the defile at KURKEN by mistake was not occupied, and that probably the vicinity of PASSENHEIM - JEDWABNO was open to a Russian retreat to the east since it was not to be assumed that

the XVII Corps would arrive there this evening. Army Headquarters decided to forego (77) for the present, its disposition of the I Reserve Corps and the XVII Corps in rear of the ALLE in order to carry to a conclusion the battle which today's misunderstanding had thwarted. The threat of the closer approach of RENNENKAMPF'S Army had to be risked for another twenty-four hours. I should like, however, to emphatically state that Army Headquarters at this time did not anticipate an attack by RENNENKAMPF. The excitement arose only because we feared that a considerable portion of Russian troops which up until this time we had considered to be surrounded might now escape to the southeast.

Therefore the I Reserve Corps was directed to march early with one division via GRIESLIENEN on HOHENSTEIN and with the other to the south of WUTTRIENEN on JEDWABNO. The cavalry of this corps should be sent to ORTELSBURG. Since the cavalry of this corps seemed to be somewhat weak GENERAL LUDENDORFF decided to have one brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division which was located at ROESSEL also hasten at 3:00 o'clock in the morning to ORTELSBURG. Army Headquarters had not learned that detachments of the XVII Corps had reached PASSENHEIM, ORTELSBURG, and JEDWABNO. It believed that it was far to the rear in the vicinity of WARTENBURG. At 6:00 AM orders were sent to the corps to be ready in its bivouacs. Should it be necessary to employ it against the south flank of RENNENKAMPF'S Army it could start its march in that direction early in the morning. On the other hand, it should also be ready to march to the south.

On the night of the 28-29 radio dispatches were received by Army Headquarters stating, first, that RENNENKAMPF'S Army finally would move to the support of SAMSONOW (78) and second, the definite information that the Supreme Command (GHQ) would send to the Eastern Front two corps and one cavalry division from the Western Front. During the telephonic conversation between COLONEL TAPPEN and GENERAL LUDENDORFF I listened in. COLONEL TAPPEN stated that only two corps would be sent instead of three as he had previously expected, the Fifth Corps would be needed on the Western Front. GENERAL LUDENDORFF again referred to the fact that the Army of the East could get along without these reinforcements and that the Reserve Guard Corps and the Eleventh Corps might also remain in the west if they were needed there.

At 6:30 AM report was received that the XVII Corps had not received the Army order of the previous evening, directing it to hold itself in readiness in the vicinity of WARTENBURG for further orders but during the course of the evening and night had pushed on to the south. Army Headquarters decided to leave it there but ordered that it should not advance beyond ORTELSBURG and PASSENHEIM. As a result of this action of the XVII Corps the only troops available to the Army to use at this time against the approaching elements of RENNENKAMPF'S Army were the garrison troops in the neighborhood of WAPLITZ under UNGER and the Landwehr under von der GOLTZ which was to assemble at HOHENSTEIN. On the other hand, as soon as possible, additional troops would have to be withdrawn from HOHENSTEIN where early today the 37th Division attacked from the west and the I Reserve Corps from the

east. GENERAL LUDENDORFF decided to go to HOHENSTEIN himself to disentangle the troops at that point and to talk with the leaders. I accompanied GENERAL LUDENDORFF on this trip (79) and shall never forget the impression which the jubilant troops and the thousands of captured prisoners made.

The skirmishes in the vicinity of HOHENSTEIN began on the 28th and lasted until late in the evening and were resumed again at daybreak. At 6:00 AM the 37th Division, one Brigade of the 3d Reserve Division, and part of the von der GOLTZ Division attacked elements of the Russian XIII Corps at MORKEN and KAMMEREIWALD from the west and drove them to the east against the two advancing divisions of the I Reserve Corps. The attack ended about 10:00 AM with unusually heavy losses to the Russians. Eight thousand prisoners were taken at GRIESLIENEN. The bulk of the XIII Corps, as a result of the delay of the I Reserve Corps, could have avoided the fate of being captured at this place. It had begun its retirement during the night in a southeasterly direction on KURKEN - JABLONKEN. Finally, toward evening, GENERAL SAMSONOW, having seen the hopelessness of his attack, ordered the withdrawal of the three corps.

On GENERAL LUDENDORFF'S order, the 37th Division was assembled at GRIESLIENEN and one division of the I Reserve Corps was to assemble at ALLENSTEIN. It was possible to hold one brigade in place. Three brigades of the corps were in pursuit and it was impossible to get these units in hand for the time being.

The XX Corps had ordered the 41st Division to pursue towards JEDWABNO and the 3d Reserve Division to pursue

via SCHWEDRICH - KURKEN on WAPLITZ and south of PASSENHEIM.

The 41st Division as a result of its defeat had become very cautious and proceeded hesitatingly, permitting itself to be held up for long periods by weak (80) hostile detachments and was able to get only as far as the vicinity of ORLAU. The 3d Reserve Division after continuous fighting reached the vicinity of KURKEN.

To the south on the main highway: NEIDENBURG - WILLENBURG the situation in the meantime had developed as follows: GENERAL VON FRANCOIS was calculating on a break through by the Russians towards NEIDENBURG. He had sent the SCHMETTAU detachment as well as his cavalry, reinforced with artillery, forward with orders to reach WILLENBERG as soon as possible and proposed temporarily to hold both of his divisions together near NEIDENBURG. Then the 1st Division should move on MUSCHAKEN and the 2nd Division on GRUNFLIESS. The 2nd Division met with resistance from elements of the Russian 2nd Division and was not able to reach GRUNFLIESS until early in the afternoon. The 1st Division supported the attacks of the 2nd Division from the vicinity north of NEIDENBURG and held its infantry in readiness east of NEIDENBURG to anticipate the expected break through. But the break through was not effected. On the contrary, Russian withdrawal to the east was observed. For that reason GENERAL CONTA, Commander of the 1st Division, sent part of his infantry to MUSCHAKEN.

The cavalry units had ridden much farther and on the road to WILLENBERG had captured many thousands of pris-

oners and Russian trains. The SCHMETTAU detachment, after a short rest of only a few hours, formed march column and reached WILLENSBURG about 7:00 PM where many Russian trains and supply columns were captured. When it became clear that the Russians did not contemplate a break through (81) on a large scale near NEIDENBURG, GENERAL FRANCOIS very properly moved his 1st Division farther to the east, with orders to occupy all road intersections between MUSCHAKEN and WILLENSBERG with detachments of all arms and thus prevent the surrounded Russians from making a break through to the south. During the night innumerable small engagements took place in which the Russian attempts at a break through were thwarted.

During the 29th the information received by Army Headquarters clearly indicated that at last RENNENKAMPF'S Army was marching to the aid of SAMSONOW. His strong cavalry had already ridden rather far forward, had reached ROESSEL and BISCHOFSSSTEIN and was advancing farther to the north on WORMDITT. Even though this advance could not change the fate of the Russian troops surrounded in the woods north of the NEIDENBURG - WILLENSBERG road, nevertheless steps had to be taken against the advance (of RENNENKAMPF'S Army). On the evening of the 29th the following troops were ready for use against the Russian First Army: The I Reserve Corps, the 37th Division, the Landwehr Division of von der GOLTZ as well as the 6th Landwehr Brigade which for the time being had been left back in LAUTERN, without the knowledge of Army Headquarters. Farther to the south the garrison troops as well as the 70th Brigade were available.

During the course of the 30th of August more troops had to be made available. It had to be assumed that if RENNENKAMPF decided to enter the battle he would do so in the general direction of ALLENSTEIN. It was desired, initially, to operate defensively against him at ALLENSTEIN. Therefore the Army Order on the 30th prescribed that the I Reserve Corps, 37th Division, and the 6th Landwehr Brigade (82) should begin the construction of defensive positions on both sides of ALLENSTEIN facing northeast. The Landwehr Division von der GOLTZ should bar the way against any further advance of the Russian Cavalry along the lake shore northeast of OSTERODE. Army Headquarters was convinced that it would be possible to check the Russian attack at this place long enough to permit the troops now engaged at TANNENBERG to be released and for the reinforcements now en route from the Western Front to arrive. These troops could be employed against one or both flanks of the enemy and the employment against RENNENKAMPF'S left flank would become all the more effective the farther he advanced to the west. What we had heretofore dreaded, we now hoped would happen, namely, a rapid advance of RENNENKAMPF'S Army.

The remainder of the Army Order provided for a speedy termination of the battle. The XVII Corps barred the way to the east, the 41st Division and the 3d Reserve Division were driving the Russian masses, which were scattered through the woods, farther to the east, and the I Corps was to close in on the troops pushing their way along the main highway to WILLENSBERG. The garrison troops and the 70th Landwehr Brigade were permitted to rest for a day in the vicinity

of HOHENSTEIN. GENERAL VON MUHLMANN, Commander of the reinforced 3d Landwehr Brigade, had requested that he be permitted to advance from SOLDAU on MLAWA and drive out the weak Russian detachments that still remained there. The Army Order approved this request.

On the evening of the 29th, the Commanding General of the Russian XV Corps, GENERAL MARTOS, was brought into OSTERODE a prisoner.⁽⁸³⁾ The morale of Army Headquarters naturally was very high. In consequence of the eastern barrier established through the correct initiative of GENERAL VON MACKENSEN it was hoped that still larger Russian detachments would be caught in the net. I should like to make it clear, however, that we did not calculate on such a colossal number of prisoners as was actually taken later. In that connection I should like to narrate an incident which took place. Two days later I rode with GRAF DOHNA, General of Cavalry, who happened to be at our headquarters on a military mission and as we saw the Russian prisoners being loaded at the railroad station for transportation to the rear, we engaged in a discussion concerning the actual number of prisoners taken. GRAF DOHNA asked me, "Well, how many prisoners do you actually think there are?" I replied, "We do not have any exact reports but I should venture a guess that there are at least thirty or forty thousand." GRAF DOHNA considered this estimate too high and said, "It will certainly not be over twenty thousand." In jest I laid a wager with him that he should pay me one mark for every prisoner over twenty thousand and I would do the same for every prisoner under twenty thousand. GRAF DOHNA unfortunately did not take the bet.

C H A P T E R X V I I

RUSSIAN ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF

On the 29th GENERAL VON FRANCOIS received reports that the enemy which had been defeated at USDAU and SOLDAU was again advancing toward the border. He therefore discontinued the reconnaissances by the divisions toward the south (84) and occupied JANOWA in addition. For the continued pursuit on the 30th he limited his corps objectives. The 1st Division was to advance somewhat farther to the east in order to make room for the 2nd Division in the vicinity of MUSCHAKEN. Orders for any further activity by the corps were held in abeyance, contingent upon the results of the aerial reconnaissance to the south early on the morning of the 30th.

In spite of the fact that the rehabilitation of the hostile combat forces in rear of the I Corps was considered to be really possible, a dropped message received in the market-place at NEIDENBURG at 10:00 AM, stating that about four Russian divisions were advancing on the MLAWA - NEIDENBURG road with heads just south of NEIDENBERG, was a distinct surprise. The situation of the German I Corps was decidedly an unfavorable one. In front of it in the woodland to the north of MUSCHAKEN were still considerable hostile forces which could be expected to use all their power to attempt a break-through as soon as they heard the sound of battle from the south. About the same

time that the air message was received, the first Russian shells fell in the market-place of NEIDENBERG.

Here GENERAL VON FRANCOIS, with his tremendous energy, was the right man at the right spot. From the very beginning he estimated that the defensive power of the Russians was not very great and at least in this instance he was absolutely right. He decided that he would under no conditions abandon the encirclement of the enemy to the north and would employ defensively to the south (85) only those troops which were absolutely necessary, and ordered that the weak outposts which were now there, should hold the heights south of NEIDENBERG and that the 2nd Division with all available troops should hold itself in readiness in the vicinity of GREGERSDORF. The 5th Landwehr Brigade, concerning which it was not known whether it had marched beyond MLAWA and, if it had, how far it had gone, was to either operate against the hostile flank and rear, or if it had not yet reached MLAWA was to march on KANDIEN and strike the enemy in flank.

GENERAL VON FRANCOIS issued these orders in the market-place at NEIDENSBURG and then went to GREGERSDORF to the assembling detachments of the 2nd Division. There he learned that Army Headquarters had also taken measures to thwart the relief attempts of the enemy. The same aviator who dropped the message at NEIDENBURG had furnished the same information to Army Headquarters.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF counseled the Army Commander to permit the von der GOLTZ Division, the garrison troops of UNGER, the 41st Division, and the 3d Reserve Division to move up (against the Russians). These reinforcements

were naturally more than sufficient to ward off a Russian attack. But they could not attack until the next day. Until then the weak forces around NEIDENSBURG would have to help themselves.

A battalion from each of the 45th and 41st Regiments and a battery from each of the 16th and 37th Field Artillery Regiments under the command of MAJOR SCHLIMM with the mission of holding the heights south of NEIDENSBURG as long as possible, carried out this mission in model fashion and held the position against the slow and cautious advance of the Russians until late in the afternoon. (86) They were supported in this action by the fire of 20 batteries which one after the other GENERAL VON FRANCOIS brought into position in the vicinity of GREGERSDORF. Not until dusk did MAJOR SCHLIMM'S detachment have to give up NEIDENSBURG and retire on account of the threatening envelopment by the enemy. At dark the town was occupied by the 3d Russian Guard Division. MUHLMANN'S Brigade, when it received word of the Russian advance, did not complete its march to MLAWA but counter-marched in order to attack in the direction from KANDIEN. It reached GR - KOSLAU in the evening and employed its artillery from there with good results. But its support did not have any direct influence on the skirmish of SCHLIMM'S detachment. The successful defense by the SCHLIMM detachment had removed all dangers to the encircling forces. By the morning of the 31st all reinforcements had arrived. Army Headquarters had released them all to GENERAL VON FRANCOIS.

There was no opponent left to meet the attack ordered by GENERAL VON FRANCOIS for the 31st. The Rus-

sian leader, the Commanding General I Corps, ARTAMANOW, had withdrawn. During the night he had made an about-face and marched off with his entire force. Whether he lost his nerve or had received information of the approaching German reinforcements and therefore withdrew will remain conjecture. If it had been possible for him to have overthrown the SCHLIMM detachment in a rapid assault and to have attacked the seven battalions of the 2nd Division assembling at GREGERSDORF the situation of the German I Corps would have been unfavorable. (87) He probably could have effected a breach through which parts of his surrounded compatriots could have escaped. Even though he was only able to reach NEIDENBURG before dark one should approve his decision to withdraw, in view of the fact that the approaching attack in the morning with its flank threat from the direction of GR - KOSLAU would have been very unfavorable to him. When the 41st Division reached NEIDENBURG early in the morning it found the town empty, the enemy gone. The Brigade MUHLMANN which had gone to SABERAU earlier could use its artillery effectively against the retreating hostile columns. But it could not attack, since it had not brought its bridge equipment and therefore could not cross the NEIDE RIVERS.

Engagements occurred also in the east, at ORTELSBURG, as early as the evening of the 29th. Here, too, the Russians made feeble attempts to bring assistance to their surrounded comrades. On the evening of the 29th, the 4th Russian Cavalry Division recaptured ORTELSBURG but withdrew in the face of the 35th Division and the

simultaneous arrival of the 1st Cavalry Brigade after setting fire to the town. On the morning of the 30th about one division of the Russian VI Corps, as well as the 4th Cavalry Division, renewed the attack from the east and north, surrounding the town, and placed the German infantry regiment in a dangerous situation since it had no artillery to support it. During the forenoon, cavalry of the I Corps from WILLENBERG as well as elements of the 35th Division relieved the situation. About noon the Russians also gave up their relief attempts here and withdrew to the south. (88)

And so the battle ended. Real attempts at a breakthrough to the south by the surrounded Russian forces was never attempted. I honestly believe that it would have been impossible to have prevented a break-through by German troops similarly surrounded. There were only about twenty-nine battalions along the fifty kilometer stretch between MUSCHAKEN and WILLENBERG available to bar the way. I should like to compare this (action of the Russians) with the only occasion on which it was possible for the Russians to surround the Germans and contrast it with the handling of the German leaders and troops at BREZINY, where GENERAL LITZMAN placed himself at the head of his surrounded troops and with them drove his way out. The surrounded Russians wandered about without leadership, thrusting at the surrounding forces but always again retreating within the woods because of the fire of the weak German detachments and finally surrendered by thousands to German forces considerably weaker numerically. One battalion of the 43d Infantry captured 17,000. After an aviator, early on the morning of the 30th, reported

that a large number of troops whose identification he had not been able to learn, were assembled in the open field at WILLENBERG, GENERAL SCHMETTAU reported that he had up to now taken 11,000 prisoners with his weak force and hardly knew what to do with them. The actual number of prisoners, 92,000 men, was not learned by Army Headquarters until much later. The Eighth Army faced about and together with the two approaching corps from the Western Front, marched to attack RENNENKAMPF. It had weightier things to worry about than the results of this victory. (89) We first learned the details during the campaign in south POLAND.

CHAPTER XVIII

C O N C L U S I O N S

I should like to make some observations concerning the orders and the course of the battle. Seldom have so many legends been related about a battle as about the battle of TANNENBERG. According to the legends of the people, Field Marshal VON HINDENBURG is supposed to have drawn the plans for this battle a generation before it took place. As general staff officer of the 1st Division and also as captain or major he is said to have made a thorough reconnaissance of the terrain and successfully prevented the draining of the lakes and swamps of this region and on the basis of a long-cherished plan to have driven the Russians into the lakes and swamps where thousands were drowned. Another version relates how in the special train from HANOVER to the east, speeding from station to station he received reports of the situation and, acting on them, sent back his orders. All these narratives have been made out of whole cloth. TANNENBERG is not the work of a single person. It is the result of the excellent schooling and development of our leaders and the incomparable performance of the German soldier.

The decision to turn the retreat from GUMBINNEN into an attack against the left wing of SAMSONOW'S army was reached by Army Headquarters under PRITTWITZ. The con-

centration of the troops for this and the preliminary arrangements for (90) the battle of TANNENBERG occurred in a period during which the Headquarters Staff had no inkling of the change in command. The only order that GENERAL LUDENDORFF issued before his arrival in the east was the order eliminating Army Headquarters from the chain of command and the granting of a day of rest to the XVII Corps and the I Reserve Corps. That this latter action was not timely I have already tried to show. When the new Army Commander arrived in MARIENBURG he had to issue no new orders but simply give the command: "Route step, march!" (Carry on!) As far as the course of the battle is concerned, one cannot deny that a series of the most important events occurred, not as the result of the orders of Army Headquarters but as a result of individual initiative of subordinates. At the decisive point for the brilliant result of the battle, the breakthrough at USDAU, GENERAL VON FRANCOIS is undeniably due great merit, since he postponed the attack until he had his combat troops, especially his artillery, available. Had he attacked a day earlier with only a part of his troops assembled and without sufficient artillery preparation against the prepared Russian position at USDAU, as the order of the Army directed, who knows whether success would have followed. Without his victory, it is questionable what the future course of the battle would have been. Not quite so important, but with its results likewise unusually happy, was the independent decision of GENERAL VON MORGEN to attack on

the 28th without waiting for the advance of the 41st Division. Since it did not come up at all it is probable that had MORGEN not made his decision, the advance of the 3d Reserve Division would certainly have been so long delayed (91) that the Landwehr Division von der GOLTZ would have been defeated before assistance could have reached it from the front of the XX Corps. The action of GENERAL VON FRANCOIS and VON MACKENSEN was correct and fortunate and lead to the encirclement of the Russian forces. Likewise it was correct for VON FRANCOIS not to carry out the order directing him to march on LAHNA but instead to send his cavalry and the detachment SCHMETTAU ahead on the road to WILLENBURG and for GENERAL VON MACKENSEN in his turning about at ALLENSTEIN to recognize the importance of blocking the way to the east and to send detachments of his corps by forced marches to PASSENHEIM and farther to the south.

If the question is asked, to whom is the principal credit due for the battle of TANNENBERG, one must devote some consideration to the conduct of the enemy, for without his mistakes the entire result would have been impossible. I have already commented on the conduct of RENNENKAMPF and on the fact that I believed RENNENKAMPF would not help SAMSONOW because of an old feud. He was supported in this by the action of the Commander of the Group of Armies, whose instructions to him to support the Russian Second Army were indifferent and delayed. During the entire course of the action he was not able to secure a clear picture of the disposition

of the German forces. SAMSONOW himself was also in the dark as to the forces opposing him and the German intentions. His first energetic advance was correct. He suspected, as did the Army Group Headquarters and the Supreme Russian headquarters, that the German Eighth Army was in rapid retreat toward the VISTULA.⁽⁹²⁾ He cannot be censured for persisting in this idea even when he saw German troops being assembled on his left flank, in the vicinity northwest of USDAU. For it was quite natural that if the Germans desired to withdraw behind the VISTULA, they would have to bend every effort to delay the left flank of the Russian Second Army which was closer to the VISTULA than the Germans were themselves. He concentrated sufficient forces on his left wing, therefore, so that he hoped to overcome a German attack. His conduct after he had been defeated on both flanks seems almost incomprehensible. After the VI Corps had been defeated at BOSSAU and after the German I Corps had made a break-through at USDAU the retention of the decision that the center now, as before, should attack, was a mistake and lead to the great debacle. Whether the psychology of the situation had anything to do with it, that RENNENKAMPF had won a victory and that therefore SAMSONOW could not bring himself to issue an order for a retreat, must remain conjecture.

The operation was made very easy for the German leaders by the interception of Russian radio messages. It is almost unbelievable that the Russians sent their combat orders by radio, in the clear, without realizing that our stations, especially the large, first-class

station at KÖNIGSBERG, could read them and transmit them to headquarters.

And so I should like to bring my little article about the BATTLE OF TANNENBERG to an end. I hope I have been able to show that the victory may be ascribed to no one man, and that it is useless to answer the question which is frequently (93) raised in newspapers and speeches: Who was responsible for the victory of TANNENBERG? by citing one name or another according to party prejudices. The battle was not conceived according to the so-called Cannae - Principle, as PROFESSOR HANS DELBRÜCK would have us believe, because at the outset one could not see that it would be possible to move the German east wing to engage in the envelopment. This possibility developed only during the course of the action as a result of the absolute inactivity of RENNENKAMPF. And so the battle became a Cannae.

The plan for the battle was conceived under the command and responsibility of GENERAL VON PRITTWITZ. The logical and unerring execution of this plan which lead to a great victory was brought about under the leadership and responsibility of GENERAL VON HINDENBERG.

EAST PRUSSIAN CAMPAIGN, 1914

STRATEGICAL MAP

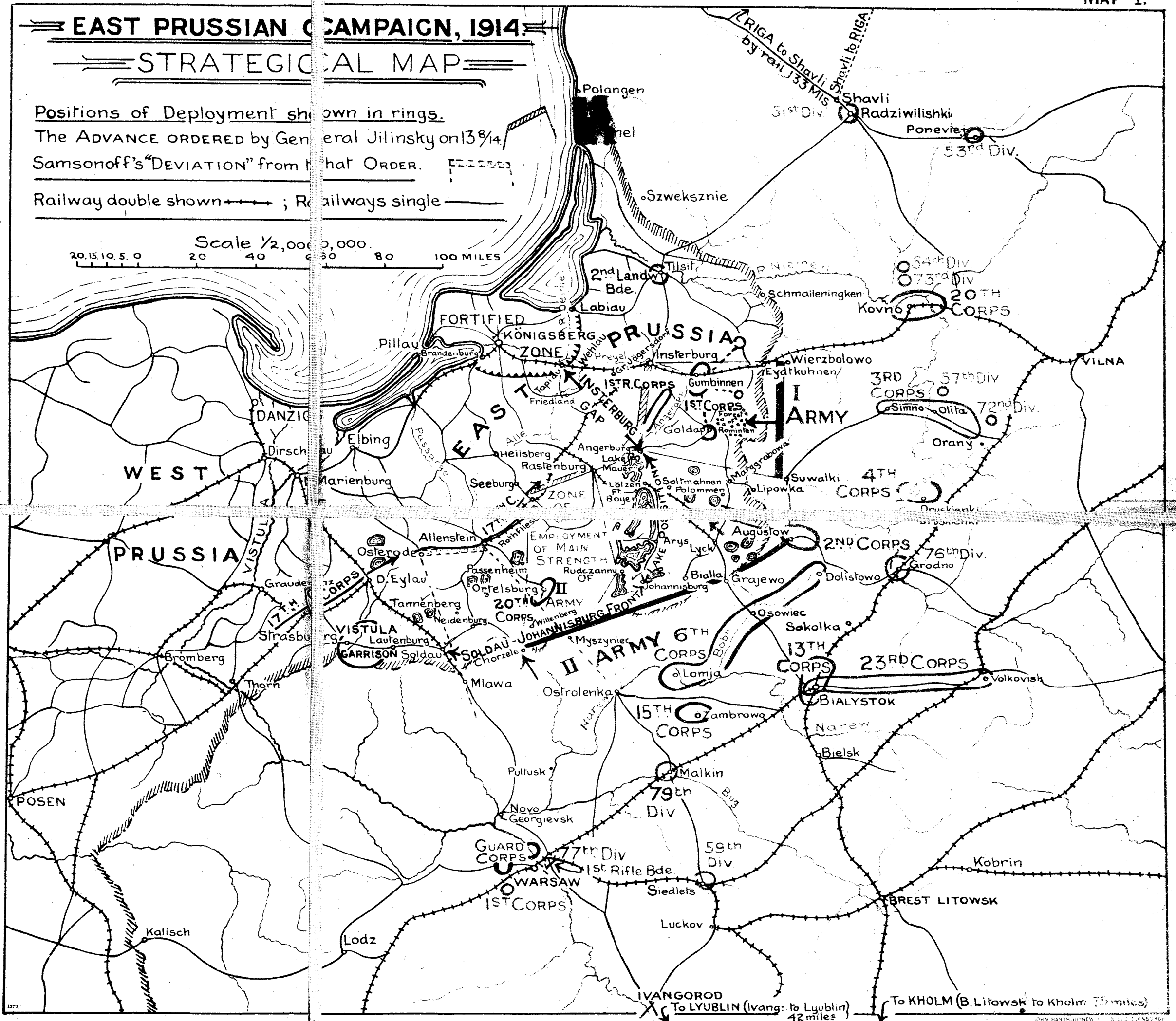
Positions of Deployment shown in rings.

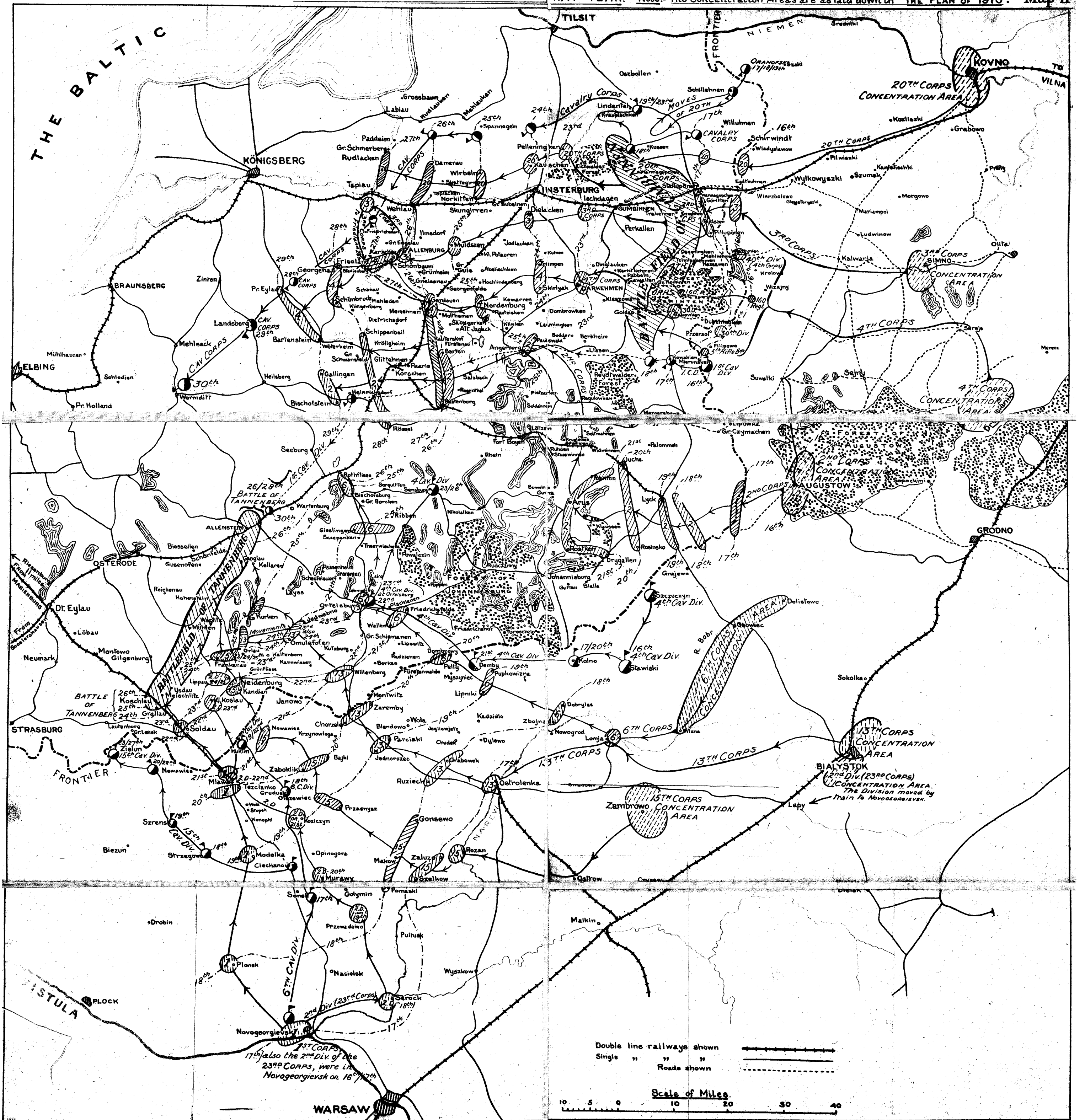
The ADVANCE ORDERED by General Jilinsky on 13th/14.

Samsonoff's "DEVIATION" from that ORDER.

Railway double shown ; Railways single

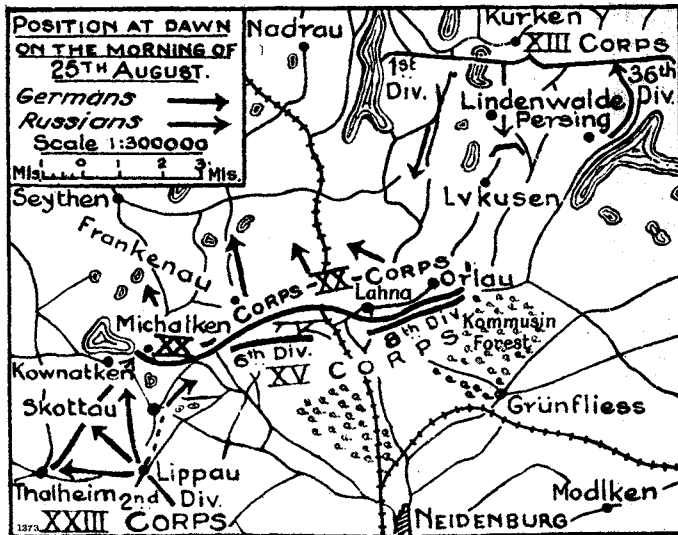
Scale 1/2,000,000
20 15 10 5 0 20 40 60 80 100 MILES





Map 3

BATTLE OF ORLAU - FRANKENAU.

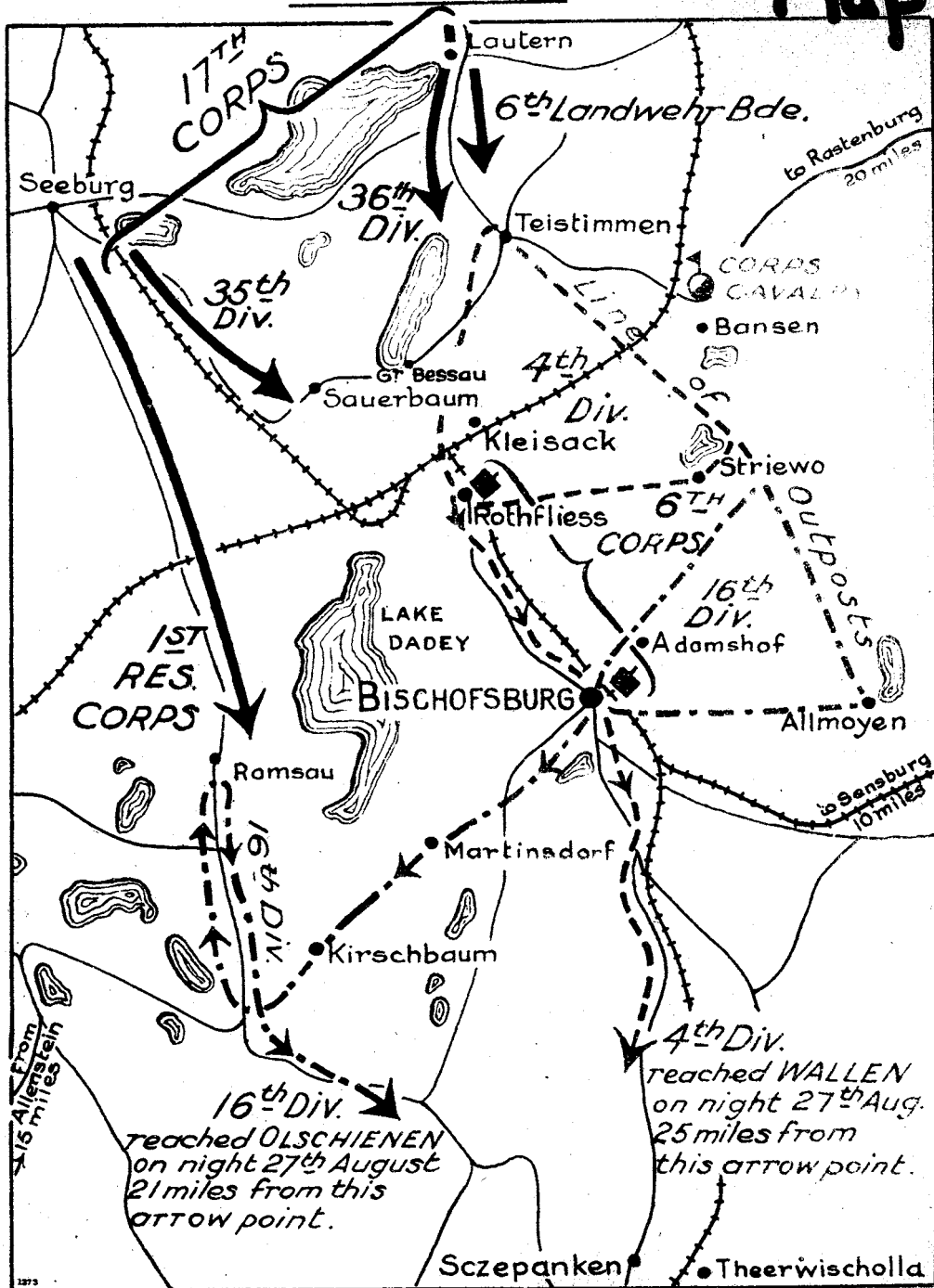


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DESTRUCTION OF THE RUSSIAN RIGHT FLANK

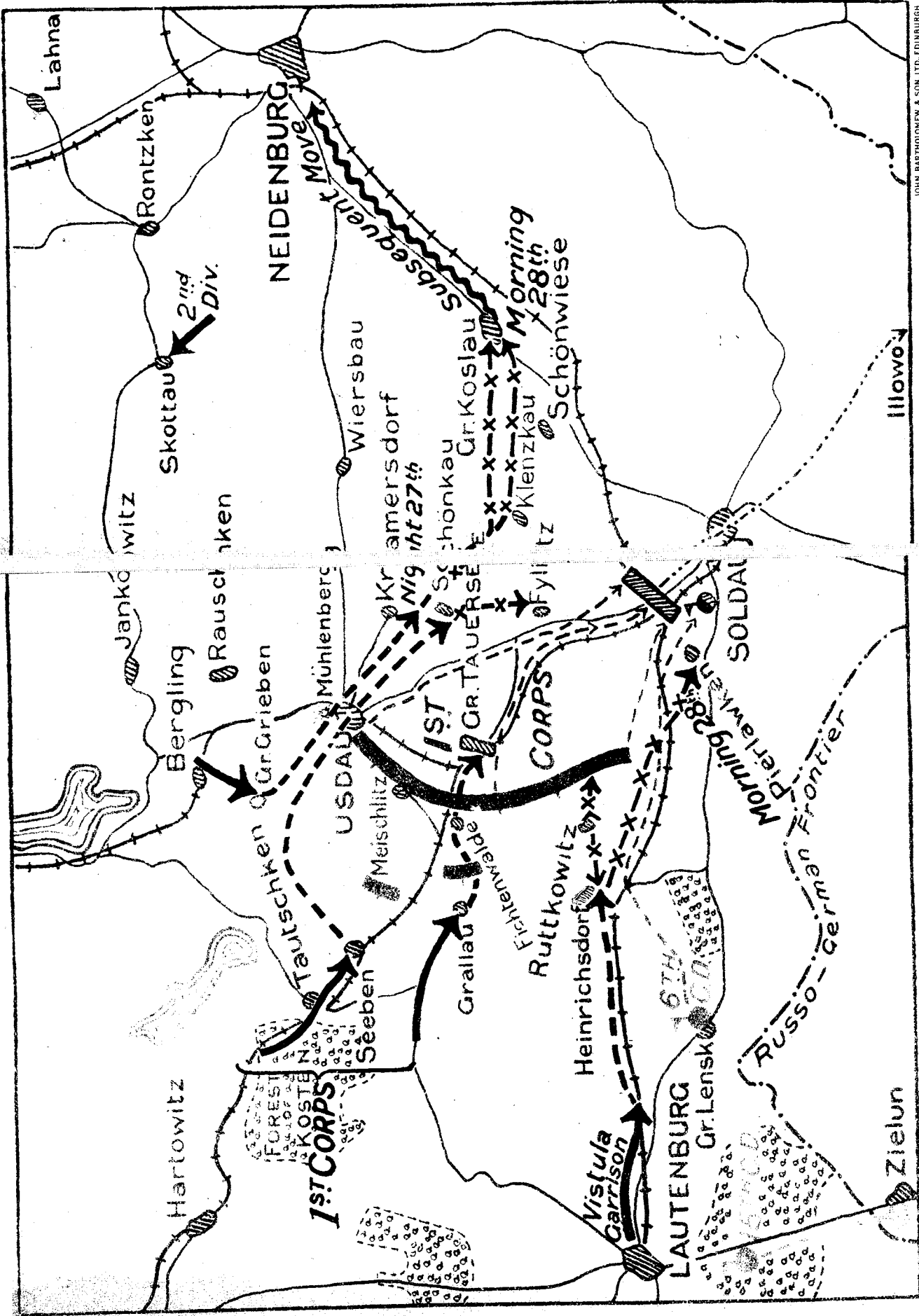
26TH AUG. 1914.

Map 4



Miles 1 ½ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Miles.

ATTACK ON RUSSIAN LEFT, 26/28TH AUG: 1914.



GERMAN

POSITION MORNING 26TH

MOVES TO NIGHT 27TH

MOVES MORNING 28TH

RUSSIAN

MOVES MORNING 26TH

MOVES TO NIGHT 27TH

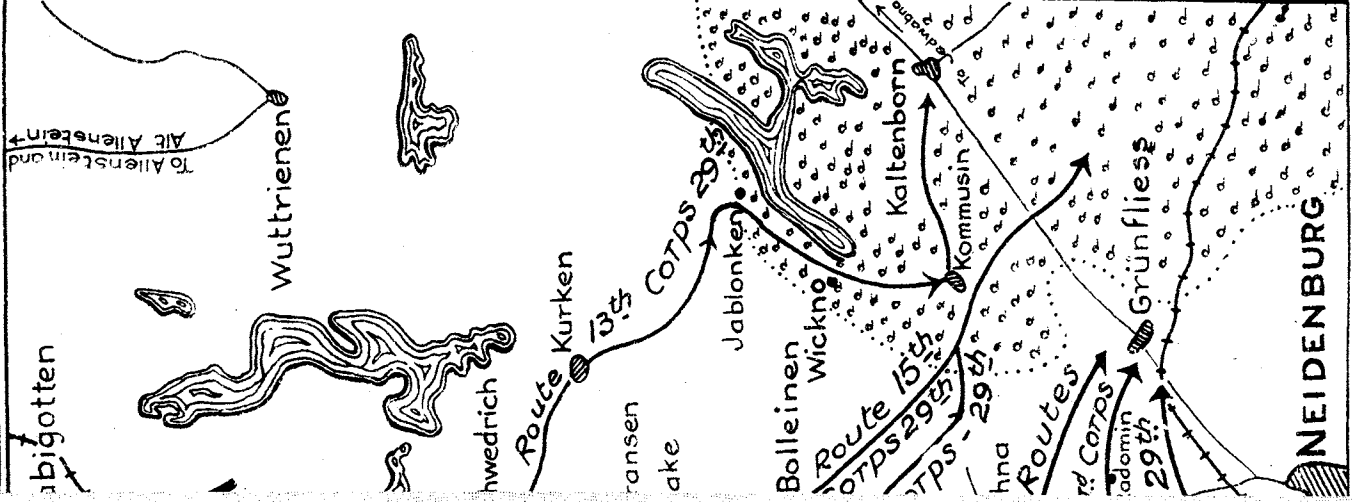
MOVES MORNING 28TH

SCALE OF MILES

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

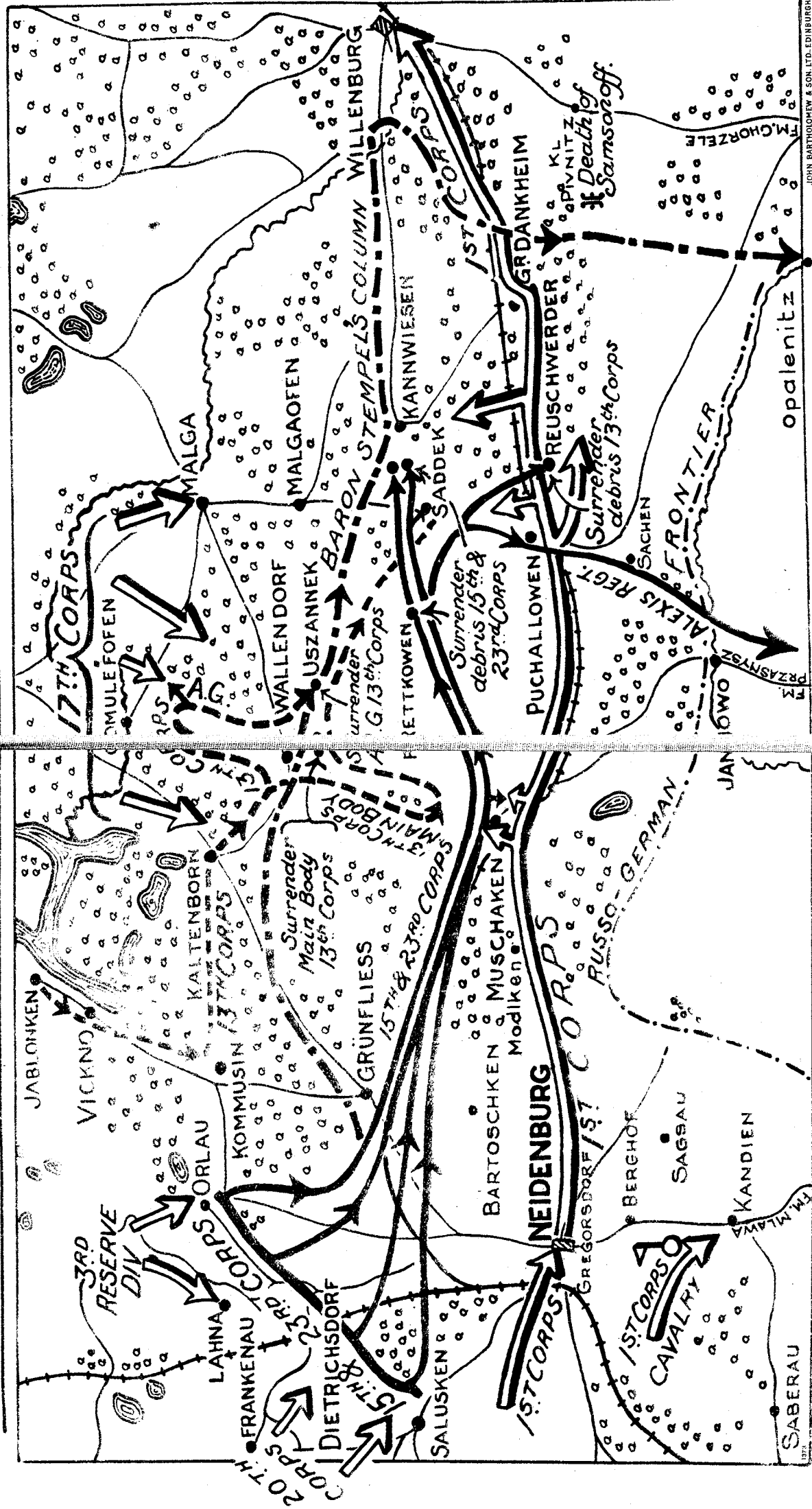
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THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE 2ND ARMY, 29TH-30TH AUG. 1914.



German's Movement
Russian's Movement

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