

3690-2050  
10/10/38

~~X-R-216931~~  
N-18389.19-A

PAMPHLET SECTION

ARCHIVES P  
710.5  
ACCESSION NO

MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE WORLD WAR

THE WESTERN FRONT

STAFF PRESENTATION

Naval War College  
Newport, R.I.  
7 November, 1938

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OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION  
"MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE WORLD WAR"  
"THE WESTERN FRONT"

Given by Colonel Clement H. Wright, U. S. Army,

Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

7 November, 1938

1. Causes. Conflicting interests; alliances.
2. German Militarism. Basis of foreign policy.
3. German General Staff. Perfected by von Moltke (the Elder) and von Walderssee.
4. Von Schlieffen. Character; influence on Army.
5. Development of Schlieffen Plan. Possible process of reasoning; consideration of factors.
6. Initial Decision. Hold Russia; overwhelm France; then, defeat Russia.
7. Western Front. Consideration of new factors.
8. Decision. Right of Armies, advance thru Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, encircle French left; Left, make strategic retreat; after French left had been rolled up, west to east, Left and Center to attack and complete French destruction.
9. German Forces. Offensive Right: 5 armies (35½ corps); Defensive Left: 2 armies (5 corps). Right to be reinforced from left.

10. Modifications in Plan. By von Moltke (the Younger):
  - (a) Respected Holland's neutrality, causing congestion on Right;
  - (b) Planned counter-stroke by Left after limited retreat;
  - (c) Sent  $4\frac{1}{2}$  corps to Russian Front from Right. Result: Right reduced to  $27\frac{1}{2}$  corps; no provision made for its reinforcement.
11. French Plans. 1880-1887, defensive; 1887-1914, offensive.
12. Joffre. Character; influence.
13. Plan XVII. Principal factors considered by Joffre.  
Decision: 4 armies near frontier, ready for Alsace-Lorraine offensive; 1 army in reserve, for use dependent upon German action; cavalry on north, to oppose advance thru Belgium. Also, British on left flank.
14. Outbreak of War. Summary.
15. Opposing Forces, Western Front. Mobilization; concentration.
16. Liege. Delays German advance.
17. French Offensive, Alsace-Lorraine. Repulsed; German left followed French and attacked without success.
18. French Offensive, Ardennes. Met Germans and were defeated.
19. German Invasion, Belgium. Right flank army (I Army) turned south and collided with British, instead of continuing southwest and outflanking them.

20. Battle of the Sambre. French defeated, but escaped due to German error.
21. Battle of Mons. German I Army defeated British.
22. New French Plan. New (6th) Army ordered formed near Amiens for eventual blow against German right flank whenever French left stopped retreating; strategic basis for Battle of the Marne.
23. German Reinforcement to Russian Front. 2 corps sent from Right wing, further reducing main effort on Western Front.
24. German Plan. Von Moltke ordered right and center to continue southwest; left, to continue attacks against French right.
25. Von Kluck Turns Southeast. But, von Kluck (I Army) turned southeast to cut off French retreating before German II Army (on his left). Schlieffen's outflanking maneuver ended.
26. Von Moltke Changes Orders. Misinformed, he approved I and II Armies' movements; directed right and center armies south to cut off French from Paris, and I Army to follow right rear of II Army and cover right flank.
27. Von Kluck Disobeys. Continued southeast because: (a) His army was farther advanced than II Army; (b) He thought von Moltke did not know this; (c) He believed his movement

southeast would envelop French; (d) <sup>He</sup> did not know French 6th Army threatened his right rear.

28. Situation, Sept. 4, 1914. Summary.
29. Preparations for French Attack. 6th Army (now near Paris), to move east, Sept. 5, to jump-off positions for attack east against German right flank; other Armies, to prepare for attack.
30. Comparison of Forces. French left now had advantage over German right.
31. Change in German Plan. Center, to attack south; I and II Armies, to face west and cover flank. (I Army must fall back.)
32. French Attack Begins. )
33. Retreat of German II Army. )
34. French Ninth and Fourth Armies. ) See Note.
35. End of Battle of the Marne. )
36. German Retreat. )

(NOTE: French attacked, Sept. 6-9. Von Kluck extricated his army and stopped French 6th Army, but 30-mile gap developed between German I and II Armies, into which British and French advanced. II Army retreated on advice of von Moltke's representative (Hentsch). This necessitated retreat of I Army on its right and other armies on its left. Retreat ended at the Aisne.)

37. Race to the Sea.

38. Stabilization.

39. Strategy. On Western Front during remainder of war, battles mostly were attempts to make tactical penetrations. Little chance for maneuver, but strategical reasons governed these tactical operations.

40. Conclusion. Tactical operations should not be judged by their local results alone; rather, their effect upon the strategical conception of the plan of operations upon which they are based should indicate the measure of their failure or success.

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MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE WORLD WAR

THE WESTERN FRONT

SLIDE 1.

SLIDE 2.

1. CAUSES OF THE WORLD WAR.

The World War was caused by numerous conflicting political, diplomatic, military, economic, industrial, psychological, and racial factors extending back through many decades prior to the conflict. Perhaps the last named factor -- the cause of race -- may have had as great an influence as any other for there is evident a distinct movement of races to expand their governments on lines closely related with their racial identities, as is the case with Germany today. Then, too, there were the various alliances of the European Powers based on obtaining a balance of power but designed for defensive purposes. As stated by one historian: "Germany thought she needed aid to enable her to retain the loot which she had taken from France; Austria-Hungary thought she needed assistance in the development of her Balkan policy; Italy thought she must have help in safeguarding Rome and in defending herself from possible French or Austrian aggression. So Germany and Austrian diplomatists formed a defensive alliance in 1879, and Italy, joining them in 1882, transformed it into

the Triple Alliance." To counter-balance this, France and Russia formed a secret defensive "Dual Alliance" in 1892; and Great Britain and France effected an "entente" in 1904. To this, Russia was admitted in 1907. "And between Triple Alliance and Triple Entente the balance of power was so neatly adjusted that from 1907 to 1914 one trivial occurrence after another almost upset it."

Added to these factors, we find numerous others such as conflicting territorial ambitions; colonial expansion of Great Britain and France to the detriment of Germany; expansion of rival military and naval establishments; tariff barriers; secret diplomacy; mutual distrust among nations; and excessive nationalism leading to the exclusion of international feelings and sympathies. In fact, the only wonder is that the conflict did not break out at an earlier date.

## 2. GERMAN MILITARISM.

The German victory in the Franco-Prussian War, which ended in 1871, welded together twenty-five independent or semi-independent Germanic states into an Empire under the leadership of Prussia, the most war-like of them all. In Germany and in France, as well, for the next forty-three years, General Staffs laid plans for a new conflict which both nations realized as inevitable. The Prussian tradition of militarism became the rock upon which German foreign policy

was built. When William II came to the throne, he declared: "The soldier and the army, not parliamentary majorities, have welded together the German Empire. My trust is placed in the army."

SLIDE 1.

SLIDE 3.

3. GERMAN GENERAL STAFF.

In theory, the Emperor himself held supreme command of the military and naval forces of the German Empire, but the real power over the armies rested with the Chief of the General Staff. For twenty years after the Franco-Prussian War, Field Marshals Count Helmuth Von Moltke and Von Waldersee, successively, held this post and devoted themselves to perfecting the most elaborate military organization of modern times, the German General Staff. With conscientious thoroughness, the Great General Staff made war plans based on the favorite hypothesis of a war on two fronts - Germany allied with Austria simultaneously opposed to France and Russia. The origin of the strategic plan which governed the German operations in the summer of 1914 dates from the last decade of the nineteenth century.

SLIDE 1.

SLIDE 4.

4. COUNT ALFRED VON SCHLIEFFEN.

Upon the retirement of Field Marshal von Waldersee

in 1891, Count Alfred von Schlieffen became Chief of the German General Staff. He combined in his person both the virtues and the limitations of the Prussian school of "blood and iron". He deserves remarkable prestige for the energy and single-minded intensity with which he devoted himself to the cause of his country's welfare and ruthlessly subordinated to it every other consideration. As an example of these qualities, he considered Sundays and holidays as days especially created for important work which required concentration and quiet, undisturbed by routine duties. General von Kuhl has related how it was Schlieffen's custom to send to him each Christmas Eve a theme establishing the conditions of an imaginary war for which Von Kuhl was to prepare a plan of operations. Von Kuhl writes: "He would have been very much surprised had he not received my completed work on Christmas night. The day after Christmas, he had prepared and I had received a continuation of the study."

Von Schlieffen was a profound student of the theory of war and of military history and wrote a number of authoritative works. "Cold, critical, utterly unsparing either of himself or his subordinates, he possessed none of the qualities calculated to inspire enthusiasm or affection in troops, maintaining his ascendancy by sheer intellectual superiority, but Schlieffen's influence on the mentality of the officers destined to lead the German armies of 1914 can hardly be exaggerated."

SLIDE 1.

SLIDE 2.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN.

Before describing the plan prepared by von Schlieffen which formed the basis for that used in 1914, let us try to visualize the process of reasoning which he might have used in formulating it. We must draw on our imaginations for we do not know exactly what information he had and we must also remember that his plan was a gradual development from constant study over a period of twenty-five years preceding his retirement as Chief of Staff on January 1, 1906. It is improbable that he made use of any particular form in estimating the situation, but we may depend upon it that with his thorough German mind he considered in a methodical and logical manner all factors bearing upon it and deduced a sound decision.

The MISSION of the combined German and Austro-Hungarian armies was to win a decisive victory over the opposing forces in order that Germany might become the dominant Power in Europe, if not in the whole world.

The PHYSICAL OBJECTIVE, then, of the armies of the Central Powers was to be the enemy's armies.

The ENEMY was assumed initially to be France and Russia. Whether any other nations would be involved is a matter for further consideration after the initial strategic de-

cision has been made. In 1914, the estimated total army strength in time of war was about 6,170,000 men for the Central Powers as compared with about 7,900,000 men for France and Russia. For the purpose of this initial estimate, disregarding the British, Belgian, and other forces which actually were mobilized in 1914, we find that in 1914 France and Russia together had a relative potential superiority over the Central Powers of nearly 13 to 10. It seems reasonable to assume that about the same relative potential strength existed in 1906 when von Schlieffen turned over his plans to his successor.

At first glance, this would seem to reduce greatly the chances of victory by the Central Powers, but there are other important factors which no doubt were considered by von Schlieffen. He believed the German troops to be superior to those of either enemy. Probably he considered his Austro-Hungarian allies at least equal in efficiency to the troops of Russia, except for the disparity in numbers, for his allies had the benefit of German influence in their training. With reference to Italy, the third member of the Triple Alliance, he foresaw her failure to assist her allies and did not count heavily on receiving her aid. As compared with the French Army, the physical standards set for acceptance were higher in the German army than in the French; also whereas the German Reserve was composed of men between 22 and 28 years of age, the French Reserve contained men between 23 and 37; and in the

German Landwehr, or Second Reserve, the ages were correspondingly less than in the French Territorials. "In 1914, in consequence, the units of the German Army of all three major classifications were composed of men who were younger, more vigorous and more carefully selected than the men of corresponding units in the French army, a factor of by no means negligible importance, but one that seems to be frequently overlooked in estimates of the relative military value of the two armies."

SLIDE 1.

SLIDE 5.

Another important factor favoring Germany was that she had "interior lines" of operation which, by the use of her strategic network of railroads and highways, would permit comparatively rapid concentration of force on either her Western or Eastern Frontiers, whereas there was little chance that France and Russia could reinforce each other on either frontier. In other words, the Central Powers would have Freedom of Action, at least in some degree, which might permit them to concentrate rapidly at any given point forces superior to the enemy.

Relative rapidity of mobilization and concentration of forces also favored the Central Powers. It was known that although Russia had a vast reservoir of potential manpower with which to back up her Regular Army, the peace strength of which was nearly twice that of Germany, the great distances

over which Russian troops would have to be moved and the difficulties of transportation would delay greatly her mobilization and the concentration of any considerable force near the German frontier. Von Schlieffen also probably believed that the German mobilization and concentration would proceed much more rapidly and efficiently than that of the French.

He undoubtedly weighed most carefully the factors outlined above and many others which there is not time to discuss. Some of these were relative political, economic, and psychological factors, comparative armaments and training, and the character of possible theaters of operations.

He considered, also, the various Courses of Action open to the Enemy and to the Central Powers, matters which lack of time will not permit us to discuss; and, eventually, arrived at his initial decision.

SLIDE 6.

6. THE INITIAL DECISION.

Von Schlieffen's initial decision was briefly as follows:

a. To hold the Russian Army in check by defensive operations, using a skeleton army composed of Reserve and Landwehr units assisted by such aid as might be afforded by Austro-Hungarian forces;

b. Simultaneously, to overwhelm the French Army by rapid and decisive use of the bulk of the German Army;

c. Then, to concentrate the bulk of the Central Powers' forces on the Eastern Front and defeat Russia before she could complete her concentration of superior strength on that front.

By this plan, von Schlieffen hoped to utilize to the utmost Freedom of Action of the bulk of his forces.

SLIDE 7.

7. THE WESTERN FRONT.

Having arrived at this initial and basic decision, we may picture him as he formulated his plans to overwhelm the French. On the Western Front, his TASK is to defeat decisively the enemy on that front with the utmost rapidity.

The German PHYSICAL OBJECTIVE then becomes the French Army and any allies which may be drawn into the war on that Front.

Again he considers the ENEMY, but possibly in greater detail than previously. He knows the peace-time location of French forces, and, particularly, the location and strength of their frontier forts. He knows the peace-time location and strength of German forces and, if not best suited to carry out the initial operations of his plan, he can make such changes in them during peace-time as may facilitate a rapid advance in force.

He studies again the geography of the Western Frontier and its defenses. The Franco-German frontier is narrow, extending

only about 150 miles from Switzerland to Luxemburg, and is defended by a series of strong French fortresses which had been erected in the two decades after the Franco-Prussian War. Beginning at the border of Switzerland and following it in a northerly direction, he finds, first, a short stretch of flat country; then comes to the fortified area about Belfort. The boundary then follows the Vosges Mountains for some 70 miles, to the westward of which is the fortified area of Epinal. North of the Vosges, there is a comparatively open space of forty miles, beyond which the frontier is guarded by the fortified Toul-Verdun area which faces the German fortified region of Thionville-Metz. To the northward, there lie Luxemburg and Belgium. In southeastern Belgium, the wooded Ardennes Mountains form an obstacle to an advance on France. Farther north, the terrain is flat. He finds, also, that the border between France and Belgium from Mezières to Dunkirk is relatively undefended by French strong points.

SLIDE 7.

SLIDE 8.

Considering these features from the viewpoint of a German advance into France, he finds along the Franco-German border only three reasonable avenues of approach. The fifteen mile plain between Switzerland and Belfort seems too narrow for an advance in force; furthermore, the French forces about Belfort

would threaten its northern flank. The gap south of Nancy, also, seems restricted and an advance through it would be subject to attack from flank and rear from troops in the Epinal-Belfort area. Farther north, lies a much traveled route from the Rhine Valley into France to the westward of Metz, but it is vulnerable to attack from the vicinity of Verdun; also, it lies close to the neutral borders of Luxemburg. Across Holland, Luxemburg and Belgium there run several railroads into France and many highways. Particularly across Belgium, the terrain favors a rapid advance, there being many roads, comparatively few natural obstacles, and room for maneuver. As already stated, an advance into France from across the Belgian border would find a comparatively unfortified French frontier.

We may imagine that Von Schlieffen tentatively decides that his most favorable geographical direction of effort lies through Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg, striking to the rear of the strongly fortified Verdun area. These being countries whose neutrality is guaranteed by the Great Powers, he must then consider the effect of violation of their neutrality. He undoubtedly expected Belgian resistance to invasion, but it is known that he did not expect as great resistance as later developed. He did, however, predict that Great Britain would live up to her treaty agreements when Belgian neutrality was violated and, also, that 100,000 British troops would cooperate

with the French on the left of their line. He, therefore, must again compare the German strength with that of the Allied Forces, including Great Britain and Belgium, and, possibly Holland, to determine whether the Consequences as to Cost would permit his adopting this plan. Time does not permit further discussion of this consideration nor of many other factors von Schlieffen must have taken into account, including the important matter of Courses of Action open to the Enemy, except to mention that he did foresee that the main French concentration would be between Verdun and Belfort and that the French would direct an initial offensive into Alsace-Lorraine.

SLIDE 9.

8. DECISION.

His DECISION was to make a wide enveloping maneuver by a right (north) wing of overwhelming strength, while the left and center were to remain temporarily on the defensive. The right wing was to advance through Holland and Belgium, north of the wooded Ardennes, and west of the Meuse River, thus avoiding the fortified eastern French frontier, with the objective of encircling the French left (northwest) wing and rolling it up from west to east against the line of the Moselle. To offset the expected initial French attack against Alsace-Lorraine, he planned that his left at first would execute a strategic retreat, offering only enough resistance to keep the

enemy occupied and to prevent any serious diversion of French forces against his main attack. After his right had rolled up the French left wing from west to east, then, and then only, would the German center and left make a frontal attack to complete the enemy's destruction.

9. GERMAN FORCES.

He planned to use seven field armies, five of which, aggregating  $35\frac{1}{2}$  corps, 7 cavalry divisions, and 16 Landwehr brigades, were to concentrate along the border of Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg, and were assigned the offensive part of the program. This Offensive Group of Armies was to concentrate in three groups and a flank guard, as follows: Northern Group (I and II Armies), 16 Corps and 5 Cavalry divisions; Center Group (III Army),  $6\frac{1}{2}$  Corps; Southern Group (IV and V Armies), 8 Corps and 2 cavalry divisions; Flank Guard, 5 corps. The remaining two armies (VI and VII) were to constitute a Defensive Left Wing Group, aggregating only 5 corps, 3 cavalry divisions, and  $10\frac{1}{2}$  Landwehr brigades, and were to concentrate and hold defensively between Metz and Switzerland. Foreseeing the need of providing strong covering forces on the right, if the Belgian forts made great resistance, he planned for possible reinforcement of his right wing by withdrawing two army corps from his defensive wing whenever it became necessary to do so; also, by providing a second

echelon of six newly-formed Ersatz Corps (supernumerary reservists). These reinforcements were to protect lines of communication, besiege fortified places, and otherwise provide Freedom of Action for the main body of his right wing.

SLIDE 10.

SLIDE 9.

10. MODIFICATIONS IN THE PLAN.

In 1906, von Schlieffen was succeeded as Chief of Staff by Von Moltke, a nephew of the illustrious Prussian Commander. During the years 1906 to 1914, the von Schlieffen Plan continued as the basis for war plans, but Von Moltke introduced many modifications with unfortunate results and in so doing lost sight of the basic principles which governed its conception. His first modification was his determination to respect the neutrality of Holland. This involved important

SLIDE 11.

SLIDE 9.

military complications. It necessitated crowding the concentration of the two armies on the right into the area about Aix-la-Chapelle; and the convergence of the right army from a front of twelve miles to a front of two thousand yards while passing through the Aix-la-Chapelle defile, and its subsequent deployment to a twelve-mile front before further advance; thus increasing the problems of mobilization, logistics, and

supply at the most critical part of the German line. It required, also, the prompt reduction of the Belgian fortress of Liege before beginning the main advance, instead of turning that strong point from the north as Von Schlieffen had planned.

More important still was his alteration in the character of the mission assigned the two left-wing German armies. He could not reconcile himself to the surrender of German soil, even temporarily, so he sought to limit the strategic retirement of his left wing and to prepare to meet the expected French offensive into Alsace-Lorraine by a counter-stroke. To provide the necessary forces for this counter-stroke, he omitted from the plan the contemplated reinforcement of his right wing by two army corps from the left; and planned to concentrate near Metz the Ersatz troops which Von Schlieffen had planned to use in Belgium.

SLIDE 12.

SLIDE 9.

Furthermore, when the reorganization of the Russian Armies after the Russo-Japanese War made it advisable to yield to Austria's request for aid, Von Moltke strengthened the German forces on the Eastern Frontier by drawing  $4\frac{1}{2}$  army corps from the right wing armies. As a result, when war began, the five armies of the German offensive right wing aggregated only  $27\frac{1}{2}$  army corps instead of  $35\frac{1}{2}$ , and had no provision for reinforcement or for support from a second echelon. And, as will be discussed later, the right wing was still further reduced in

strength on August 25th (twenty-two days after the invasion of Belgium began) by the transfer of one army corps, each, from the Northern Group and from the Center Group to the Russian Front.

Although the German plan of operations of 1914 is generally known as the "Schlieffen Plan", it may well be doubted if General von Schlieffen would have acknowledged it as such. It is said that as he lay on his death-bed in 1913, his last words were: "Make the right wing strong."

SLIDE 7.

11. FRENCH WAR PLANS.

Following the disastrous defeats of the French Army in 1870 and 1871, there was brought about a complete reorganization of the French military establishment. Although every effort was made to return to the tradition of the victorious armies of Napoleon, the French General Staff had no illusions as to the army's capacity for offensive action. Consequently, Plan I, the first of a long series of Franco-German plans, which was adopted in 1880, provided for a purely defensive resistance along the frontier.

In 1887, after the completion of the strong defensive areas close to the frontier, the conservative, defensive policy was discarded. In Plan VIII, a general offensive was to be directed against Alsace-Lorraine with the recovery of these lost provinces as the initial and primary objective. Thereafter,

throughout the succession of plans, the offensive was the keynote of French strategy.

In 1911, the relations between France and Germany were close to the breaking point. Plan XVI, then in force, established the main French assembly area near the German frontier preparatory to invading Alsace-Lorraine, and took little account of the possibility of a German attack from the north -- the very plan which had already been adopted by Germany. General Michel, Vice President of the Superior War Council, thought Plan XVI fraught with danger. As the result of the maneuvers in 1910, he was convinced that the Franco-German frontier was unsuitable for decisive operations and concluded that the main conflict would be fought farther to the north. He submitted to the Minister of War a plan calling for a regrouping of the French armies by concentrating 1,000,000 men between Lille and Reims and correspondingly reducing the forces along the Franco-German frontier. This plan did not abandon taking the offensive at the start of the war but did contemplate such offensive being made toward Germany through Belgium. For various reasons, important ones of which were the proposed drastic reorganization of the army at what appeared to be a critical period, and a slower mobilization resulting from reorganization, Michel's plan was not adopted. His post of Vice President of the Superior War Council was abolished and a new post, that of Chief of the Gen-

eral Staff of the Army, was created, of which the incumbent automatically became Commander-in-Chief in time of war.

SLIDE 7.

SLIDE 13.

12. GENERAL JOFFRE.

General Joffre was appointed Chief of Staff on July 28, 1911. He was a veteran of the War of 1870, with a long record of distinguished accomplishment. Since 1909, he had been a member of the Superior War Council and Director of the Services of the Rear, a post which had given him ample opportunity to become familiar with the problems of mobilization, transportation, and supply. Without friction but with great firmness, as Chief of Staff, he dominated the Superior War Council. His decisions were rarely questioned and never disapproved and he became France's supreme military authority. He prepared a new war plan, Plan XVII, which controlled the concentration and early operations of the French Armies in 1914.

13. PLAN XVII.

We have not time to attempt to visualize General Joffre's estimate of the situation which led up to his preparation of Plan XVII. We will, however, consider some of the principal factors which must have influenced him in its development.

The MISSION of the French Armies may be assumed to be to defeat the German Armies in order to regain the "Lost Provinces", and to regain the prestige of France as a military power which was lost during the Franco-Prussian War.

The initial PHYSICAL OBJECTIVE was to regain Alsace and Lorraine. Defensive operations, alone, could not attain this objective; hence, from the outset, the campaign was to be of-  
fensive in character. Furthermore, an agreement had been reached with Russia in 1911 to the effect that in the event of war, the French and Russian armies would cross the frontiers on the sixteenth day after mobilization and would pursue a vigorous offensive.

The reorganization of the Russian army and a closer understanding with the British General Staff, developments during the period since Plan XVI had been adopted, gave rise to the belief that France could reasonably expect more cooperation from Great Britain and Russia. Improved diplomatic relations with Italy indicated that the latter country might be unwilling to join Germany and Austria against Great Britain and France. This permitted some modification in plans for defense of the Franco-Italian border.

SLIDE 5.

Improved railway communications in eastern France permitted concentration of troops closer to the German frontier. On the

other hand, the German railways had been improved near the Belgian border and there were other indications which might have led to the belief that Germany planned to march across Belgium.

General Joffre believed that the French and German armies would assemble face to face, separated at most by a few days' march, and that heavy fighting would follow almost immediately after mobilization; also, that the war would be of short duration.

Among Courses of Action open to the Enemy, there appeared to be the following:

SLIDE 7.

SLIDE 14.

1. To drive back the French to the north by an attack on the front; Epinal-Toul, combined with a secondary attack to the west of Metz.

2. Using the fortified area south of Metz as a mask, to pivot on Metz and swing through Belgium against the French left.

3. To crush the French forces between the Vosges and Nancy, followed by an advance through Belgium and an attack along the Meuse below Verdun.

SLIDE 7.

SLIDE 15.

4. To take the offensive against Russia combined with a defensive attitude on the Western Front.

SLIDE 7.

With reference to a German invasion of Belgium, Joffre did not believe that they would go north of the Meuse because such a move, it was thought, would make the attack too weak by over-extension of the front.

In considering Courses of Action open to France, Joffre advocated, in 1912, a French advance through Belgium and Luxembourg, pointing out the advantages of taking the initiative in that direction, and suggesting that it might be feasible to make previous arrangements with Great Britain and Belgium for this action. This was vetoed by President Poincare because it would probably align Belgium against France and would surely alienate Great Britain. In fact, in November, 1912, Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of Staff of the British Armies, notified Joffre that Great Britain would join Germany if France violated Belgium's neutrality. Such action would be very disadvantageous to France -- the Consequences as to Cost would be too great; on the other hand, the violation of Belgium's neutrality by Germany would surely bring Great Britain and Belgium to France's aid -- a great advantage to the latter country.

SLIDE 16.

General Joffre's DECISION, following the tradition of Plan XVI and its predecessors, was to concentrate the main body of the French armies in the region of the German frontier with a view to taking the offensive into Alsace and Lorraine upon the completion of the concentration.

Four Armies, the First, Second, Third, and Fifth, were to concentrate in that order from south to north with headquarters respectively at Epinal, Moufchateau, Verdun, and Rethel, forming the first line and furnishing troops to cover the mobilization. The Fourth Army, with headquarters at St. Dizier, was to be in reserve, prepared to move into the line between the Third and Fifth Armies if the enemy advanced through Belgium, or between the Third and Second Armies if the Germans invaded Switzerland. In rear of each flank, there was to be a reserve of three divisions so located as to protect the flanks of the zone of concentration. The cavalry corps was to concentrate near Mezières ready to move into southern Belgium to oppose the Germans if their north wing entered that country. Although not officially included in the plan, there was an understanding with the British General Staff which provided for concentrating the British Army in the area about Le Cateau.

It will be noted that Plan XVII was a plan of CONCENTRATION rather than a plan of OPERATIONS. Whereas the German Plan actually prescribed the operations to be undertaken, the French plan left the Commander-in-Chief freedom to take such action as might be indicated by the situation after the concentration had been completed.

The provision of a strategic reserve so located as to permit its use to assist in opposing a German advance against either flank was intended to increase his Freedom of Action.

SLIDE 17.

Upon completion of the concentration, on the thirteenth day of mobilization, Joffre declared in general terms his intention to take the offensive, as follows:

"Whatever the circumstances, it is the Commander-in-Chief's intention to advance with all forces united to the attack of the German armies.

"The action of the French armies will be developed in two major operations: one, on the right, in the country between the wooded district of the Vosges and the Moselle below Toul; the other, on the left, north of the line Verdun-Metz.

"These two operations will be closely connected by forces operating on the Haute de Meuse and in the Woivre."

In following out this plan, it was hoped to secure such initial successes as to imperil the German armies in the north.

If the French attacks proved unsuccessful, a defensive stand would be made on the front: Belfort-Nancy-Verdun-Charleville. Should this line give, a further stand could be made behind the line of the Aisne, the Oise, and the Somme. It was expected, also that Russian attacks on the Eastern Front would necessitate the withdrawal of German forces from the west and thus weaken that front so as to permit the chance of a decisive defeat of the Germans there.

SLIDE 2.

14. OUTBREAK OF WAR.

On June 28, 1914, the Austrian Crown Prince was assassinated at Sarajevo. Austria, claiming this to be a Serbian plot, sent that country an ultimatum on July 23, demanding unconditional acceptance within forty-eight hours. Russia, France, and Great Britain tried to obtain an extension of time for international negotiations, but Austria refused. When Serbia could not accept all the terms, Austria declared war on July 28. Three days later, Russia began to mobilize and refused to cease upon demand of Germany, so the latter declared war on Russia August 1.

Italy decided that Germany and Austria were aggressive and, therefore, that she was not bound by the terms of the Triple Alliance to assist them. On August 2, France and Germany began mobilization; and the latter moved forces toward Belgium and Luxemburg, demanding permission to cross unopposed

into France. Belgium refused, and asked Great Britain for aid. The next day, August 3, Germany invaded Belgium and declared war on France, blaming the war on the latter country. On August 4, France declared war on Germany, and Great Britain sent an ultimatum to Germany requiring assurance that Belgian neutrality would be respected. This Germany refused on the grounds of "military necessity"; so, on August 5, Great Britain announced that a state of war existed and began mobilization.

By August 13, the combatants were Germany and Austria-Hungary on one side, against Russia, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro on the other.

SLIDE 18.

15. OPPOSING FORCES ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

The leading armies in Europe were modeled after the German Army. Infantry divisions -- the basic units -- were approximately the same size, each totaling about 18,000 men. Divisions were organized into army corps. Normal German and French corps each consisted of two infantry divisions, and of corps troops composed of certain combat units, auxiliary troops, and trains. A German corps totaled about 42,500 men; a French corps, about 40,000. Cavalry divisions varied in strength between 4,000 and 6,000. The German cavalry division totaled about 5,200; the French, about 4,500. Field armies had no fixed

composition or strength. They consisted of two or more army corps, such additional artillery, cavalry, aviation, and other combat units as might be required by the situation, and the necessary auxiliary troops and trains.

Germany mobilized about 2,500,000 men, which were organized into eight armies, four cavalry corps, an Army Detachment, and Fortress Troops. On the Western Front, she concentrated her armies in the following order from north to south: First (von Kluck), 230,000; Second (von Bulow), 309,000; Third (von Hausen), 175,000; Fourth (Grand Duke Albrecht of Wurttemberg), 217,000; Fifth (Frederick Wilhelm, Crown Prince of Prussia), 243,000; Sixth (Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria), 243,000; and Seventh (von Heeringen), 133,000; on the south flank, the Alsace Detachment (von Deinling). The Eighth Army (von Prittwitz) was concentrated on the Russian Front.

France mobilized about 2,689,000 men, which were organized into five armies, a cavalry corps, and fortress troops. She concentrated her armies as follows from south to north; the First Army (Dubail), 256,000; Second (de Castelnau), 200,000; Third (Ruffey), 168,000; and Fifth (Lanrezac), 254,000. The Fourth Army (Langle de Cary), 193,000 was in general reserve to the west of the Third Army.

Belgium mobilized about 117,000 men, organized into six divisions and a cavalry division. The fortresses of Liege,

Namur, and Antwerp were manned and the remainder of the troops used for mobile defense east of the line: Brussels-Antwerp.

Great Britain mobilized her Expeditionary Force of about 100,000 men organized into five divisions and one cavalry division. This force, commanded by Sir John French, moved to France between August 12 and 17, and concentrated near Mauberge by August 20.

Upon completion of the concentration of opposing forces on the Western Front, Germany had 73 infantry divisions (active, Reserve, and Ersatz) and 10 cavalry divisions, opposed to  $71\frac{1}{2}$  infantry divisions (active and Reserve) and 13 cavalry divisions of the Allied French, British, and Belgian Forces. These totals do not include Landwehr Brigades guarding German lines of communication, and garrisons of French and Belgian fortresses.

SLIDE 19.

While this concentration was taking place, other armies were concentrating on other fronts; the German VIII Army, in East Prussia, facing two Russian armies across the border; three Austro-Hungarian armies, in Galicia, opposed to four Russian armies in southern Poland; and the other three Austro-Hungarian armies along the Serbian boundary, opposed by three Serbian armies and the small Montenegrin army.

16. LIEGE.

SLIDE 11.

SLIDE 20.

The essence of the German Plan was Concentration of Force, and Speed; hence, any conditions interfering therewith were to be brushed aside as rapidly as possible. Therefore, elaborate plans had been made before the war for the speedy reduction of the fortress of Liege. Six infantry brigades, one cavalry corps, and some 210 mm. mortars had been assigned this mission. Under the command of General von Emmich this force crossed the frontier and moved on Liege. On August 5, after General Leman, commanding the fortress had refused to surrender, the bombardment began. Infantry assaults that afternoon and night failed to make much headway, so von Bulow sent in reinforcements. The city was taken on August 7, but the last fort was not surrendered until August 16, and then only after several days of continuous bombardment by 420-mm. guns and the use of further reinforcements. It had taken eleven days, instead of forty-eight hours as expected, and the expenditure of men and ammunition was beyond all expectations.

SLIDE 11.

SLIDE 21.

The actual delay in the development of German plans occasioned by this magnificent resistance probably will always

remain in doubt. Opinions differ widely, varying from a few hours to ten days. "In Germany the first day of mobilization was August 2, and whatever advantages may have been gained by preparatory measures, there seems no question that the German right-wing armies could not have completed their concentration before the 13th. Certainly, though they might have advanced as far as the Meuse, it can hardly be supposed that they would have undertaken a further march which might have brought them into conflict with substantial Allied forces before their own effectives were complete. It seems fair to say, therefore, that the defense of Liege did not retard the march of the main body into Belgium by more than forty-eight hours."

SLIDE 22.

17. FRENCH OFFENSIVE IN ALSACE-LORRAINE.

While German forces were still attempting to reduce Liege, the French mobilization and concentration continued rapidly and efficiently, and Joffre made ready to open his campaign with a great offensive in Lorraine. No major operations marked the first eleven days of hostilities. On August 7, a French detachment from the First Army invaded Alsace and occupied Mulhouse, but within four days had been forced by German attacks to return to its starting point. This incident caused Joffre to make the first major readjustment of his forces. The operation had been too far from First Army Headquarters for proper control; hence, Joffre subdivided the First Army

and formed a force, approximately equal to three corps, designated as the Army of Alsace, under General Pau.

SLIDE 17.

On August 3, Joffre issued the general instructions already quoted, which form the key to the French strategy. Based on two assumptions -- both erroneous -- that his First and Second Armies faced not more than six corps and that the principal German concentration was near Thionville-Metz, these instructions ignored wholly the possibility of a German advance west through Belgium beyond the Meuse.

His First Army was to strike north across the frontier, with Sarrebourg as its initial objective, to drive the German forces there assembled east into Lower Alsace near Strasbourg. The western flank of the First Army was to be protected by the simultaneous advance of three corps of the Second Army towards Dieuze and Chateau Salins, while the eastern flank was to be covered by the northern movement of the Army of Alsace. A reserve was provided near Nancy to meet any German counter-stroke.

Von Schlieffen had anticipated nearly ten years before almost exactly the offensive ordered by Joffre. To meet the expected French attack, the German VI and VII Armies, forming a group under Prince Rupprecht, prepared to fight defensively as von Schlieffen had planned; the VI Army extended from near

the Nied River on the west to Saverne; the VII Army was to protect Alsace.

On the morning of August 14, the First and Second French Armies advanced, but the Army of Alsace was delayed because its reorganization after its set-back on August 7-11 had not been completed. When it did advance, it did so slowly and with great caution. Consequently, the right corps of the First Army had to be used to cover the right flank -- thus dissipating the strength of that Army. The Germans retired, as planned, but made considerable resistance. For four days, the French advanced slowly until, by the morning of August 20, they had reached the line: Pont-a-Mousson--Saarburg--Schirmeck--Mulhouse. Increasing German resistance and other signs indicated that the French were approaching the enemy main line of resistance from which a counter-stroke might be expected, but the French commanders underestimated the German strength and fighting powers, and believed they could break the attack. They seem to have forgotten Napoleon's maxim: "Never do what the enemy wants for the very reason that he wants it; avoid a battleground that he has reconnoitered and studied, and with even more reason, ground that he has fortified and where he is entrenched."

On that day, the German counter-offensive was made most vigorously. The left of the French Second Army, being threatened by strong forces moving south from Metz, was forced back. This uncovered the left of the First Army and caused it to re-

tire. Four days later, these armies were back on the line: St. Die--Pont-a-Mousson, approximately at their starting points.

The principal result of these battles was the effect on German strategy. Overdrawn accounts of the German victory reached Great Headquarters and von Moltke's most ardent hopes seemed to have been fulfilled. Prince Rupprecht's Chief of Staff pled for permission to make a vigorous attack which he thought would complete destruction of the French right, driving the French back across the Moselle between Toul and Epinal, one part southeast against the Swiss border, and turning the flank of the main French forces to the west. Von Moltke made a major change in the German plan. The primary defensive mission of his left wing, which would have permitted it to become a reservoir of reinforcements for the decisive right wing, was forgotten. The left wing took the offensive, and from August 25 to September 7 dashed itself unsuccessfully against the French defenses in the very region against which von Schlieffen had warned. This action even permitted Joffre to take from his right four army corps to oppose the advance of the German right wing.

#### 18. FRENCH OFFENSIVE IN THE ARDENNES.

With the advance of the First and Second Armies into Lorraine starting under conditions apparently satisfactory, Joffre turned his principal attention to preparing the second

major offensive contemplated by Plan XVII and his instructions of August 8, the offensive north of the line: Verdun--Metz. This was to be the main effort, with the objective of driving northward enemy forces in Luxemburg and near Thionville. If this and the Lorraine offensive were successful, Metz might be invested.

SLIDE 22.

SLIDE 17.

Initially, he planned to use his entire left wing--the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Armies. By August 14, there were indications of a German advance west of the Meuse which might threaten his left flank, so he ordered the Fifth Army to the northwest into the right angle formed by the junction of the Sambre with the Meuse at Namur and the Fourth Army from reserve into the Sedan--Mezières area. These movements were not completed until August 21.

On August 22, the French Third and Fourth Armies advanced northeast into the Ardennes Forest with the initial objective of securing the line: Arlon--Neufchâteau. On the same day, the German III and IV Armies moved southwest into the same forest. After two days of desperate fighting, the French were driven back.

SLIDE 21.

19. INVASION OF BELGIUM.

After Liege fell, Von Moltke ordered the German right wing to advance. On August 18, the German I and II Armies, operating under von Bulow, were to move to cut off from Antwerp the Belgian forces holding the Gette River, while the III Army was to advance west on Namur. Before this operation was well started, the Belgians on the Gette withdrew to Antwerp. This caused Von Kluck to detach one corps to follow them and protect his right flank, thus further weakening the German right wing. The II Army, after advancing westward, turned southwest toward the Sambre to meet French forces located there; while the I Army continued toward the west. On August 20, von Moltke ordered that Namur be besieged and indicated a combined attack by the II and III German Armies against the French Fifth Army west of Namur. Although the British Expeditionary Force had completed its concentration south of Maubeuge on August 20 and had begun its advance toward Mons the next day, as late as the 20th Von Moltke did not believe there had been any important British landings in France and thought they would eventually be used near Lille (some 75 km. from Maubeuge).

On August 21, von Bulow's advance guards encountered Lanrezac's (Fifth Army) outposts on the Sambre and he ordered von Kluck to march south so as to bring him in line with his

own right and secure that flank while the II Army attacked the French. Von Kluck, bearing in mind his strategic mission under the Schlieffen Plan and, also, the German belief that the British would be used near Lille, wished to continue toward the southwest, but Von Bulow over-ruled his objections. This was an important and unfortunate strategic decision for the Germans. If von Kluck had continued toward the southwest, he would have struck outside the western British flank, instead of meeting them head-on, as he did, at Mons.

20. BATTLE OF THE SAMBRE.

On August 21, von Bulow's advance guards captured the bridges over the Sambre from Lanrezac's covering force and gained a foot-hold south of the river. He planned to consolidate his gains the next day and await the arrival of von Hausen's Army along the Meuse so that the two armies could make a combined attack.

SLIDE 23.

SLIDE 21.

Lanrezac counterattacked von Bulow on August 22, but failed, and fell back to positions on the heights some distance south of the Sambre. That night, the British reached Mons, their right being about ten kilometres from Lanrezac's left.

On August 23, von Bulow attacked Lanrezac, but did not gain much ground, so he appealed urgently to von Kluck and von

Hausen to converge against Lanrezac's flanks, the next day, while he attacked the front.

But von Kluck's Army was already in contact with the British, and von Hausen had issued orders for an advance southwest, on Givet, against Lanrezac's rear. However, von Hausen complied with the request, changed his orders, and prepared to attack toward the west. When the German II and III Armies attacked on August 24, only the French rear guards opposed them for Lanrezac's Army had escaped.

Lanrezac had learned that Namur had fallen, thus freeing German troops engaged in its reduction, and that von Hausen was at Dinant, threatening his right and rear; consequently, during the night August 23-24, he had withdrawn toward the south. He made no attempt to cooperate with the British and did not inform them of his intention to withdraw.

With reference to von Hausen's change in orders which enabled Lanrezac to escape possible destruction, Tynj says: "It was a strategical error of the first magnitude, for which vonBulow must bear the primary responsibility, that put beyond the reach of the German right wing armies the decisive victory they so eagerly sought."

SLIDE 24.

SLIDE 21.

21. BATTLE OF MONS.

On August 23, the British encountered von Kluck's Army near Mons. The ensuing battle was sanguinary, with the British giving ground stubbornly, and stopping for the night

SLIDE 25.

SLIDE 21.

just south of Mons. The next day, the British began the retreat from Mons.

SLIDE 26.

The general location of The Battle of the Frontiers-- a name applied to the battles in Alsace-Lorraine, in the Ardennes, on the Sambre, and at Mons during the period August 20th to 24th-- is shown in red on this slide.

SLIDE 27.

22. NEW FRENCH PLAN.

The general situation on August 23 is shown on this slide. That day saw the collapse of the French offensive in the Ardennes, the defeat of the Fifth Army south of the Sambre, the start of the British retreat from Mons, and the fall of Namur. These events brought to a close the first phase of the Campaign of the Marne and marked the final break-down of the French strategy based on Plan XVII. These events caused Joffre to draw up a new plan.

On August 25, he issued General Instructions No. 2, in which he directed the formation of a new army--the Sixth-- under General Manoury, to be concentrated on the Somme, east of Amiens. He believed this location was far enough to the west to place the army outside the German right flank so that it could eventually strike the enemy's outer flank from west to east after the French left had stopped retreating. He states: "Having been unable to carry out the offensive manoeuvre originally planned, future operations will be conducted in such a way as to reconstruct on our left a force capable of resuming the offensive by a combination of the Fourth and Fifth Armies, the British Army, and new forces drawn from the east, while the other armies hold the enemy in check for such time as may be necessary." This was the strategic basis upon which the Battle of the Marne was fought. It was not, however, possible to launch the offensive on the date or in the place originally planned.

Joffre also organized another army--the Ninth-- under General Foch and placed it near the French center.

### 23. GERMAN REINFORCEMENTS TO EASTERN FRONT.

In the meantime, the Russians had invaded East Prussia and von Prittwitz had suffered a reverse at the Battle of Gumbinnen. Von Prittwitz asked for help. As the situation on the Western Front, seemed very satisfactory to von Moltke, who had

received greatly exaggerated accounts of German victories; on August 25, he ordered the XI Corps from the III Army and the Guard Reserve Corps from the II Army to East Prussia. This

SLIDE 12.

further reduced the strength of the German right wing which was charged with the mission of making the main effort.

24. GERMAN PLAN.

Due to the detachment just mentioned and the necessity for making other detachments to besiege fortresses, particularly that at Maubeuge, the German right wing (I, II, and III Armies on August 26, consisted of only eleven army corps instead of the sixteen which had entered Belgium. Nevertheless, von Moltke

SLIDE 28.

adhered to his conception of von Schlieffen's strategy, and, on August 27, directed the five armies on the right and center to continue their offensive toward the southwest, while the two armies in the left wing were to continue their attacks against the line of the Moselle. The lines of advance ordered were as follows: the I Army towards the lower Seine, southwest of Paris, marching west of the Oise; the II, towards Paris; the III, towards Chateau Thierry, east of Paris; the IV, towards Epernay, still farther east; and the V, after crossing the Meuse near Dun, north of Verdun, towards the Marne between Chalons and Vitry-le-Francois. The VI and VII Armies, as one group, were first to parry

any French counterstroke in Lorraine or Alsace, or in case of a French retreat, were to force their way across the Moselle, between Toul and Epinal, advancing in the general direction of Neufchateau.

SLIDE 28.

SLIDE 29.

25. VON KLUCK CHANGES DIRECTION.

After defeating the British at Le Catcau on August 26, the German I Army continued its march southwest. Contact had been lost with the British and although the I Army encountered and drove back increasing numbers of French troops, von Kluck considered them as isolated detachments and became convinced that the time was at hand for the turning movement to the southeast designed to bring the Schlieffen Plan to consummation. In the meantime, he had been released from subordination to von Bulow and, for the first time, was a free agent.

SLIDE 30.

SLIDE 29.

About August 28, he wrote to von Bulow suggesting that the I Army should turn in a southeasterly direction while the II Army executed a corresponding change towards the south. In the meantime, von Holtke's directive had arrived which required

SLIDE 30.

the I Army to continue southwest towards the Seine southwest of

Paris. On August 30, he received from von Bulow a radio stating that the French had been defeated in decisive fashion that day near Guise and St. Quentin, and suggesting that von Kluck move southeast to exploit the success. If von Kluck carried out literally von Moltke's orders, he would assure the protection of the German right flank; but, he was convinced that there were no strong forces on his right and that there was no need to go farther southwest. By the night of August 30, his army had reached approximately the line of the Avre between Moreuil and Roye. If he followed von Bulow's suggestion, a sharp turn to the east would be required and there seemed to be little chance of cutting off the French if they were retreating rapidly and being followed by the II Army as indicated by von Bulow's message. Therefore, he decided to take a southeasterly direction, instead. He was somewhat disconcerted to learn, after he had issued orders for the change in direction, that the II Army would rest in position near Guise on the 31st and he began to doubt the decisive nature of von Bulow's victory. Nevertheless,

SLIDE 28.

SLIDE 31

he turned his army on August 31 and began to march towards Compeigne and Noyon, resolved to press forward, alone if necessary, to strike the flank and rear of the main French armies as they retreated.

These two slides show, respectively, the objectives of the German Armies as directed by von Moltke on August 27, and the lanes of advance actually followed by these armies, especially the change of direction begun by von Kluck's (I) Army on August 31.

For the next six days this remained von Kluck's primary objective, and his decision placed his Army on the path that ultimately led it into the area southeast of Paris and permitted the concentration of the French Sixth Army, undisturbed, outside the German right flank. "Quite unconsciously von Kluck thus put an end to any possibility of successfully carrying out the outflanking manoeuvre that had been the corner-stone of the Schlieffen Plan."

SLIDE 30.

SLIDE 32.

These two slides show in greater detail the movements of von Kluck's army during the period August 29-September 1.

SLIDE 31.

26. VON MOLTKE'S CHANGE IN ORDERS.

On August 30th, von Moltke had before him four important messages; namely, from the IV Army announcing that it had finally overcome French resistance and that the passages of the Meuse lay open; from von Hausen (III Army) suggesting that he march south so as to be closer to the IV Army; from von Bulow

announcing a "complete victory" at Guise--St. Quentin; and an intercepted message from von Bulow to von Kluck, suggesting that the latter turn east to cut off retreat. Von Moltke, therefore, modified his instructions and approved the actions of his army commanders, including a statement that "the movements undertaken by the I and II Armies conform to the intentions of the High Command."

SLIDE 33.

SLIDE 31.

On August 30 and September 1, he received only the most meagre reports from his two right-wing armies. With his attention focused on his center, he concluded that the decision would have to be obtained in the area between Paris and Verdun, into which the main French armies seemed to be retreating. He decided to reduce the scope of the enveloping movement and to abandon all thought of an immediate attack on Paris, instead directing the march of the II, III, IV and V Armies southward towards the Marne, while the I Army covered the right flank. Accordingly, he sent a radio to the right wing on the night of September 2: "It is the intention of the High Command to drive the French back in a southeasterly direction, cutting them off from Paris. The I Army will follow the II in echelon and will also cover the right flank of the armies."

SLIDE 33.

SLIDE 34.

27. VON KLUCK DISOBEYS.

By the evening of September 2, the I Army was between the Oise and the Marne, with its advance guards at Chateau Thierry. Von Bulow's II Army had advanced more slowly and was echeloned to the left rear of the I Army --- a full day's march behind the movements of the latter army. Von Kluck believed that a continuation of his march would accomplish the envelopment desired. Wholly ignorant of von Moltke's hope for a decisive victory by the centre armies, von Kluck believed that the second sentence of the radio; namely, directing him to follow the II Army in echelon, had resulted from incomplete or inaccurate appreciation of the relative positions of the I and II Armies. He, therefore, deliberately determined to ignore it and to continue his drive across the front of the German II Army in an effort to strike the French rear.

SLIDE 35.

28. THE SITUATION ON SEPTEMBER 4.

By September 4, the position of the armies from Verdun westward was as follows: the French Third Army, southwest of Verdun; the Fourth Army, on a front of about forty miles; the Ninth Army had been thrown into a gap which resulted from the retirement of the Fourth and Fifth Armies; the Fifth Army,

astride the Petit Moran to east and west of Montmiral; the British, on their left, occupying the line Colommiers to the eastern edge of the fortified area of Paris, but with a gap of about twelve miles from the left of the Fifth Army. The Sixth Army was northeast of Paris, facing east and north. It was subordinated to the orders of the Governor of Paris, General Gallieni. The Germans were in contact with the French all along the line, with one corps of von Kluck's Army opposite the gap between the Fifth Army and the British.

SLIDE 36.

SLIDE 35.

29. PREPARATIONS FOR FRENCH ATTACK.

On the morning of September 4, French aviators and cavalry reported to General Gallieni that von Kluck's Army was continuing its march southeast and leaving its western flank hourly more vulnerable to attack from Paris. Gallieni at once sent General Manoury a warning order to prepare to move the Sixth Army eastward, and notified Joffre of the situation. That night, Joffre issued orders directing preparations on September 5 for the attack which was to begin on the morning of the 6th. The Sixth Army was to concentrate northeast of Meaux ready to cross the Ourcq between Lizy-sur-Ourcq and May-en-Multien in the general direction of Chateau Thierry. The British Army, on the front: Changis-Coulommiers, facing east, was to be ready

to attack in the general direction of Montmiral. The Fifth Army, on the general front: Courtacon--Esternay--Sozanne, was to be ready to attack in a northerly direction. The Ninth Army was to cover the right of the Fifth.

SLIDE 26.

SLIDE 35.

30. COMPARISON OF OPPOSING FORCES.

In spite of the errors of the initial French plan of concentration, and the many difficulties of a two weeks' retreat, Joffre had succeeded in concentrating a numerical superiority against the German western wing. Comparing German and French strength in the west, on August 23, during the Battles of the Sambre and of Mons, the German I, II and III Armies aggregated  $24\frac{1}{2}$  divisions and 5 cavalry divisions (exclusive of 5 infantry divisions besieging Namur), opposed to only  $17\frac{1}{2}$  infantry divisions and four cavalry divisions of the French Fifth Army and the British. Two weeks later, at the Battle of the Marne, which we are about to discuss, the same German Armies aggregated only  $23\frac{1}{2}$  infantry divisions and 5 cavalry divisions, opposed to 41 infantry divisions and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  cavalry divisions of the French Fifth, Sixth, and Ninth Armies, part of the Fourth Army, and the British. Moreover, Joffre had provided reinforcements by using reservists from his depots and had thus replaced in large measure the French losses; whereas,

the Germans, whose unit strength had been reduced by at least fifty per cent by long marches and almost constant fighting, had not made such provision. Thus we see, a French concentration of force at the decisive point and freedom of action to use such force in the decisive direction of attack in contradistinction to the German failure in these respects.

The green line on this slide shows the approximate line of contact of opposing forces at this time.

SLIDE 37.

SLIDE 35.

31. CHANGE IN GERMAN PLAN.

It had become evident to von Moltke that the main bodies of the French Armies were retreating southward towards the Seine and that French troops were concentrating near Paris. It was apparent to him that von Kluck's Army was not providing adequate protection for the German right flank. Despite his growing fears for the safety of the right flank and communications, he had conveyed to von Kluck no hint of danger from the direction of Paris and no information of the general situation along the front. Based on the information at hand, von Moltke, on September 4, the very day that Joffre issued orders to prepare for attack, changed his plan.

On that day, he sent to von Kluck a message directing the I and II Armies to remain facing the eastern front of Paris;

the I Army, between the Oise and the Marne; the II Army, between the Marne and the Seine; and, the III Army to march on Troyes. That night, the German General Staff prepared orders for the Battle of the Marne, the plan of attack being as shown on this slide. Von Moltke had made a most drastic change--from the von Schlieffen envelopment to a penetration. The III Army, marching on Troyes, was to be ready to act according to the situation, either to support the I and II Armies, or to assist the left wing in their attack against the eastern group of French Armies.

At 7:00 a.m., September 5, von Kluck received von Moltke's message. His corps were already on the march and he decided to allow them to proceed to their assigned objectives. That afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch, Chief of the Intelligence Section of von Moltke's General Staff, arrived at I Army Headquarters with a copy of the attack orders, explained the situation to von Kluck, and insisted that he retrace his steps and take the position directed.

By that night, four of his corps were several miles south of the Marne and one corps was near Meaux, north of that river. Based on Hentsch's statement that, "There is no need for haste", von Kluck decided to devote two days to a gradual withdrawal, planning to be in position by late September 7.

SLIDE 38.

SLIDE 39.

32. THE FRENCH ATTACK BEGINS.

On September 5, the French 6th Army marched eastward towards its assigned jump-off positions along the Oureq. It collided with von Kluck's one corps (IV Reserve) then north of the Marne and never did reach its destination. Consequently, the decisive results Joffre had anticipated by the attack of the 6th Army became impossible of attainment.

The French attack was duly launched on September 6 and continued until late on the 9th. Von Kluck hastened the withdrawal of the rest of his army to oppose the 6th Army. He extricated his army from its perilous position, confronted and held the French 6th Army, and even attempted the envelopment of its north flank on the morning of September 9th. As late as 1:00 p.m., that day, he was satisfied with the situation even though he realized that the retreat of von Bulow, which had, in the meantime been ordered, was leaving a gap of thirty miles between the German I and II Armies. Early that afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch, the personal representative of von Moltke, appeared on the scene and gave directions for the I Army to retire in keeping with the forced retirement of the German armies farther to the east. Accordingly, von Kluck

issued orders for the retirement of his army towards the line: Soissons--Compoigne.

SLIDE 39.

33. RETREAT OF GERMAN II ARMY.

Reference has just been made to the retreat of von Bulow's II Army, which necessitated von Kluck's retreat. The responsibility for the decision to retreat has been the subject of much controversy since the war. Von Moltke's personal representative, Lieutenant Colonel Hentsch has been blamed by many for exceeding his authority. He was, however, cleared of this charge in 1917 by a military Court of Inquiry which he had requested.

On September 8, General von Moltke had no very definite information as to the real situation on his right. He did know, however, that there was a gap between his II and I Armies. He called a conference of his principal advisers. In the general discussion which followed, it appears to have been the consensus of opinion that the situation did not justify a retreat by the right-wing armies, but, on the contrary, that they should maintain their positions. Nevertheless, the gap between the armies, into which the British were slowly advancing, required von Moltke to consider the possibility of retirement. Realizing the lack of first-hand information, he decided to send Lieutenant

Colonel Hentsch to the front; at the same time authorizing him, in the event that a movement in retreat had already been initiated, to try to direct it in such a way as to close the gap between the armies--the I, to retire on the line: Soissons--Fismes (half-way between Soissons and Rheims); the II, simultaneously, to fall back behind the Vesle.

After visiting in succession the headquarters of the V, IV, and III Armies, Hentsch reached von Bulow's (II Army) Headquarters on the evening of September 8. The situation as known to von Bulow was far from satisfactory and at the ensuing conference, the trend of opinion seems to have been generally pessimistic, and the view accepted that unless some way could be found to close the gap, a retirement behind the Marne had become inevitable.

Early the next morning, Hentsch conferred again with the Chief of Staff, II Army, and others. In the light of the night's reports of the situation, the Chief of Staff expressed the belief that the II Army could hold its ground only provided that the I Army was able to disengage itself and retreat eastward along the north bank of the Marne and form a junction with the II Army. This appeared difficult, if not impossible; hence, it was decided then and there, for the safety of the II Army, that it should retire behind the Marne and, ultimately, behind the Vesle. It was agreed that Hentsch should go at once to I

Army Headquarters and bring about the retreat of that army in such a direction as would close the gap. Von Bulow was not present at this conference, but there seems to have been no doubt in the minds of those present that he would ratify the conclusion reached. Hentsch left without seeing him.

Later, von Bulow, learning that at about 8:00 a.m. the British were crossing the Marne, confirmed the decision and issued orders for the general retreat of his Army behind the Marne.

#### 34. FRENCH NINTH AND FOURTH ARMIES.

With reference to the French situation farther to the east, the Germans had developed an attack in force against the French Ninth Army, but Foch succeeded in maintaining his positions. On September 7, his left and center stood fast, but his right (XI Corps) was pushed back. The next day, the attack became more furious and the French XI Corps was repulsed. Eventually a counter-attack was organized on the right of the Ninth Army. It was not as strong as planned for there were insufficient reserves available. However, it turned out to be a "blow in the air", for it met no opposition--the German III Army being in full retreat. At noon on that day, September 9, von Hausen had learned that von Bulow, on his right, had begun his retreat. Von Hausen had no choice but to conform to the movement.

Farther to the French right, the Fourth Army had been engaged with the German IV Army and had been fairly successful in holding its ground as directed by Joffre. The arrival of the French 21st Corps permitted the French to take the offensive on the left of the Fourth Army, in a gap between it and the Ninth Army, and some progress had been made by the night of September 10. But, the situation was not so favorable on the right of the French Fourth Army. However, when dawn came on the 11th, all along the front of the Fourth Army, it was discovered that the German IV Army had broken contact during the night and retreated north.

SLIDE 26.

35. END OF THE BATTLE OF THE MARNE.

The Battle of the Marne was over. This campaign did not bring about the complete defeat of the German Armies, nor did it even accomplish all the immediate results hoped for by the French High Command. "Nevertheless it ranks deservedly as the greatest strategic victory of the whole conflict, for it put an end to the possibility of achieving a rapid decision in the west by the defeat of France which had been the basic idea of the German plan of operations at the outset of the war."

36. GERMAN RETREAT.

The German Armies continued their retreat and took up a position along the Aisne. The green line on this slide

shows the extreme limit of the German advance; the black line, the approximate front at the end of the German retreat, September 14. On September 12, von Falkenhayn replaced von Moltke as Chief of Staff and immediately stabilized the whole Western Front while coming to a decision how best to continue the campaign.

SLIDE 40.

This slide shows the von Schlieffen Plan compared with the actual advance of the German Armies in 1914.

37. THE RACE TO THE SEA.

Before a decision for continuation of the campaign could be formulated, Joffre, who now had the initiative, began reaching for the German right flank in an attempt to envelop it. Falkenhayn followed a similar plan and the course of the war on the Western Front developed into a series of attempted envelopments which have come to be known as "the Race to the

SLIDE 41.

Sea". By October 10, Antwerp had capitulated, and by the 20th, the opposing forces were facing each other on a line extending from Switzerland to the Channel.

SLIDE 42.

38. STABILIZATION.

The war on the Western Front assumed the character of siege operations. Both flanks of the opposing forces were

secure. Portions of this entrenched front were weak; other sections were strong. Neither side could invest the other and neither side was strong enough to assault the other's trenches and vanquish the opposing forces. It soon became a war of attrition. There were occasional local assaults, when one side felt that success would more than counter-balance the losses that would be sustained. The problem was to wear out the enemy's resistance and break his morale and power of resistance.

39. STRATEGY.

There were numerous battles of great intensity but they were mostly in the nature of attempts at tactical penetrations and there was very little opportunity for maneuver. Although these operations were tactical, in character, there were, in the main, strategical reasons for undertaking them.

SLIDE 43.

For example, the German attacks on Verdun in the first half of the year 1916 were undertaken partly to deprive the French of the strategic position of that stronghold-- what the Germans regarded as a "sally-port" into Germany-- and partly for the strategic purpose of anticipating the general pressure on all fronts which the Germans dreaded would take place that year. The Allies began in July, 1916, the Battle of the Somme, about 130 miles to the northwest of Verdun, for the strategic purposes of relieving the German pressure at Verdun; of rolling up the German line towards the Belgian coast

and rendering untenable in the south and east the great salient in the German front; and of stopping any further transfer of German troops from the Western front to other fronts. Although the Germans were unsuccessful in their efforts to take Verdun, one effect of their strategy was to wear down the French so that the latter were unable either to take the offensive in force elsewhere on the front, or to make an equivalent contribution to the joint campaign on the Somme, thus limiting it initially mainly to a British affair. Germany adopted the strategical defensive on the Western Front in the fall of 1916 in order to have troops available to take the offensive on the Eastern Front.

40. CONCLUSION.

Many other examples could be given but there is no time for further discussion of the Strategy connected with the operations on the Western Front.

In closing, it is well to bear in mind the close relationship between tactics and strategy. Tactical operations should not be judged by their local results alone; rather, their effect upon the strategical conception of the plan of operations upon which they are based should indicate the measure of their failure or success.

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"MILITARY STRATEGY OF THE WORLD WAR"

"THE WESTERN FRONT"

Given by Clement H. Wright,  
Colonel, U.S.Army.

Date November 7, 1938.

LEFT SCREEN

RIGHT SCREEN

| Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                                    | Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide              |
|---------|------------|---|---------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1       | 33-97      | Map of Europe (Outline)                           | 2       | 38-247     | Main Theater of Operations. |
| 1       |            | Repeat  | 3       | 33-786     | Field Marshal von Moltke    |
| 1       |            | Repeat  | 4       | 34-344     | Graf Alfred Schlieffen      |
| 1       |            | Repeat  | 2       |            | Repeat                      |
| 1       |            | Repeat  | 5       | 38-246     | R.R. Net, Northern Europe   |
| 6       | 34-45      | Fight-Hold  | --      |            | None                        |
| 7       | 38-245     | Western Theater of Operations.                    | --      |            | None                        |
| 7       |            | Repeat  | 8       | 34-84      | Full Speed Ahead            |
| -       |            | None  | 9       | 33-73      | von Schlieffen Plan         |
| 10      | 36-126     | General von Moltke                                | 9       |            | Repeat                      |
| 11      | 39-153     | Fig. 39, Army Concentration Areas.                | 9       |            | Repeat                      |
| 12      | 39-151     | Fig. 14, Comparison of Schlieffen and 1914 Plans. | 9       |            | Repeat                      |

LIST OF SLIDES (Continued)

LEFT SCREEN

RIGHT SCREEN

| Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                                     | Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                            |
|---------|------------|--|---------|------------|---|
| 7       |            | Repeat   | ---     |            | None                                      |
| 7       |            | Repeat   | 13      | 30-453     | General Joffre                            |
| ---     |            | None   | 5       |            | Repeat                                    |
| 7       |            | Repeat   | 14      | 34-86      | Maneuver Mass, Fcint, Go.                 |
| 7       |            | Repeat   | 15      | 34-44      | Hold. Fight.                              |
| 7       |            | Repeat   | ---     |            | None                                      |
| ---     |            | None   | 16      | 39-150     | Fig.9, French War Plan XVII.              |
| ---     |            | None   | 17      | 39-154     | Fig.41, Battle of Frontiers               |
| ---     |            | None   | 2       |            | Repeat                                    |
| ---     |            | None   | 18      | 34-83      | French-German Concentrations, 1914.       |
| ---     |            | None   | 19      | 39-152     | Fig.28, Initial Concentration Areas, 1914 |
| 11      |            | Repeat   | 20      | 33-70      | Leige.                                    |
| 11      |            | Repeat   | 21      | 36-95      | Invasion of Belgium.                      |
| 22      | 34-90      | French movements, Aug.10-14, 1914; Concentrations. | ---     |            | None                                      |
| ---     |            | None   | 17      |            | Repeat                                    |
| 22      |            | Repeat   | 17      |            | Repeat                                    |
| ---     |            | None   | 21      |            | Repeat                                    |
| 23      | 36-96      | Battle of the Sambre                               | 21      |            | Repeat                                    |

LIST OF SLIDES (Continued)

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RIGHT SCREEN

| Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                                | Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                                      |
|---------|------------|---|---------|------------|---|
| 24      | 36-97      | Battle of Mons                                | 21      |            | Repeat  |
| 25      | 36-98      | Le Cateau                                     | 21      |            | Repeat  |
| 26      | 38-248     | Summary Map,<br>Marne Campaign                | ---     |            | None  |
| 27      | 39-155     | Fig.46, Aug.23<br>Situation                   | ---     |            | None  |
| 12      |            | Repeat  | ---     |            | None  |
| 28      | 39-156     | Fig.50, Aug.28<br>Situation                   | ---     |            | None  |
| 28      |            | Repeat  | 29      | 33-489     | Advance, Ger. I Army,<br>Aug.27-28, 1914            |
| 30      | 35-490     | Advance, Ger.<br>I Army, Aug.<br>29-30, 1914. | 29      |            | Repeat  |
| 30      |            | Repeat  | ---     |            | None  |
| 28      |            | Repeat  | 31      | 38-263     | Allied Retreat to<br>Marne.                         |
| 30      |            | Repeat  | 32      | 33-491     | Advance, Ger. I Army,<br>Aug.31, Sept.1, 1914.      |
| ---     |            | None  | 31      |            | Repeat  |
| 33      | 39-157     | Fig. 52, Sept.<br>1 Situation                 | 31      |            | Repeat  |
| 33      | 34-159     | Repeat  | 34      | 36-100     | Gen. Sit., German<br>Right, night Sept.<br>2, 1914. |
| ---     |            | None  | 35      | 39-91      | Fig.53, Sept. 5 Sit-<br>uation.                     |

LIST OF SLIDES (Continued)

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| Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                | Box No. | File No. B | Title of Slide                                   |
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| 36      | 39-159     | Fig.55, French Plan of Attack | 35      |            | Repeat   |
| 26      |            | Repeat                        | 35      |            | Repeat   |
| 37      | 39-158     | Fig.54, German Plan of Attack | 35      |            | Repeat   |
| 38      | 39-160     | Fig.59, Battle of the Cureq   | 39      | 39-161     | Fig.60, Critical Day, Battle of Marne.           |
| ---     |            | None                          | 39      |            | Repeat   |
| 26      |            | Repeat                        | ---     |            | None   |
| ---     |            | None                          | 40      | 38-249     | Schlieffen Plan and Actual German Advance, 1914. |
| ---     |            | None                          | 41      | 33-1267    | Progress of Enveloping Movements.                |
| ---     |            | None                          | 42      | 39-162     | Fig.65, Situation, End of Year, 1914.            |
| ---     |            | None                          | 43      | 39-163     | Fig.222, Operations, Western Front, 1916.        |

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