

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا كُنْ يَعْلَمُ  
TAUGHT MAN THAT WHICH HE KNEW NOT

SELECTED  
**M** READINGS IN **Y**  
MILITARY HISTORY

The Napoleonic Art of Warfare;  
Battles of Tannenberg  
& Masurian Lakes - 1914





National Defence University  
Islamabad

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**SELECTED READINGS IN  
MILITARY HISTORY**

# **THE NAPOLEONIC ART OF WARFARE**

**Study Panel**

**Lt Col Khalid Javed**

**Lt Col Muhammad Sultan**



# **WORLD WAR-I**

## **BATTLES OF TANNENBERG & MASURIAN LAKES – 1914**

**Study Panel**

**Lt Col Azfar Ali Syed**

**Lt Col Muhammad Akif**

## **NDU Military History Publications Series: Number 2**

### **National and Military History Cell**

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The Battles of Tannenberg &  
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**Compiled & Edited  
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**National and Military History Cell, ISSRA  
National Defence University, Islamabad  
2012**

*“It should be known that history is a discipline that has a great number of approaches.”*

*Ibne Khaldun*

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## FOREWORD

The publication of second book '*Selected Readings in Military History: Art of Napoleonic Warfare and World War-I*' by National and Military History Cell, NDU, Islamabad is a matter of satisfaction, as it has been done in a record time of two months. The idea of publication of military history presentations has been well received by the military officers at all levels. Since the book in hand comprises important epochs in world affairs; Napoleonic Era and World War-I, it is viewed important for officers in various tiers for developing better insight in the art of warfare.

I would like to urge the budding military leaders to develop a taste for the subject of history in general and the military history in particular. It is a subject which contains a treasure trove of knowledge and gems of wisdom. "*Those who are not ready to learn from the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it*". Hopefully, this book, based on well researched presentations by seasoned military officers, will serve as a good read for young military officers.

I compliment Director General ISSRA and his team, particularly the editors, for picking up the pace and quality of research publications in the last few months.

Lieutenant General  
Agha Muhammad Umer Farooq  
President National Defence University

## PREFACE

The book in hand '*Selected Readings in Military History: Art of Napoleonic Warfare and World War-I*' is the second publication in quick succession by National and Military History Cell, National Defence University, Islamabad. For economizing the financial resources, two to three Military History Presentations are being combined for the purpose of publication.

Part-I of this book consists of Napoleon Era. Napoleon Bonaparte is counted among the great strategists and generals of all times, who held sway over the European Continent in the later part of 18<sup>th</sup> century and earlier part of 19<sup>th</sup> century. He practiced the art of warfare as nothing less than the military science. The student of military history would be a remiss, if he does not take serious interest in Napoleon's Continental System, Code Napoleon, Operational and Military Concepts of Napoleon and, thereby, the shaping of modern Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Part-II of the book deals with World War-I, with particular reference to the battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. World War-I was the first global conflict in the history of mankind, which resulted in not only the colonization of various parts of the world but it also brought about unprecedented catastrophes to the mankind, both in men and material. The seeds of hatred that were sown in Treaties of Sèvres and Versailles, displayed their effects in yet another world war in a period of less than a quarter of the same century. History as a subject is never stale and has a lot to offer to knowledge yearning minds. It is hoped that the publication of material on Napoleon Era and World War-I will pave the way for military officers to a wider journey in the domain of military history.

There is always a room for improvement in any of the ventures that we undertake in our lives. Therefore, any suggestions for improvement by the readers are always welcome.

Compilers / Editors

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# THE NAPOLEONIC ART OF WARFARE

## Introduction

1. The second half of eighteenth century brought phenomenal changes in socio-political thinking, which ultimately challenged the nature and authority of dynastic rule all over the civilized world. The power struggle and the dominance continued, however, the French Revolution towards end of the century dramatically changed socio – political, economic and military affairs of not only France but the entire Europe. Such was the scene on the European Continent, when Napoleon appeared and triumphed in becoming one of the history’s most successful military commanders, combining in him the political as well as the military power of France.

2. Napoleon was a statesman and undoubtedly a great captain of war, who played a major role in the development of military art. He invariably sought to achieve decision in battle, with the sole aim of utterly destroying his opponents, usually achieving success through superior manoeuvre. While not the originator of the methods he used, Napoleon’s Warfare Strategy very effectively combined the manoeuvre and battle stages into one event. During his contemporary period and for more than a century to come, military theory and practice were measured against his standards and related to his concepts of war making.

3. The Battles of **Ulm** and **Austerlitz** are the masterpieces among his successful campaigns and the brilliant manifestation of Grand Army’s organisational efficacy, training standards, logistic system and military thought process. These battles also marked the beginning of Napoleon’s victories and took him to new heights of professionalism. The focus of this study shall be on this particular aspect.

## Aim

4. To study the Napoleonic art of warfare with a view to understanding his contribution towards development of operational

art and the strategic thought process, with particular reference to the Battles of Ulm and Austerlitz.

### **Scope**

5. While remaining within the framework of the 'Napoleonic Art of Warfare' the study is designed to understand the environment in which Napoleon became ruler of France and various reforms carried out by him in French military system and their impact on his campaign planning. His Continental Strategy, strategic thought process and mastery over practical application of operational strategy has been covered with a brief account of conduct and analysis of battles of Ulm and Austerlitz.

### **Layout of Paper**

6. The general scheme of presentation is as under:-

a. **Part I – The Napoleonic Art of Warfare**

- (1) Environment and rise of Napoleon.
- (2) Military system and continental strategy.
- (3) Campaign planning and evolution of military thought.
- (4) Principles of napoleonic warfare.

b. **Part II – Contribution to Operational Art/ Strategic Thought Process**

- (1) Geo- political environment.
- (2) Conclusions from environment.
- (3) Battle of Ulm.
- (4) Battle of Austerlitz.
- (5) Analysis.
- (6) Conclusion

## **PART – I**

### **THE NAPOLEONIC ART OF WARFARE**

#### **Environment and Rise of Napoleon**

1. **General.** Later part of 18th century was period of fluidity and transition, the European powers were competing for domination both in the continental and global context. Clash of interests in the realm of imperialism, colonialism and trade precipitated one war after the other. Great Britain emerged as the major player and emergence of competitive environment generated power struggle between the key players like Great Britain, France and Russia. The wars were, however, limited in aims, means and magnitude. Attrition rather than annihilation, and domination rather than destruction were the norms. The issue of human rights sparked by Rousseau had finally exploded in the form of French Revolution. There was a general state of confusion and unrest all around.

2. **French Revolution.** The French Revolution took place on 14 July 1789, when French mobs attacked the garrisons of King Louis XVI. Before the French Revolution, the wars of absolute Kings tended to be limited politically as well as militarily. The European Kings maintained standing armies, but their sizes were kept small due to high cost of their sustenance. The strategy resorted to during the limited wars was not to seek enemy's army in battle, but to exhaust the enemy's treasury. When an adversary's treasury began to run dry, the opponents were forced to accept a negotiated peace. The French Revolution gave birth to the concept of National Wars which, in turn, led to the transformation of warfare from limited to absolute. The major components of change were:-

- a. **National War.** All elements of national power were dedicated and utilized for the war effort. The war was no more to be fought for dynastic interests.

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- b. **National Purpose.** National purpose became the motivating factor for wars. This imbued French soldiers with a zeal that frightened all armies of Europe. The new sense of French nationalism inspired the French Army to fight a war.
- c. **War as a Central Element of Foreign Policy.** The war was regarded as the central element of the foreign policy rather than an emergency measure. In the changed environment army was not to be deprived of the victories by cautious diplomacy.
- d. **Political Reforms.** Having taken control of the state, the National Assembly made several monumental changes in the prevailing socio-political order. These were:
  - (1) Elimination of nobility as a legally defined class.
  - (2) Grant of equal civil rights to all citizens.
  - (3) Extension of rights to all ethnic, racial and religious minorities.
  - (4) Elimination of Guilds and other similar organizations that monopolized production, controlled prices, regulated wages and tended to obstruct the economic activity.
  - (5) Separation of state and religion.
- e. **Popular Desire.** Vigour infused in the people of France manifested itself in the popular desire to export the revolution to other countries, in order to share freedom and economic dividends through annexation of additional territories.
- f. **Conscription.** Expanding the army was of paramount importance, if Revolutionary France was to face her coalition enemies. The volunteer system was insufficient so France turned to conscription. The

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Levée en Masse Decree made all French men and women liable for requisition for the duration of hostilities. By the end of 1794, the Republic boasted of 1,108,000 troops, compared to the roughly 150,000 in the pre-Revolution regular army. Conscription had following effects:-

- (1) **Quality Manpower.** Soldiers were recruited from all segments of society, had more initiative, were intelligent and aggressive; though not very disciplined. They utilized their attributes of aggressiveness and initiative admirably in action.
- (2) **Easy War Making.** Soldiers, a precious commodity, became cheap and abundant. Resultantly battles were sought for quick and decisive results.

### 3. **Personality Profile**

- a. It was in this backdrop that Napoleon entered the French scene. Born on 15 August 1769, at Corsica in a Corsican – Italian family of minor nobility, his humble origin had no indication of his future greatness. He received his education at the École Militaire in Paris. He got commission in the French Artillery, as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in November 1785. He was 20 years of age at the time of the French Revolution. He saw his first active service as a captain when he was part of a sea borne attack on Sardinia from Corsica. He became Brigadier General in 1793 after successful recapture of Toulon which was the most important naval arsenal and key to French control of the Mediterranean and had revolted against the Republic.
- b. He was promoted as a General and was given his first field command in 1795. He fought the North Italian Campaign in 1796-97 against First Coalition

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(Austrian controlled armies), Egyptian and Syrian Campaigns in 1798-99 and once again Italian Campaign in 1800 against Second Coalition (Russia, Austria and Britain). He became First Consul of the Republic in 1799.

- c. He became Emperor of France in 1804. War with England, primarily naval in nature, started in 1803 and later in 1805, developed into war against Third Coalition (Britain, Russia, Austria and Sweden). Historically, significant battles of Ulm and Austerlitz were part of this campaign. In 1806, another important battle of Jena was fought as part of campaign against Prussia. In the long list of his campaigns, remaining were against East Prussia and Poland in 1806-07, against Spain in 1808 and against Russia in 1812. Finally he was completely defeated at Waterloo in 1815.
- d. In all, he fought 60 battles in 23 years, mostly against numerically superior forces of coalitions. From 1804 to 1815, while he was the emperor, in eleven years, two million French people saw active service in addition to one million allies.

4. **Leadership Qualities.** Napoleon well understood the psyche of his men as a leader. He had drawn a careful balance between praise and punishment; he infused a new spirit in his men. He generously decorated deserving under commands, while the unworthy were mercilessly castigated. His almost unbelievable range and incredible comprehension of art of war, speed of decision and unswerving determination made him an inspiring leader. Some of his significant leadership traits were:

- a. Intellectual tenacity.
- b. Personal charisma and style.
- c. Determination.
- d. Boldness and courage.

- e. Exceptional diligence, competence and meticulousness.
- f. Man management and power of motivation.

### **Military System**

5. Napoleon inherited revolutionary, intelligent and inspired army, which was weak in training and discipline. The salient features of French military system in pre-Napoleonic era are:

- a. The French Royal Army was typical of armies of the Continent at that time. The nobility dominated the officer corps and enlisted soldiers were culled primarily from the lower classes and often joined to escape poverty, unemployment, and sometimes the law. These soldiers felt little loyalty to the crown and desertion was a severe problem. Consequently harsh punishment and brutal discipline were the norm.
- b. Infantry was the centerpiece of warfare at the time, as the specially formed light infantry units performed a support function. Their tasks included scouting, capturing prisoners and deserters, and harassing a retreating enemy. These light troops were not integrated into the line battalions and seldom participated directly in major battles.
- c. Cavalry regiments served on the army's flanks and were employed as a shock force, focused on breaking the rigid discipline inherent in maintaining and moving the linear formations, to be exploited by the infantry. The cavalry was a socially prestigious organization but for all intents and purposes, it was a support for the infantry.
- d. Artillery was dominated by unwieldy heavy guns. These guns usually provided a preliminary bombardment but fell silent when the army was fully engaged.

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- e. Royal French Army battles were marked by rigid tactics, with the linearly arrayed troops exchanging volleys at close range until one side broke. Battles were rarely decisive, since the victors were usually too 'beaten up' to effectively pursue and finish off the defeated army. The vanquished could usually escape annihilation and live to fight again. Battles were rare and wars often inconclusive.
6. Napoleon brought about major changes in the military system to suit his strategic concepts. His developmental strategy aimed at contriving a military machine configured for quick mobilization, rapid movement and aggressive action in line with the spirit of French Revolution. Important components of his military system, having a close linkage with his operational art, consisted of the following:-
- a. **Training.** Normally upon conscription soldiers were given some elementary training in marching, care of arms, kit discipline, musket training and then sent to veteran units, where they often received their further training. The system worked well, providing continuity till the old cadre of veterans remained uniform. Officers for Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery and Engineers were trained in different military academies, founded in 1802, capable of producing 100 officers per year.
  - b. **Intelligence System.** Napoleon organized the intelligence system effectively by having spies, agents, police and even his light cavalry, who would search all post boxes, farm houses and capture enemy deserters or soldiers for information. Due to an effective intelligence system, he knew more about the enemy than their own generals did. He also ensured secrecy and security of his own plans through limited dissemination, closure of frontiers for the foreigners and media control.



- c. **Mobilization System.** Although Napoleon was not the founder of conscription, he organised and systematized it to achieve faster mobilization. Napoleon introduced a mobilization system, which encompassed documentation of all ex-servicemen. Recruitment offices were opened in each region for conscription, maintenance of records and announcement of call-ups. The system was capable of raising over 200,000 soldiers in a month. Due to wide popularity enjoyed by the profession of arms, the response to conscription and mobilization used to be very good, which gave an edge to him over his adversaries.
- d. **Logistics.** Napoleon recognized the importance of logistics very early in his career. He revolutionized the existing cumbersome logistic system, by reducing the dependence of his reorganized armies in a very practical-way. His armies were to 'live off the country' that they traversed or captured. It was not chaotic plunder but a careful calculation in advance of the resources. He carried only 4-8 days rations to be consumed in operations only. Napoleon formed battalions of supply trained troops:
- (1) **Living off the Land.** The reforms in the military system also allowed a change in military logistics. Where conventional wisdom held that one was dependent upon one's supply lines, the divisional structure, coupled with the chaotic supply system during the revolution, saw a reversion to 'living off the land.' The Corps d' Armee would move along separate routes, de-conflicting foraging areas. This created efficiency to living off the land, unheard of in the past by a large army.
  - (2) **Train des Equipage(Military Transportation Service).** Napoleon created a militarised

transportation service, the *Train des Équipages*, to supplement civilian contractors and requisitioned transport. This originally comprised seven battalions each of four companies; the battalion establishment was later increased to six companies. These were initially equipped with vehicles purchased from the contractors. The soldiers of the *Train des Équipages* were armed and expected to be able to at least defend themselves as well as be more willing to go forward to deliver supplies than the civilian contractors. Eventually they were expanded to strength of twenty three battalions.

- (3) **Logistic Depots.** He established a chain of logistics depots. Troops were mainly fed by supervised requisition and only the forward cavalry was allowed to maintain their own supplies. The chain of depots was reinforced by river barges, which proved a valuable source of supply.

e. **Re-organization of Army**

- (1) **Infantry.** Infantry continued to form the back bone of the French Army. The infantry comprising the 'citizen soldier' was organized in line and light battalions. Line infantry battalions comprised nine companies each. Light battalions comprised six companies each, relatively lightly armed, and were able to keep up with trotting cavalry. Two or more battalions normally formed a brigade and two to four brigades formed an infantry division. The infantry division had a company of 4x4 pounders with it but no cavalry.

- (2) **Cavalry.** There were three main categories of cavalry – heavy (for shock action), dragons (supposedly capable of fighting on horseback or foot in close support of infantry formations) and light (responsible for reconnaissance, screening and pursuit roles).
- (3) **Artillery.** As a gunner, Napoleon effected organizational and conceptual improvements within French artillery. The initial strength of foot and horse batteries rose from 28000 to 103000. He envisaged the employment of artillery en-mass to help achieve a decision at the most crucial point and time. He had planned to have 5 guns per 1000 troops but he managed to have 3 guns per 1000 troops.
- (4) **Corps d' Armee.** The dominant organisation of an army upto the Napoleonic times was a centre and two wings. After introducing divisions, realising the problems of articulation of command he grouped his divisions into corps and introduced Corps de Armee into the lowest level of a balanced all arms force. The seven corps which were structured initially by Napoleon, normally had 2-4 infantry divisions, a brigade or division of light cavalry, 36-40 cannons, engineers and supply troops. A corps was considered capable of achieving an assigned task independently or in concert with another corps. Corps was also expected to survive against an enemy for sufficient time to allow the army to accomplish its task or another corps could be spared to come to its rescue. Napoleon deliberately avoided standardization of corps and divisions, because of varying capabilities

of his marshals and to confuse enemy intelligence.

- (5) **Imperial Guards.** This was an elite organization under Napoleon's personal control. It acted as his central reserve and comprised cavalry, artillery and infantry. It grew from a strength of 2000 in 1800 to a strength of over 60,000 in 1812. The Imperial Guard drew special pay and rations. Admission to the Guard was open to any outstanding soldier. Guard's outstanding combat reputation stimulated a feeling of emulation throughout the French Army. Imperial Guard Artillery consisted almost a quarter of the total artillery resources of the Army.

f. **Imperial General Headquarters.** Napoleon combined in his person the offices of the Commander of the French Army and Emperor of the French Empire. To run both the offices, he organised Imperial General Headquarters. Various other subsidiary headquarters like Artillery, Engineers-in-Chief, Imperial Guards Headquarters, Topographical Department, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Treasury were kept in close proximity of the Imperial General Headquarters:

- (1) The Imperial General Headquarters had three main branches. First, '*The Maison*' (the House of Hold), Napoleon's personal staff organisation.
- (2) Secondly, there was the General Staff of the Grand Army, in the person of Berthier, Napoleon's Chief of Staff.
- (3) Thirdly, there was the staff of the General Commissary of Army Stores, who looked after

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all matters pertaining to the acquisition, transportation and distribution of supplies of all sorts.

- g. **Promotion System.** The Revolution provided Napoleon with a promotion system open to talent. It was the calibre of truly natural leaders who emerged from the ranks of the Revolutionary armies to command battalions, brigades, divisions and corps, that made Napoleon's achievements possible. "***A man could rise by his merits***", the proverbial baton was in every soldier's knapsack and this applied equally to the opportunities of civil life.
- h. **System of Awards.** The Revolution had abolished all honours in France. However, it soon became obvious that exceptional performance by individuals or units merited recognition. Swords or muskets, cash or land was given. When Napoleon assumed control of France in 1799, he institutionalized the system of awards. Men of exceptional courage were given weapons of honour, knighthood on the spot or nomination to Imperial Guards, accelerated promotion, special amenities and so on. Regiments, possessing distinction, received their 'Eagle' from Emperor's hand in moving ceremonies. Napoleon's greatest innovation was the introduction of 'legion de honour', instituted in 1802. It was essentially an order of chivalry but not one of aristocracies. It was unique in the sense that any one could win it. The only qualification was to do some thing meritorious. This system effectively sustained the morale of French Army.

### **Continental Strategy(Map-1)**

7. During seventeenth century, England and France became great colonizing nations and world rivals. The English colonial movement spread to North America, Africa and India. French also sought colonies and trading posts in these countries. The struggle

continued during the eighteenth century. The Seven Years War (1756-1763) was the bloodiest war, the modern world had seen. The French had to suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of the English in Canada, India and West Indies.

8. After the Seven Years War, Great Britain wished to capitalize on her early industrial revolution, by selling her goods in Europe. Conversely, to become prosperous and thereby, sustain her power, France had to protect her up coming industries:

a. **The Concept.** Identifying England as his main rival, Napoleon desired to defeat it militarily but his inability to neutralise her maritime dominance ruled out the possibility of a direct attack. He, therefore, adopted the indirect approach of neutralising England's influence over its continental allies, without whom it could not hope to raise coalition after coalition against France. The Continental System promulgated through Berlin Decree and various other proclamations forbade trade with Britain by France, its Allies and Neutrals. Napoleon once said: *"England is my sole enemy, I am working against England alone and since its trade has ramifications everywhere, I have to pursue her everywhere"*. The multiple aims of the Continental System were:

- (1) To unify Europe against England in the economic realm.
- (2) Bankrupt England by shutting down its principle markets in Europe.
- (3) By ending dependence on English trade, promote the French industry.
- (4) Solidify own power by denying England the political advantage it had gained over a period of time.

b. **Measures Adopted.** The important features of the Continental System were:

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- (1) Closing of all Continental ports to English Shipping.
  - (2) Interdiction of all trade with England.
  - (3) Confiscation of all English merchandise, ships/boats, wherever found.
- c. **Effects.** In the final analysis the system did not succeed. It had the following effects:
- (1) Continental powers got antagonised due to adverse effects on trade and economy.
  - (2) Napoleon was induced into making grand policy errors of invading Portugal, Spain and Russia, which led to his ultimate decline.
  - (3) The blockade hurt British trade and caused soaring unemployment and rioting in the country.
  - (5) France also suffered from a lack of imported raw materials.
  - (6) French satellites also suffered, which caused general discontent.

### **Campaign Planning and Evolution of Military Thought**

#### 9. **Campaign Planning**

- a. Napoleon was in the habit of thinking through a forthcoming campaign months in advance. This concentrated thought process was no easy matter. He invariably thought all around a possible problem, considering every foreseeable possibility and making allowance for every conceivable complication. To him the planning of a campaign was a work of art, as the following quotes show, "*I am accustomed to think out three or four months in advance what I should do, and I base my calculations on the worst (situation). It is my habit to take so many precautions, that nothing is left to chance. It is only when plans are deeply thought out that one succeeds in war*".

- b. **Phases of a Campaign.** Napoleon planned his campaigns in three distinct phases; the move into contact, the battle and lastly the pursuit or exploitation. This is one of the many aspects of Napoleon's campaign planning which has not lost its relevance despite lapse of two centuries. These relate very closely to the phases of an offensive operational cycle envisaged in the book on Operational Strategy.
  - c. **Napoleon's Phases of Operational Cycle**
    - (1) Move into Contact Preparatory Manoeuvre, Breakthrough Battle, Deep Manoeuvre
    - (2) The Battle/Battle of Destruction
    - (3) General Exploitation/Exploitative Pursuit
10. **Evolution of Military Thoughts.** "Read and meditate upon the wars of the greatest captains. This is the only means of rightly learning the science of War":
- a. Napoleon's strategic and tactical ideas were predominantly influenced from earlier thinkers and war leaders. As a subaltern at the Artillery Training School at Auxonne, he was believed to have carried out extensive reading of military history.
  - b. Napoleon derived his theoretical knowledge of strategy and tactics from a close study of outstanding military writers of the past. Some of the military thinkers and practitioners who believed to have shaped his military thoughts and imprinted on execution of his plans through their conceptual and practical contributions were:-
    - (1) **French Marshal Henri Turenne(1611-1675).** Napoleon benefitted from Turenne's concepts of un-orthodox tactical manoeuvres, designed to achieve surprise and advantage. His inspiring leadership and motivation



guided Napoleon to transform into a legendary leader.

- (2) **Herman Maurice Saxe(1696-1750)**. The French Marshal, profoundly influenced a class of military leaders like Napoleon. Besides being an inspiring field commander emphasizing on mobility, training, discipline and morale, he was a prolific writer. His *Mes Reveries* (My Thoughts) stipulated integration of cavalry, infantry and artillery resources. His supernatural sense of timing to synchronize manoeuvre with reinforcements, his organization of the army with a proper balance of infantry and cavalry had influenced Napoleon's military system and operations.
- (3) **Pierre de Bourcet(1700-1780)**. In Liddel Hart's view, General Bourcet (1700-1780) can be considered as the greatest of chiefs of staff. Napoleon's philosophy of meaningful dispersal of force was inspired by Bourcet who was emphatic about the value of calculated dispersal as a means of inducing a foe to disperse his army, in turn, laying himself open to a rapid re-concentration for battle. He also advocated the value of a plan with several branches, and operating on a line, which threatened alternative objectives.
- (4) **Guibert (1743-1790)**.Guibert's words had a deep significance for Napoleon, such as "The art is to extend one's forces without exposing them, to embrace the enemy without becoming dis-united, to link up the moves of the attack to take the enemy in flank without exposing one's own flank".

- (5) **Frederick the Great.** Frederick advocated “War should be short and lively, for it is not in our interest to protract matters; for a long struggle, little by little, wears down our admirable discipline and only results in the de population of our country and the exhaustion of our resources”.Napoleon initially adopted Frederick’s concept of short and lively wars, opposed to the long drawn encounters.He was influenced by Frederick’s idea of achieving a quick and decisive outcome to compel the enemy to fight according to one’s adopted approach,by means of a forced march, placing oneself in enemy’s rear and cutting his communications, or threatening a critical space.These concepts all feature prominently in Napoleon’s strategic system.

11. **Evolution of Strategy.**In most of his campaigns, Napoleon adopted basically a direct and offensive strategy, however the approach was mostly Indirect. After initiating a campaign, Napoleon aimed at the destruction of the opponents with all available means. Salient features of his strategy were:

- a. Quick and decisive war aimed at annihilation of enemy’s main army.
- b. Exploiting superiority of Time, Space and Relative Strengths at the point of decision through surprise, deception, and superior mobility.
- c. Main Manoeuvres culminating into a tactical action, forcing enemy to fight the battle of reverse front followed by pursuit.
- d. Manoeuvre, and battles were merged as a single whole.

12. **Strategic Decision.**Napoleon laid emphasis on five

cardinal points for opening a campaign and they are worth bearing in mind while studying his theory of war or any of his operations:

- a. **Single Line of Operations.** An army must have only a single line of operations, the target being clearly defined and every possible formation directed towards it.
- b. **Selection of Objective.** Destruction of the main enemy army should always be the objective. Napoleon believed that only by destroying an opponent's field forces, he could be induced to give up the struggle.
- c. **Exploitation of Enemy's Flank and Rear.** To gain psychological and strategic advantage, Napoleon moved the French Army to place itself on the enemy's flank and rear.
- d. **Isolation of Enemy Forces.** The French Army always strived to turn the enemy's most exposed flank, isolating them from their base.
- e. **Security.** Napoleon stressed the need to keep the French Army's own lines of communication both safe and open.

13. **Napoleon's Strategic Manoeuvres.** As highlighted earlier, Napoleon was not an innovator of any new strategy. His genius lay in application of the strategic thought process of the era to a clinical precision. Outflanking manoeuvres were not new in the warfare of that time, or indeed of any time, but what was important, was his strategic flair for when and how to employ these manoeuvres i.e thinking and acting with certainty in an otherwise uncertain realm of warfare. Even towards the end of his life, he believed "*The art of war is simple, every thing is a matter of execution*". Of significance to the students of war are his strategic manoeuvres, i.e strategy of envelopment, strategy of central position and strategic penetration:

- a. **Strategy of Envelopment.** This manoeuvre was designed to crush a single enemy army out of close supporting distance of its allies. The aim was to gain a total victory with a minimum expenditure of manpower and effort. The strategy of envelopment was animated as under:
- (1) Cavalry screen reported contact with the enemy.
  - (2) Nearest corps would contact with enemy and pin him down.
  - (3) The corps in contact would involve the enemy in escalating battle of attrition.
  - (4) Enemy compelled to commit reserve to retain initial superiority.
  - (5) The main army would march by quickest possible safe route, hidden by cavalry screen and natural obstacle to place itself on the rear or flank of the enemy.
  - (6) It was important that the enemy should learn about the enveloping force only after he had committed all or most of the reserves to the frontal battle.
  - (7) The enveloping force would occupy a natural barrier (river line, mountain range, etc) and isolate the enemy from his reinforcements and depots.
  - (8) The enveloping force will attack the main enemy force from the rear or flank. The pinning corps will also renew attack from the front leaving no option for the enemy but to fight on two fronts or surrender.
  - (9) The manoeuvre is synonymous with today's concept of Indirect Approach.

- b. **Strategy of Central Position.** Contrarily, when faced by two or a series of armies within supporting distance of one another, Napoleon often adopted a second manoeuvre known as the 'Strategy of Central Position'. The concept was:
- (1) **Phase-1.** The force was organised as Cavalry and Advance Guard, two equally strong wings and a strong reserve. Advance Guards would occupy central position vis-à-vis the enemy forces, and main French Army advances in rear.
  - (2) **Phase-2**
    - (a) During conduct of operations, left and right wing would contain respective enemy army.
    - (b) 'Secondary Wing' contains Army A and detaches a division to envelop right wing of Army B.
    - (c) Part of reserve extends front of own right wing.
    - (d) Remainder of reserve forms 'Masse de decision' and this force defeats Army B.
  - (3) **Phase-3**
    - (a) Having defeated enemy Army B, the French would switch superior strength against Army A.
    - (b) The French right wing and Cavalry would assume pursuit of defeated Army.
    - (c) Left wing detachment would return to parent body (French left wing)

### *Napoleonic Art of Warfare*

- (d) Part of Reserve forced would march to envelop Army A's exposed flank.
  - (e) Remainder of Reserve would counter march to repeat 'masse de decision'.
- (4) The defeat of the first attacked enemy (Army B) often resulted in dissolution of the second army, mainly due to the psychological impact.
- c. **Strategic Penetration.** If Napoleon found the enemy holding an extended 'cordon line' type of defense, he devised a means to smash through it at some convenient place. This was followed with a rapid march deep into enemy territory, using speed to offset the danger of being surrounded by the enemy, in order to seize some town or city for use as a center of operations for the next phase of the campaign. Such a manoeuvre was never complete in itself, but it led to the creation of an initial favourable situation to act as springboard from which the main moves of the campaign could subsequently be undertaken. This type of manoeuvre could be undertaken for occupation of a central position hitting at the joint or hinge linking two armies or two major forces, or even in combination with the strategic envelopment. Napoleon's strategic penetration, especially its emphasis on speed to off balance the enemy laid the basis for the German blitzkrieg attack of 1940.

### **Principles of Napoleonic Warfare**

14. Napoleon never really formulated a precise system of war, at least not on paper. This was partly due to a deliberate desire to keep his contemporaries in dark but more significantly, rather than theoretical aspects, he was master at practical innovations. In consequence, his conduct of campaigns is also full of variations and adaptations. Napoleon's official correspondence is also riddled with inconsistencies and ambiguities. However, it is still possible from

the pages of his official 'Correspondence' that Napoleon's basic theories of war can best be derived. Napoleon never held to a rigid set of principles, but evolved and amended his ideas continually to meet particular situations. Once he remarked, "If one day I can find the time, I will write a book in which I will describe the principles of war in so precise a manner that they will be at the disposal of all soldiers, so that war can be learnt as easily as a science." Unfortunately, he never did so. From the record of his accomplishments and an analysis of his campaigns, following principles emerge:

- a. **Unity of Command.** Napoleon held unity of command to be "*the first necessity in war*", by this he meant political and military direction in the hands of a single man. On military singleness of command he wrote "In military operations, I only consult myself; in diplomatic, I consult everybody".
- b. **Centre of Gravity.** Identifying enemy's centre of gravity as a 'logical first' and then devising ways and means of overcoming it, was an essential element of Napoleon's strategy. At operational level, he standardised his thought by always considering the main enemy Army as his centre of gravity. He said: "There are in Europe many good generals, but they see too many things at once, I see only one thing, namely the enemy's main body. I try to crush it, confident that secondary matters will then settle themselves".
- c. **Balance.** The principle of assembly and concentration served to provide inherent balance to Napoleon's Forces. He disposed his forces in a manner that ensured security of own dispositions, permitted generation of optimum combat power in the required direction and allowed concentration of all components at the desired time and space. However, his operational strategy not only aimed at establishing balance of own forces but also attempted

to undo that of the opposing forces. One of his maxims on the subject is self-explicit: *“The principles of war are the same as those of a siege. Fire must be concentrated on a single point and as soon as the breach is made, the equilibrium is broken and the rest is nothing”*.

- d. **Thorough Planning.** He entered into each of his campaigns with a precisely pre-meditated plan which admitted Variants to counter enemy’s every possible and probable reaction. However, Napoleon never undervalued the part played by sheer chance in war. His every plan, allowed a period of spare time for remedying or exploiting the unpredictable.
- e. **Offensive Action**
- (1) On the offensive he said; “I think like Frederick, one should always be the first to attack.“It is a very great mistake to allow oneself to be attacked. Make war offensively.” At another occasion he said, “at the opening of a campaign, one should carefully consider whether to advance or not, but once one has assumed the offensive it should be pushed to the last extremity”.
  - (2) Napoleon is the mind for which everything short of the offensive is myth, so much so that he was scarcely conscious of the offensive as a matter to be at issue. His was the state of mind, which in its offensive spirit Clausewitz observed to *“have the most decisive influence on the forces employed in war”*.
  - (3) Although he did not invent the pursuit, it may be said that he systematized it, because he related it to the battle and made it an essential feature in his tactics. On 17<sup>th</sup>October 1805, in the Ulm campaign, he sent the following



message to Murat: *“I congratulate you on the success you have gained, but no rest; pursue the enemy with your sword in his back, and cut all communication”*. Nevertheless, because a sustained pursuit is one of the most difficult of operations, only four of his pursuits fully succeeded; at Rivoli (1797), at Austerlitz (1805), at Jena (1806) and at Echmuhl (1809).

f. **Speed and Mobility**

- (1) Speed and mobility were basic features of Napoleon’s campaigns from beginning to end. This was one feature, which confused and unsettled majority of his opponents the most. Napoleon used speed of movement and forced marches as a Force Multiplier. Comte Dervieu says, *“movement is the soul of Napoleonic war, just as the decisive battle forms its means. Bonaparte makes his troops move with a calculated rapidity. Multiply them by speed - make up for numbers by the quickness of marches”*.
- (2) During march towards Ulm his troops said: *“The Emperor has discovered a new way of waging war, he makes use of our legs instead of our bayonets”*. This is less a complaint and more a compliment pointing towards achievement of successes, merely by speed of movement, conserving manpower and casualties.
- (3) The insistence on rapid movement is also closely related to another of Napoleon’s master concept - the vital significance of time and its accurate calculation in relation to

space. one of Napoleon's sayings is quite revealing:

*“Strategy is the art of making use of time and space.”*

- (4) This clearly points towards the origin of the Time, Space and Relative Strength Matrix (TRS Matrix).

g. **Security and Protection**

- (1) In Napoleonic system, this implied concealment of own strength and intentions from the enemy and protection of own echelons. Long before a campaign opened, the curtain of military security was lowered. The press was ruthlessly controlled and tuned to produce the information that Napoleon wished the enemy to comprehend. At the same time, elaborate deception schemes and auxiliary offensives would be devised and implemented to confuse the enemy and keep him off balance.
- (2) A mobile screen, comprising light cavalry, would move ahead of the main body denying any access to enemy patrols. Napoleon frequently altered the orbits of his corps and divisions to deceive the enemy.
- (3) His protective system was based on establishing in rear of his army a place de-campagne, a fortress or a fortified town which could not be surprised, and in which the army magazines, parks, hospitals etc, were assembled; it was his base of operations.

h. **Assembly and Concentration.**“The art of generalship consists of, when actually inferior in

numbers to the enemy, being superior to him on the battlefield". It implies:

- (1) For the decisive battle, Napoleon cut down all subsidiary operations in order to concentrate the greatest possible numbers. Colin quotes him as saying, "the army must be assembled and the greatest force possible concentrated on the battlefield". There is an important difference between the meaning of assembled and concentrated. Assembly is explained by Napoleon in a letter to King of Naples. "The art of disposing of troops is the art of war. Distribute your troops in such a way that whatever the enemy does, you will be able to unite your forces within a few days".
  - (2) In nutshell then, assembly meant placing of his major formations within marching distance of the intended place of battle, though not necessarily their physical presence in contact with the enemy or one another. Conversely, concentration meant producing the greatest possible numbers at the point of decision. Assembly and Concentration have an important linkage with Dispersion.
- j. **Time and Space.** Napoleon's insistence on rapid movement in view of the vital significance of time in relation to space, highlights his understanding of the operational art. He once asserted; "*strategy is the art of making use of time and space. I am less chary of the latter than of the former; space we can recover, time never. Time is the great element between weight and force. Hours, even days could be saved or gained by a careful selection of the best routes to the chosen objective*".

- k. **Economy of Force.** Accordingly to Napoleon, the careful tailoring of all available military and political power to the requirements of the politico-military aim i.e. the destruction of the foe's will to resist without unnecessary waste of manpower resources in elaborate rear-echelon formations or by detaching large numbers of troops against secondary objectives was most significant. At the same time the avoidance of the opposite extreme i.e. the commitment of too little, too late was equally important. Hence the achievement of a carefully calculated balance between means and ends, between conflicting priorities should be to cause destruction of the enemy's state of equilibrium, if possible before the decisive battle was physically fought.
- l. **Morale.** Napoleon stated that morale is to the physical as three is to one. He re-stated, "*Morale force rather than numbers decides victory*". A carefully graded system of military awards for the rank and file, princedoms and thrones to the elect among the leaders and accelerated promotions, was adopted to achieve this end. He knew his men and what appealed to them, their virtues, hopes and fears and expected the same from his officers. Wellington remarked, "*his presence on the field made a difference of 40,000 men*".

## **PART-II**

### **BATTLES OF ULM AND AUSTERLITZ**

#### **General**

1. Ulm – Austerlitz campaign is rated as one of the greatest campaigns of all times and provides a valuable perspective on Napoleon's flair for strategy and genius for war. In twenty days the Grande Armee marched from Boulogne to the Rhine, in two months, it had reached Vienna and within three months it shattered the potentially most powerful alliance directed against France. Starting with his military victories during the revolution days, this campaign is seen as a turning point in military history, as it revolutionized warfare by replacing the outdated 18<sup>th</sup> century concepts of seize and stately manoeuvres by a form of Blitzkrieg.

#### **Geo – Political Environment(Map-2)**

2. The five empires on European map during the period were Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia. France and Britain were involved in a race for dominance of Europe. From 1803 to 1805 Franco-Spanish Navy had failed in a naval war against Britain and the latter enjoyed a complete mastery of the sea. In the meanwhile British had also succeeded in organizing a new anti-French coalition (Third Coalition), consisting of Austria, Russia, Sweden and Naples. Prussia decided to remain neutral while Spain, Bavaria and Württemberg adhered to France. Politico-Strategic objectives of the opposing sides were as following:

- a. **Allies.** The allied strategic aim was to isolate France and bring the Third coalition forces against her. The military objectives were northern Italy and Strasbourg, with the aim that capture of these areas would bring territories of Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Bavaria and Prussia under the influence of allies.
- b. **France.** The strategic objective of France was dissolution of Third Coalition. The political strategy adopted was an exterior manoeuvre to keep Prussia out of coalition by offering her territory of Hannover

and keep Bavaria as an ally. The French military objective at the grand strategic level was to destroy the strongest of the two coalition armies, dealing with them one by one. To this end the final objective was the capture of Vienna, which would result in the dissolution of the Third Coalition. The critical space between Ulm, Munich and River Danube, thus, denying the union between the Russian and the Austrian Forces.

### **Conclusions from the Environment**

#### **3. Politico-Strategic Environment**

a. In the process of enforcing naval blockade of the English Channel, England had put together yet another coalition against France:

(1) Austria and Russia, the other major coalition partners were ill prepared for war. England, the paymaster of the coalition needed to divert the impending French threat from across English Channel. It, therefore, urged war.

(2) Napoleon enjoyed a complete liberty of action in the campaign but Allies' liberty was curtailed due to reservations and lack of political will of the component countries forming coalition.

(3) Local population in the affected countries was to remain neutral but revolutionary elements were expected to support French.

b. **Operational Environment**

(1) Coalition forces had an overall superiority in relative strength, especially once combined, but French Army was superior in training, tactical concepts and motivation.

- (2) French forces, poised towards English Channel, had to turn rearwards to meet impending threat.
- (3) French Army's mobility and speed were to play a dominant part in the operations.

### **Battle of Ulm (Map-3)**

#### **4. Conclusions from the Zone of Operation**

- a. The area is cut across diagonally into two distinct compartments by River Danube. Rhine is the other major obstacle in the area.
- b. The terrain between Rhine and Danube lends itself to large scale movement and assembly of forces.
- c. Black Forest, though difficult to traverse, provides an ideal covered approach, leading directly to the critical space bounded by Ulm, Munich and River Danube.
- d. Ulm is the main communication centre in the area, which offers multiple options for offensive both from East to West and vice versa.

#### **5. Opposing Plans.** The relative strengths situation is as Annex A. The allied and French plans were as under:

##### **a. Allied Plan**

- (1) **Design of Operation.** The Allies based their whole strategy on the assumption that Napoleon would attack through Northern Italy. While remaining on defensive in the Danube Sector and protecting lines of communication to Vienna, project a potent threat to southern France, thus, inducing Napoleon to pull his forces towards this sector. Thereafter, exploit the vacuum created in Danube Valley by the combined Armies of Russia and Austria for a thrust towards Strasbourg (Southern France).

(2) **Manoeuvre Plan**

- (a) **Main Effort.** Main effort comprising 100,000 men, under Archduke Charles, directed towards northern Italy to seize Milan and threaten Southern France.
- (b) **Secondary Effort.** With 85,000 troops under Archduke Ferdinand (with General Mack as his Chief of Staff) was to advance in to Bavaria to cover approach of 85,000 strong Russian Armies under Kutusov and Buxhowden from the east and wait for their arrival till 20 October. This force was to be converted in to 'Main Effort' (under command Emperor Francis II of Austria) for a combined drive through the Black Forest directed against Strasbourg in France.
- (c) **Auxiliary Effort.** An auxiliary effort of 25,000 Austrians under Archduke John to be launched with the aim to secure Tyrol and advance into Italy and remain ready to support the main effort towards south, or secondary towards north.
- (d) **Diversionsary Efforts.** Anglo-Swedish forces of 27,000 troops and 20,000 Russians to launch a sizeable effort from the north against Hannover. In the south 53,000 strong hybrid force of Allies to descend on Naples to cooperate with Charles.



b. **French Plan(Map-4)**

(1) **Design of Operation.** Napoleon conceived that Russo-Austrian forces would launch their main effort through Danube Valley approach to threaten Alsace initially and then go for final drive towards heart of France, when reinforced by the Russian Armies. Napoleon chose to create classical deception through wide dispersion, while undertaking deep enveloping manoeuvre from Rhine to Danube Valley for the isolation and piecemeal destruction of Mack's Army before the arrival of Russian Forces.

(2) **Manoeuvre Plan**

(a) **Main Effort.** Launch main effort comprising seven corps d' Armees,(200,000 troops) along the fastest, separate but closely interrelated lines of march, converging on the Danube, incorporating 25,000 Bavarian troops en-route. Wheeling southward from the Rhine, the army would encircle and destroy General Mack's exposed Army before his Russian allies could join.

(b) **Feint.** To conceal the main manoeuvre, Lannes's 5<sup>th</sup> Corps and part of Murat's cavalry were to launch a feint attack 24 hours earlier towards the Black Forest, intended to draw Austrian troops towards the west.

(c) **Offensive Fixation.** General Massena with 50,000 troops was to contain Archduke Charles' contingent in the

Italian theatre, disallowing any transfer of forces.

- (d) **Defensive Effort.** General Brune was left at Boulogne with 30,000 troops to guard against the possibility of British sea borne incursion and to keep the enemy thinking that the French were still poised for an assault on England. Whereas, General St Cyr was to defend Naples against probable Anglo-Russian threat.

6. **Conduct**

a. **Phase-1: Strategic Assembly**

- (1) **Allies.** By 15 September Austrian Army started to arrive at Ulm. General Mack began fortifying Ulm and Memmingen. Kutusov marched 10 days late. He was still 300 Kilometers away from Ulm. Buxhowden and Benningsen were still awaiting Prussian permission to cross the frontiers.
- (2) **French.** On 26th August, French Imperial Headquarters issued the orders for move of French Army from channel coast to central Europe against the impending allies threat. The French War Machine, nearly with 200,000 men strong, began its march under a corps system perfected over the past years. In a surprisingly short span of time and through clinical precision of clockwork mechanism, French reached Rhine and were concentrated between Wurzburg and Strasbourg. Napoleon himself arrived at Strasbourg on 26<sup>th</sup>September.

b. **Phase–II: Manoeuvre to Ulm**

- (1) **Rhine to Danube.** On 25-26 September French forces crossed Rhine, while Murat's Cavalry launched a feint through the wooded mountains of Black forest, thus, confirming Mack's apprehension about the impending danger. After deceiving Mack, Murat left some troops in the western fringes of black Forest and rapidly shifted all his Cavalry Corps to the north to provide flank protection to the main manoeuvre. The main French army moved rapidly towards the Danube to place itself in the rear of Mack's army, using all available routes. It was protected and screened by the light cavalry of the divisions and Murat's cavalry. The Grand Army began to wheel to the south and the front steadily narrowed from a width of 120 kilometres on Ansbach – Stuttgart line to 60 Kilometers by the time the troops reached Danube between Ingolstadt and Danauworth. The movement resembled a door swinging on its hinges. Every adjacent corps was within mutually supporting distance of 48 hours. The beauty of the manoeuvre was the time and space linkages, being maintained at all times between complimenting streams. Napoleon ensured a correct strategic front as well as correct strategic balance. The entire army, if required, could be concentrated in any area in 3 to 4 days. The rapid move from Rhine to Danube coupled with deception through Black forest achieved overwhelming surprise over the Austrians.

(2) **Crossing Danube–Strategic Envelopment.**

On 7 October, Napoleon's Army began the crossing. After crossing the Danube, Napoleon retained optimum space between the investing force and exterior circle, to be able to shift forces with flexibility for facing enemy counter attacks. I and III Corps were, thus, ordered to set up an exterior circle along the defensible lines of the Rivers Isar, Iller and Lech for protection. IV Corps (Sault) advanced towards Landsberg and then westwards to Memmingen to seize main Austrian depots and close the Tyrolean escape route up River Iller. Murat Cavalry, II Corps and V Corps completed the envelopment of Ulm, while operating along the southern bank of the Danube in conjunction with VI Corps (Ney), which was located in the north of river Danube. Imperial Guards and II Corps (Marmont) were kept as strategic reserve at Augsburg which was also set up as centre of operation.

(3) **Destruction of Austrian Force at Ulm.**

Meantime, Mack till 3 October had no idea of the French Army's advance and was still facing west, watching the exits of the Black Forest. It was too late when he realized that the French attack would develop from the north. Mack realized that he had lost the time of retreat as he was cut off by an army, at least three times the size of his own. He made certain frantic and desperate attempts to break the sledge by marching to the north where on 13 October his troops were repulsed by the French VI Corps. Finding no way out Mack surrendered with bulk of his forces on

21 October. A small portion of Austrian Army soldiers under Archduke Ferdinand managed to escape to the north.

**Battle of Austerlitz(Map-5)**

7. **Background.** Although the Allied strength was now negligible, it was beginning to accumulate as French failed to trap Kutusov and prevent his link up with Tsar Alexander and General Buxhowden's reinforcements. The Allied Supreme Commander, Kutusov was not anxious for a pitched battle as yet. His design was to lure Napoleon deeper and deeper into Central Europe, by retreating rapidly into Moravia, using the Danube's south bank tributaries for a series of delaying battles. Resisting Austrian pressure to defend Vienna, Kutusov fell back to Olmutz, where on 19 November Buxhowden reinforced him. Although the Allies now totalled over 80,000 men, Kutusov still considered his army too weak for taking on offensive. However, on 21 November, the effective direction of the armies fell into the inexperienced and incompetent hands of the Czar. His ambition to defeat Napoleon in a great battle spurred him into overruling Kutusov and ordering a halt to the retreat. Nothing could have suited Napoleon better. The prevailing situation was fraught with peril for him, because:

- a. In the south Archduke John and Charles were concentrated with a powerful army around Marburg.
- b. A force under Ferdinand approached Iglau, and threatened the French rear.
- c. The main Austro-Russian army at Olmutz was growing stronger by the day as reinforcement turned in from the east.
- d. Although Vienna had been lost, the Allies enjoyed unobstructed communications with Russia and Poland.

8. Napoleon, on the other hand, was at the end of his administrative tether; threatened from three sides; his lines of communications tenuous; and his forces scattered on a 240 miles front. Moreover, the morale of his troops was falling fast as they saw

themselves marching endlessly into increasingly inhospitable country. He had to halt, and the Czar's decision was a Godsend.

9. Austerlitz had been selected by him for battle. Napoleon shunned the safest course of action-retreat and decided instead to shatter the Allied threat by defeating its strongest element – the army concentrated around Olmutz. His strategy was clear, he formed the tactical plan; lured the Allied army into an ill-advised attack against the main body of French forces.

10. **Dispositions Before Austerlitz**

a. **Allies.** Allies were disposed as under:-

- (1) In the south Archdukes John and Charles were concentrated with a powerful army around Marburg.
- (2) The main Austro–Russian army was at Olmutz, growing stronger by the day, as reinforcements turned in from the east.
- (3) A force under Ferdinand approached Iglau, and threatened the French rear. He was closing up with Russians.
- (4) Although Vienna had been lost, the allied enjoyed unobstructed communications with Russia and Poland.

b. **French.** French were positioned as under:-

- (1) North flank protected by Baraguay's Cavalry.
- (2) New base and line of communication protected by Augereau and French allies (Bandar's Wurttembergers) with order to mount limited operations towards Vorarlbugr to distract enemy in that direction.
- (3) In the south Ney and Derio (Bav) moved forward successively in coordination with the

main, while blocking the mountain passes along line Innsbruck Salzburg.

- (4) Marmont moved to Leoben in order to sever road linking Vienna with the Italian front.
- (5) Further down south, Massena was to keep the Archdukes from effecting a link up with Kutusov.
- (6) Strong garrisons were placed in Ingolstad, Ratisbon and Passau to guard the Bohemian and Prussian flank.
- (7) Davout was left at Vienna and Bernadotte at Iglau.
- (8) Main French Army was at Brunns.

11. **Battle Area.** The northern extremity of the battle area is marked by 700 feet mound called Santon, overlooking the main highway from Brunn to Olmutz, which runs immediately to its south. This road runs over two streams, the Goldbach and its tributary the Bosenitz. Goldbach Brook divides the area into two halves. The Goldbach itself is a minor obstacle and the water in it was frozen. To the west of the Goldbach lies a long, low ridge. To the east is the Pratzen Plateau, which rises gradually from west to east from 650 feet to 1000 feet. The important villages which played a part in the battle were from the south, Tellnitz, Sokolnitz, Kobelnitz, Puntowitz and Pratzen. Enclosed in the triangle formed by the two streams and the Brunn – Olmutz Road is the Zurlan feature. The town of Austerlitz lies three miles away to the east of the Pratzen Heights on the banks of the Littawa River.

12. **Conclusions from Area of Operations**

- a. Pratzen Heights, located in the centre of the area, dominates the entire zone, whose retention by either side would facilitate their operation.

- b. Santon Hill dominates the Brunn – Olmutz Highway effectively interfering with any move on/astride the road.
  - c. Goldbach Stream and Bosenitzar River are two major obstacles in the area providing strong defence line.
  - d. Telnitz and Sokolnitz are important towns towards south, capture of which would create a flank for any enveloping manoeuvre.
13. **Schemes of Operation(Map-6)**
- a. **French Plan**
    - (1) **Design of Operation.** While staying on the defensive, employ a baited gambit by feigning weakness towards southern flank of the defence. Once the enemy swallows the bait and commits his forces in a flanking attack towards South, rupture the weakened centre and move to the flank and rear of the enemy for the final battle of destruction.
    - (2) **Manoeuvre Plan**
      - (a) **Main Defensive Effort.** Towards North, covering the Olmutz Road, comprising Lannes' Corps and two divisions of Soult's Corps.
      - (b) **Secondary Defensive Effort.** Towards South, comprising a division ex-Soult's Corps deployed on the western side of Goldbach Stream. Once attacked this force was to be reinforced by Devout's Corps.
      - (c) **Strike Force.** Two divisions of Soult's Corps hidden behind Goldbach Stream in Zurlun area were tasked to attack Pratzen Heights at the opportune



moment. Bernadotte's Corps was to assist the counter offensive and cover its left flank.

- (d) **Reserves.** Imperial Guards and Grenadiers were to remain poised behind Soult's Corps to exploit the success.

b. **Allies Plan**

- (1) **Design of Operation.** Launch an oblique multi-column attack towards South, then swing North to envelop the French forces cutting their line of communication running along Brunn – Vienna Road.

- (2) **Manoeuvre Plan**

- (a) **Main Effort.** Comprising Buxhowden's Army, was to attack Napoleon's right flank around Telnitz. After crossing Goldbach Stream this force was to wheel half right in an enveloping manoeuvre.
- (b) **Secondary Effort.** Bagration's Division was to attack along Brunn - Olmutz Highway to tie down French northern flank and prevent move of forces towards South.
- (c) **Reserves.** These were located at Krenowitz under Constantine.

14. **Conduct**

a. **Phase-1: The Opening Battle**

- (1) **Southern Sector.** Telnitz was attacked heavily by Kienmayer's cavalry, followed by Doctorov's division at 0700 hours on 2 December. The town fell to the Allies by 0800

hours. Meanwhile, Langeron and Przbysweski attacked Sokolnitz and captured it finally by 0900 hours after having exchanged hands twice. Davout's Corps, less one division, reached the sector just in time to save a rout. The initial honours in the South thus went to the Allies.

- (2) **Central Sector.** St Hillaire's and Vandamme's divisions were formed up on the Goldbach under the cover of the dense mist. At 0800 hours the rising mist revealed Russian columns moving south. By 0900 hours when Kollowarat's column had moved sufficiently South, the two divisions emerged from the protective mist, surprised the Allies completely and soon after occupied the Pratzan Plateau at its summit.
- (3) **Northern Sector.** Bernadotte was ordered to move on Blasowitz. By 0930 hours the village exchanged hands twice and went back to the Allies, after an attack by two battalions of the Imperial Guards. Lannes columns and Murat's cavalry tried to pin down Bagration and Liechtenstein. By 1000 hours the entire northern sector was locked in furious battle.

b. **Phase-2: The Tide Turns**

- (1) **Southern Sector.** After the fall of Tellnitz and Sokolnitz, Napoleon became anxious about the sector and at 0930 hours reinforced it with Oudinot's reserve division. The situation, however, rapidly improved once the effect of the French capture of the Pratzan Plateau started telling on the Allies. At 1000 hours, this sector was further reinforced by Friant's division of Davout's Corps which was

initially left behind at Gross Raigernd. With these available additions, the French counter attacked Sokolnitz and Sokolnitz castle. The southern half of the former was re-taken. For the rest of the morning, 1100 French fought off 35000 Allies in an agonized battle of attrition.

(2) **Central Sector.** The French occupation of the Pratzen Plateau was challenged severely by the Allies. St Hillaire's and Vandamme's divisions were counter attacked but they gallantly held out. By 1200 hours the worst crisis had passed, the Allies pulled back to the eastern edge of the plateau and the Pratzen Heights were securely in Soult's possession.

(3) **Northern Sector.** Lannes and Murat with some assistance from Bernadotte had successfully contained and completely isolated Bagration on the Allied right, from the Allied centre.

c. **Phase-3: The Allied Rout.** After stabilizing all the sectors, Napoleon shifted Bernadotte's Corps and the Imperial Guards to Pratzen Plateau. Oudinot's Division also joined them, The moment was now ripe for delivering Coup-de-Grace. The events then unfolded as follows:-

(1) The Russian Imperial Guards launched one last counter attack at about 1300 hours against Vandamme's left flank. It met quick success and the French were in considerable disarray. But for lack of more reserves, the Allies could not exploit this success. Subsequently, the French Imperial Guards and Oudinot's Division threw back the Allies towards Austerlitz.

- (2) By 1400 hours, the Allies centre had ceased to exist, causing complete dislocation in Allies system of forces. After entrusting the Pratzen Plateau to Bernadotte, the Soult's Corps was swung south to envelope Buxhowden's army both from the north and the east. Davout's Corps had started pressing him from the west. Buxhowden was now snared in a critical trap. Only a portion of Kienmayer's cavalry and Doctrov's division could escape via the strip of land connecting Satschen and Menitz ponds. Superior French mobility, both physical and mental, dazzled and incapacitated the Allies.
- (3) As the disaster on the Allies left and centre developed, Bagration decided to extricate Kutosov, who had urged upon him to keep the road Brunn– Olmutz open for withdrawal. He, therefore, attacked the French extreme left and centre. But Lannes, in turn, attacked his left and centre. At this stage, if Murat had displayed initiative, Bagration could have been enveloped from the east and routed. Bagration quickly realized the danger and extricated himself.

### **Analysis**

15. **Application Of Operational Strategy.**The Ulm/Austerlitz Campaign resulted in Napoleon assuming undisputed control of Europe. The campaign is rated as a masterstroke of Napoleon's strategic vision and his genius in application of operational strategy. Important aspects as applied by Napoleon during the planning and conduct of this campaign are highlighted in succeeding paragraphs:-

- a. **Strategic Objective.**The political aim of French Government was dissolution of third coalition. The military aim of War, thus, derived from the political

aim was, isolation and piecemeal destruction of coalition forces. Napoleon's real genius was identification of strategic objectives for the campaign. These were a fine blend of space and force oriented objectives to achieve the ultimate aim of War. Ulm or central Danube region was identified as critical space to isolate Austrian Army and its ultimate annihilation or capitulation. Having done that the next natural objective (force oriented) materialized at Austerlitz, where Allied were enticed to join battle and Napoleon achieved destruction of their forces through carefully orchestrated design to dislocate Russian Army.

- b. **Strategic Approach.** Ulm is a classic and the most quoted example of application of indirect approach in military history. In this campaign complete paralysis of General Mack's Army was achieved in an almost bloodless battle. Napoleon calculated that the Austrians would send an army into Bavaria to block the exits of the Black Forest. He maneuvered round their northern flank, across the Danube, onto the rear to establish strategic barrage. He hypnotized Austrian commanders and paralyzed them to an extent that they were unable to react. Following on from Ulm, Napoleon maneuvered until Vienna and Austerlitz, he continuously aimed at defeating the enemy through adoption of indirect approach. He remained focused on not allowing various withdrawing Austrian and Russian Armies to join each other. In his application of indirect approach, he pushed the Russians as Far East as possible and kept them separated from the Austrian Armies, returning from Italy. Mortier's Corps along the northern bank of the Danube, threatened Kutosov's communications and induced him to fall back northeastwards. Move of Murat's Corps drove them further into a hurried retreat towards Olmutz. Finally, at Austerlitz we see

application of indirect approach in an essentially defensive posture. Napoleon, through defence baited gambit, displaced bulk of allied forces before striking at their rear.

- c. **Strategic Posture.** Napoleon was on offensive both strategically as well as tactically upto and including defeat of Mack's forces at Ulm. Later, mindful of being over-stretched, he adopted a tactically defensive posture until seeking defeat and destruction of Russian Army.
- d. **Critical Space.** Napoleon identified the areas between Ulm, Munich and Danube as Critical Space. Domination of this space was vital to accomplishment of strategic and military objectives. It was only Napoleon's flair for strategy that he could identify this space over a vast expanse of entire European front. Though the main Austrian concentration was in Italy, yet Napoleon was aware of the importance of Germany, as it was here that Austrian and Russian Forces could link up. Additionally, occupation of this space also threatened Austrian offensive effort in Italy and forced them to recoil to protect their line of communication with Vienna. At Austerlitz, Pratzen Heights assumed the status of critical space in relation to the force disposition. It was identified that capture of Pratzen heights would dislodge Allies from the area.
- e. **Superiority of Strategic Orientation.** Having assembled his forces with speed on the Rhine, Napoleon was in a position to reach sensitive objectives of allies earlier than any, which Allies could reach in France. Central Danube valley was threatened by Napoleon in a much earlier timeframe than Strasbourg could be threatened by Allies. The significance of the French superior orientation dawned on the Allies, particularly Austria as late as

the fall of Ulm. The only Allied inferior army of Kutusov was thus left between French and Vienna. Alarmed by the threat to their capital, the Austrian forces in Northern Italy and Tyrol recoiled in a desperate move to save their capital. By sealing off the passes from Italy and the Tyrol during his pursuit to Vienna, he prevented the Austrians from being able to defend their capital against his manoeuvre.

- f. **Induced Baited Gambit.** At Austerlitz Napoleon employed a baited gambit by distracting the enemy towards South, thus, uncovering the critical space of Pratzen Heights leading to its dislocation. The weakened centre was ruptured in sufficient strength to draw Allied reserves towards Pratzen Heights prematurely. The initial imbalance was exploited to create critical imbalance in system of Allied forces.
- g. **Strategic Decisions.** At Ulm Napoleon correctly analyzed and identified the centre of gravity of the coalition, which was the union of Russian Forces with the Austrians. Identification of this imbalance implied dealing with the Allies piecemeal, first the Austrians followed by the Russians. It was this central idea around which the entire manoeuvre plan was to be built. Although Allies main was in the South i.e in Northern Italy, Napoleon avoided head on clash and instead decided for a strategic envelopment. At Austerlitz with heavy odds against him in terms of relative strength situation, it was impossible for Napoleon to continue pressing the united Allied forces located at Olmutz. He could improve his relative strength by either falling at Vienna and muster all available forces there before engaging the Allies, or change the posture to defensive, lure the Allies to attack at a ground of his choice, attrite them and then overpower them through a counter offensive. Withdrawal to Vienna was fraught with

numerous disadvantages such as loss of initiative and offensive spirit, and granting time to Austrian Forces returning from Italy to unite with the Allied Forces operating in Moravia. Napoleon, therefore, decided to adopt the second option.

h. **Application of Strategic Manoeuvres**

- (1) **Strategic Envelopment.** After crossing Danube, Napoleon detached two corps— those of Bernadotte and Davout – to hold the Isar and Lach River lines and ward off the possibility of Russian intervention from the east. At the same time a third one of Marshal Soult was marching on Memmingen at River Iller to cut General Mack's secondary line of retreat or reinforcement running down the Iller to the Tyrol. The remainder of the army, Murat, Ney, Lannes and Marmont were converging on the real target – Mack's Austrian Army isolated around Ulm. By Napoleon's original plan, Soult would next have advanced up the Iller, so as to envelop Mack's strategic flank as well as to sever his links with the Tyrol. All the while Marshal Augereau's reserve Corps was moving up from the Rhine to protect the main French lines of communication running over the Danube towards Strasbourg. Augsburg on the River Lech served as the 'Center of Operations' for all the formations of the Grande Armee to the south of the Danube. With such a brilliant manoeuvre and distribution of force, all sectors could be reinforced rapidly. General Mack was so demoralized by this enveloping manoeuvre that he succumbed without offering serious



resistance and Napoleon achieved the perfect bloodless victory.

- (2) **Strategy of Central Position.** This form of manoeuvre was employed both at Ulm and Austerlitz. At Ulm, after successful completion of strategic envelopment, Napoleon seized the city of Augsburg, cutting Mack's main line of communication. By placing himself at Augsburg, he caused psychological paralysis in enemy forces who capitulated without fighting. After Mack's capitulation, Napoleon was well poised to forestall any reinforcement from south and ward off Kutusov approaching from the east. At Austerlitz, Napoleon's central position at Brunn, between Iglao and Leoben gave him space for manoeuvre, allowing him to concentrate against either the Archdukes from the South or Kutusov from North East. Similarly, by successful employment of defensive baited gambit stratagem, he divided the battle area into two zones i.e. Goldbach in the South and Santon in the North. This arrangement ensured central positioning of his 60,000 troops at Blosowitz, ready to manoeuvre in any direction.

16. **Application of the Notions of Operational Strategy**

- a. **Centre of Gravity.** At Ulm Napoleon correctly identified the unified military might of Austro – Russian forces as their centre of gravity and set about to unhinge it by first destroying Mack's Army and then resolutely pursuing his Russian ally Kutusov. Once united at Austerlitz, Napoleon displaced centre of gravity of the Allies too far forward through induced baited gambit, that it became inextricably difficult for the Allies to regain equilibrium.

- b. **Balance.** Napoleon opened his campaign with a carefully balanced distribution of forces, which was never disturbed throughout the three months of the campaign. He maintained balance in the system of his force, with its offensive components, within mutually supporting distances, capable of employment in required direction, while ensuring security of manoeuvre with the French Cavalry and that of base of manoeuvre through defensive force. While sufficient reserves were catered for employment against any threat. At Austerlitz, he achieved decisive effects with a similar distribution of forces. On the other hand, he masterly executed defensive baited gambit to force imbalance in the Allied armies.
  
- c. **Time, Space and Relative Strength Matrix.** Napoleon through exacting toil and hard work was master in manipulation of TSR matrix in his favour. This particular campaign was one of the most decisive victories of history for him against superior strength of Austrian and Russian Armies. The principal factor in the scale of French victory was its relative combat effectiveness at the decisive point and balanced force in required time and space. Time always seemed to be on his side during this campaign. This was possible, firstly because of his forward planning and secondly because of mental and physical flexibility in movement of Army. By occupying space around Augsburg, he built a superior relative strength situation against both Mack's army and subsequently in pursuit of Kutusov. At Austerlitz, he kept his forces dispersed initially, within supporting distance, concentrating at the opportune time through synchronization, speed and a series of quick marches.

- d. **Culmination Point.** The art of offensive is to achieve decisive objectives before the culminating point is reached. At Austerlitz, Napoleon stretched his lines of communication too long. However, before this overstretching could start telling on Napoleon's offensive he temporarily transited to defensive mode for creating favourable situation for the resumption of his offensive.
  - e. **Strategic Effects.** At Ulm, the rear to front situation for Austrian forces in physical sphere led to total paralysis in the psychological realm. Capitulation without a major battle was a consequence of strategic effects caused by masterly manoeuvre. At Austerlitz, the stratagem employed by Napoleon at Pratzen Heights deprived the Allied of their freedom of action in the context of battle. The subsidiary effects of division through central rupture finally led to the dislocation of main Allied forces South of Pratzen Heights.
17. **Application of Principles of War**
- a. **Maintenance of Aim.** Aim must be pursued vigorously till its achievement. Napoleon's aim was dissolution of the Third Coalition, through piecemeal destruction of the constituent armies. Throughout the conduct of the campaign, Napoleon never deviated from this aim.
  - b. **Mobility.** "*Marches are war*". Movement was soul of Napoleonic war. In Battle of Ulm, Napoleon moved over 200,000 troops from Boulogne to Rhine in 21 days and then to Ulm in merely 11 days. The amazing performance was made possible by self-contained French Corps system.
  - c. **Concentration.** Napoleon was master of concentrating superior forces in time and space at the point of decision by cutting down all subsidiary operations.

The initially dispersed forces contracted, once the enemy was approached. In the Battle of Ulm, he concentrated his force from an initial front of 180 miles to finally 40 miles.

- d. **Surprise and Deception.** *“Surprised forces seldom regain control in battle”*. Napoleon’s surprises were seldom tactical ones, nearly all were strategic. In the battle of Ulm, it was indirectness of approach with speed and mobility due to which Mack had no clue of Napoleon’s concentration in the North until as late as 3 October. At Austerlitz, it was defensive baited gambit in which his imaginative deception of deliberately withdrawing from Pratzen Heights attracted the enemy’s main effort by showing a weak right flank that invited enemy’s shallow envelopment, thus, defeating the Allies in a planned manner. At Austerlitz, Napoleon concentrated his maximum effort against Plateau which was a critical space, and the Allies centre of gravity initially massed around it. This concentration of force was doubly enhanced by drawing the enemy to the South, creating a semi-vacuum which he exploited on his point of decision i.e. Pratzen Heights.

18. **Development of Theory of Warfare.** Napoleonic era left a deep impact on military thought process that resulted in an increase in military writing. Foremost among the school of military authors emerging from the Napoleonic era were Clausewitz and Jomini:-

- a. **Clausewitz.** Clausewitz was a writer of Napoleonic era, whose analyses had a deep impact on all future wars. His most significant contributions to the art of warfare include theories on war as an instrument of policy and centre of gravity. Napoleon’s principles adopted by Clausewitz are:

### *Napoleonic Art of Warfare*

- (1) **Theory of Absolute War.** In Napoleon, Clausewitz found the past master of his theory of absolute war. He believed that in the theory of war as a whole, the foremost place must be given to absolute form of warfare.
  - (2) **Centre of Gravity.** Based on the study of Napoleonic Wars, Clausewitz believed that to distinguish the centre of gravity of the enemy's military power was a supreme act of strategic judgement. It is one of the most important Clausewitzian theories as it governs the grand strategic aim of war.
  - (3) **Principles of War.** Clausewitz's principles of war were largely deduced from Napoleonic Warfare. His principles of concentration, rapidity and striking the final blow with utmost energy bear a close resemblance to Napoleon's maxim:  
*"In the art of war, as in mechanics, time is the grand element between weight and force".*
  - (4) **Concept of National War.** In Clausewitz's view this concept was aptly demonstrated by Napoleon, especially after the French Revolution. Since that time till today, war has become an affair of the entire nation.
- b. **Jomini.** He was first to show that Napoleon's campaigns and battles were based on the application of certain fundamental principles, that were valid in all times. His theories like base of operations, strategic direction, lines of defence, zones and lines of operations, pivots etc. are relevant even today. His important concepts related to military theory are:

- (1) **Unity of Command.** Jomini, impressed by Napoleon's unity of command and freedom of action, advocated total freedom to the military commander in waging war. "A government should choose its ablest military commander, and then leave him free to wage war according to scientific principles".
- (2) **Strategic Approach.** Jomini was influenced by Napoleonic Warfare. He was an exponent of use of 'Indirect Approach', and advocated employing maximum force at a point where enemy was weak.
- (3) **Interior and Exterior Lines.** Jomini advocated operations on interior lines. According to him a general operating on exterior lines could not exercise control over events. He has to delegate authority to his subordinate commanders.
- (4) **Concentration.** "The fundamental principle, the application of which renders all combinations effective and without which all are defective, consists in combining the greatest amount of one's forces against the decisive point". He also relates it to the concept of operations on interior lines, where greater forces can be concentrated at a point in earlier time frame than the enemy.

19. **Impact on Subsequent Wars.** The impact of Napoleon on Europe had been so broad and deep that his failure at Waterloo did little to reduce his stature. Field commanders have studied and applied the lessons of Napoleonic Campaigns and the theories put forward by his interpreters i.e. Clausewitz and Jomini. A few examples of emulation of Napoleonic concepts are:-

- a. **Austro-Prussian War 1866 and Franco-Prussian War 1870-71**

### *Napoleonic Art of Warfare*

- (1) The Prussian Army of mid nineteenth century owed its understanding of strategy to Napoleon. In the words of Hajo Holborn:  
“It was a foreign conqueror who reminded the Prussians of the role that strategy plays in warfare, thus, Napoleon became the second taskmaster of the Prussian Army (after Frederick)”.
- (2) The Prussians introduced universal conscription on the lines of the French.
- (3) Prussians recognized that war was an instrument of policy and pursued the operations until their political aims were achieved. They defeated both Austrians and the French in respective wars without causing them humiliation and, thus, secured favourable peace.

#### b. **World War I**

- (1) Schlieffen's Plan envisaged defence against Russia, on the Interior Lines and 'Advance of Envelopment' against France with seven armies. The offensive was based on a bold enveloping attack quite similar to Napoleon's great manoeuvre at Ulm.
- (2) The German defence of East Prussia in 1914 was an example of adoption of Napoleon's strategy of central position, against superior forces.

#### c. **World War II**

- (1) The German Army of Second World War was deeply influenced by the offensive spirit of Napoleon, his emphasis on manoeuvre and encirclement and his philosophy of decisive battles.

- (2) The Manstien Plan of 1940 stands out as an example of offensive strategy based on logical analysis and meticulous planning. Its breeding ground was the induced baited gambit stratagem of Austerlitz. The German offensive was a brilliant combination of both the indirect approach and the central position.

20. **Military System.** Napoleon was successful in moving the entire French Nation and her resources, meshing these in his military system. He not only fused a spirit of offensive in the Revolutionary Army, but also brought much more pride and dignity to the profession of arms. Some of the major strengths and weaknesses are covered in the succeeding paragraphs:-

- a. **Strengths of the System.** The strength and the vitality of system lay in the fact that Napoleon was able to successfully apply his concepts of war, strategic concepts, manoeuvres and principles of operations in most of the campaigns. Some of the strong points are as under:-

- (1) **Mobility and Flexibility.** By virtue of the organization of army in various corps, its inherent flexibility enabled Napoleon to move his corps separately on different axes, easing pressure on roads and logistics. This provided Napoleon not only with the ability to achieve mobility, but also enabled him to initially move in a controlled and dispersed manner on a broad front, forcing dispersion on the enemy, then concentrating rapidly at the required place and time at a relatively small front. In this way he not only surprised the enemy, but also achieved the desired force ratios. It was only towards the end of war that Prussians and English, having little



experience in largescale operations, introduced corps in 1815.

- (2) **Speed.**The fact that the French Army marched 120 paces to a minute, while her adversaries continued to march at their orthodox 70 paces a minute, enabled the Napoleon's Army to cover longer distances in comparatively shorter times. On numerous occasions, French armies literally outpaced their rivals, beating them in time and space.
- (3) **Security.** The grouping of varied resources with each corps and the manner in which these were employed was marvelous. Before the campaign, a strategic curtain of security was thrown to avoid leakage of information/intentions. During movement, strategic light screen would move in front and flanks covering the main force. This enabled the corps to move mutually supporting and arrive almost undetected at a given point which would invariably unnerve the adversary psychologically before the battle was even joined, as at Ulm.
- (4) **Tactics.** The combination of men and arms and terrain is the essence of combat. There is an optimum tactical system for any combination of weapons under any circumstances. French emerged with a highly flexible approach to tactics, the idea being to suit the tactics to the situation, while her enemies retained rigid formations. Line and column tactics were usual battle formations, whereas, French evolved a third tactical order i.e Mixed Order essentially a combination of line and column tactics, which was employed successfully by French army throughout the

campaigns. It is interesting to note that the Emperor hardly ever interfered in the tactical precepts of his marshals.

- (5) **Unity of Command.** Most of the armies had different agencies at the highest level of command. For example in case of Britain, the Board of Ordnance controlled the artillery, the exclusion of regular army command and the higher command arrangements were frequently a hindrance to flexibility. In contrast was Napoleon's command structure, under Napoleon himself as an exemplary commander and a master strategist, who not only conceived but also saw the successful execution of his plans with an exceptional unity of command and purpose.

b. **Weaknesses**

- (1) **Over Centralization of Command.** The enormous strength and simultaneously weakness of his system lay in over centralization of command in his person i.e Napoleon himself. This curbed the initiative at all levels. No body could take a decision in his absence. Napoleon was able to take advantage of unity of command in earlier campaigns but later on when his armies grew more in numbers and theatre of operations extended farther, the nature of war became more complex, it became impossible for a single man to control it efficiently. The system failed to provide the required direction, as in the campaign against Russia and at Waterloo.
- (2) **Imperial Guards.** It had one bad effect on the army. Ceaseless draining of the best

soldiers and squadrons undoubtedly weakened their parent units.

- (3) **Conscription.** After 1806 compulsory military service became increasingly unpopular, the number of conscripts deliberately avoiding call ups and desertions from the ranks rose steadily. The hunting down and rounding up of these dissatisfied and often desperate elements of society posed number of small problems for the police and National Guards.

(4) **Logistics**

- (a) **Living off the Land.** The terrain and communication system on the Continent of Europe, accelerated the speed, mobility and flexibility of his strategic operations. Availability of local resources also reduced his logistic worries but when he ventured in the vast terrain of Russia and Poland his logistic system failed, as there was nothing available for his troops to forage or live of the country. It was this system of living off the country, which finally turned the people of Europe against Napoleon.

- (b) **Stockpiles.** Supplying an army from stockpiles in magazines had its own limitations. Supplies would first have to be gathered and transported to the magazine. They would then have to be transported forwards to the troops that required them. This obviously required a large amount of transportation which would increase the farther an army travelled from its

magazines. Consequently the army would be tied to its supply trains, without which it would starve, limiting its room for manoeuvre, whilst also forcing it to defend its lines of communication from enemy threats.

### **Conclusion**

21. Finally to conclude, for the students of military history, there is perhaps no chapter more stimulating and rewarding than study of the Napoleonic Era. This presentation aimed at learning about Napoleon and his art of warfare. The panel endeavoured to focus on theoretical aspects in Part I, whereas, in Part II, battles of Ulm and Austerlitz were deliberated upon, which remain as classic examples of strategic move and tactical battle in the annals of military history. For all potential strategists, to understand operational strategy, the study of the campaign of Ulm-Austerlitz is a must.

**Map-1: The Continental System**



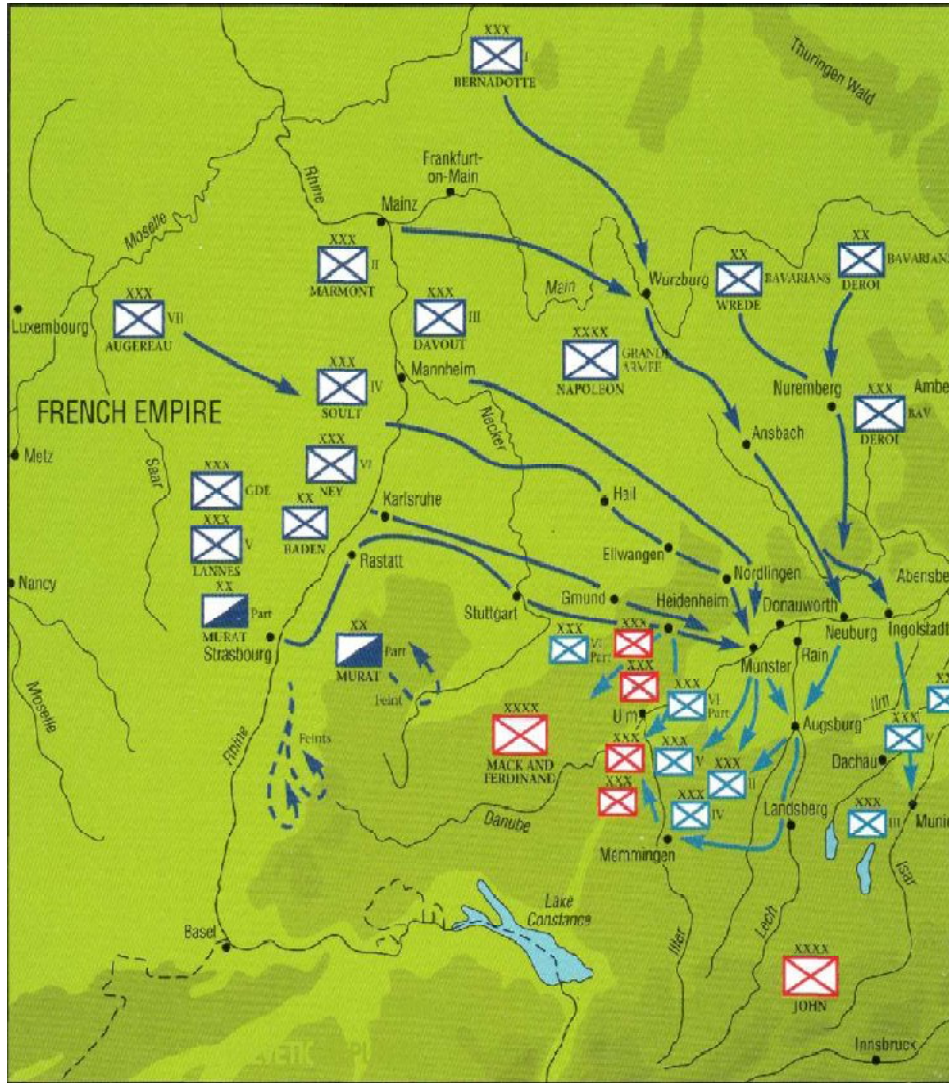


**Map-3: Area -Battle of Ulm - Allies Plan**



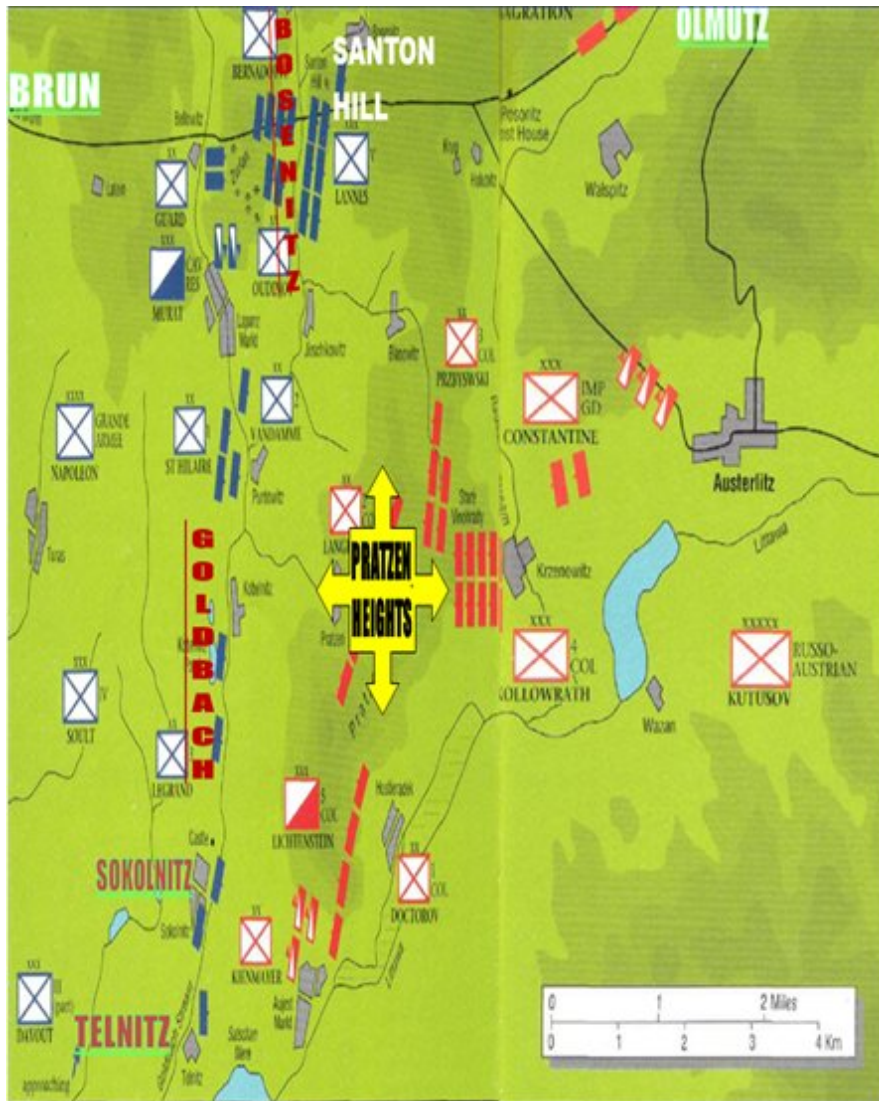


**Map-4: Ulm-French Plan & Conduct**

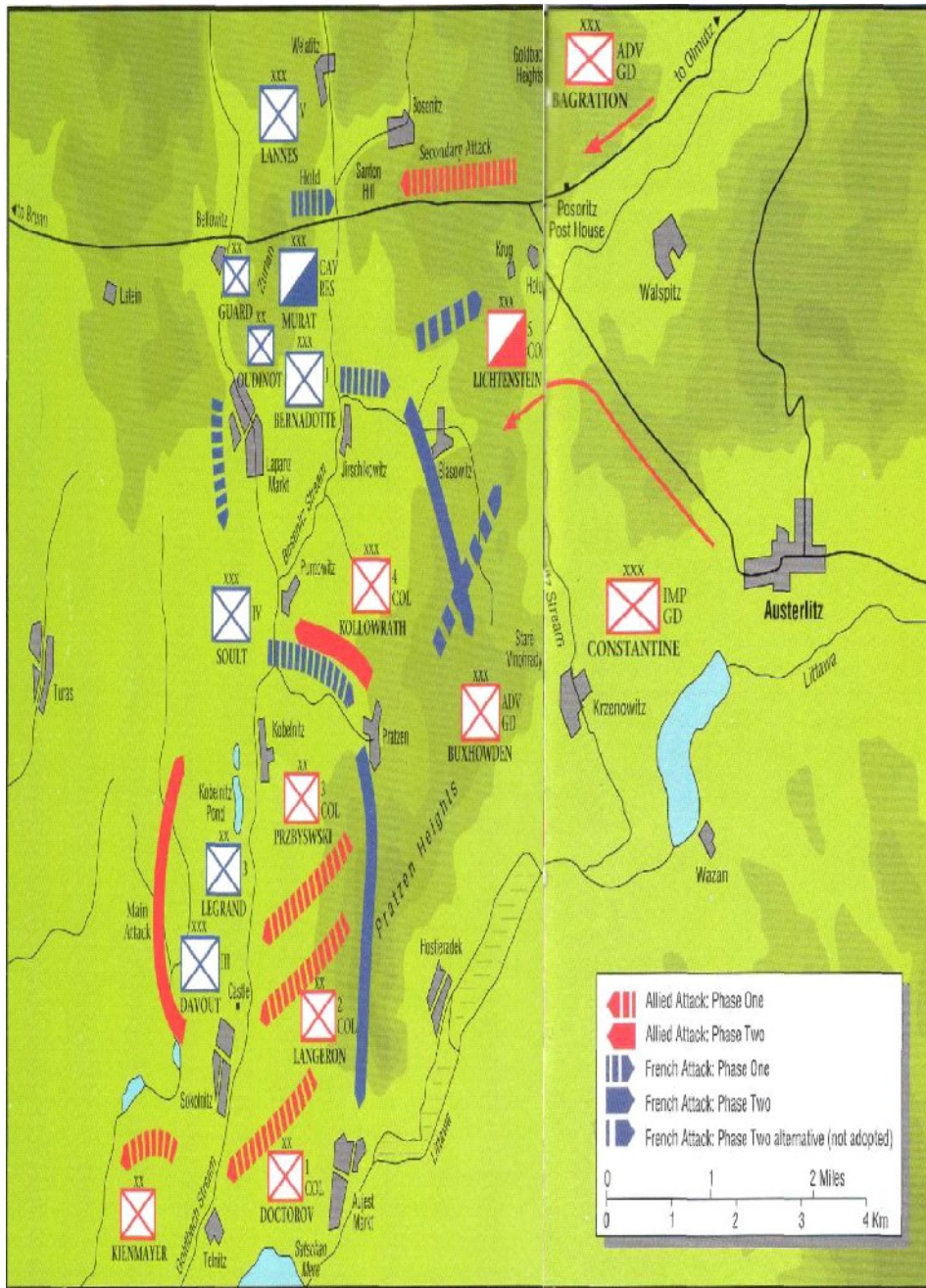




**Map-5: Battle of Austerlitz**



Map-6: Austerlitz - Opposing Plans



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## **WOLRD WAR-I**

### **Introduction**

1. Many political conflicts of today and of recent years are rooted in or created by the tensions of the pre-war and after-war period of World War 1. For example, conflicts in Kosovo, Albania, the Middle East and Balkans took their roots from First World War. The Second World War was a direct consequence of the Versailles Treaty and the inter-bellum was only a long pause between violent hostilities. In the First World War both belligerent parties, the Centrals and the Allies, developed high-tech weaponry and new tactics, which still influence the modern warfare. The high-tech inventions like the armoured cars, the tanks, the dreadnought-battleships, the zeppelins and poison gases were introduced during the First World War.

2. The murder of the crown prince Franz Ferdinand, the heir to Austro-Hungarian throne, sparked the onset of First World War. Ferdinand's death at the hands of the *Black Hand*, a Serbian nationalist secret society, set in train a mindlessly mechanical series of events that culminated in the world's first global war. Serbia was blamed for his murder. Austria and Germany did not take long to make this an excuse to declare war on Serbia, Russia and France. Germans opened the offensive by entering Belgium on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, hence, enticing the Great Britain to join the war. The war on western front characterized stagnation due to protracted trench warfare. However, the conduct of war on eastern front remained fluid because of greater distances and greater differences between the equipment of the armies. Mobile operations of old style were possible here, resulting into decisive operations. Russian offensive in East Prussia saw series of classic battles in which numerically inferior Germans decisively defeated Russians. Confrontation amongst the contending powers was based on the ambit of two alliances, which prolonged the war much beyond their myopic objectives and to the annihilation of millions of people.

3. The battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes are, perhaps, the most spectacular and were the only complete German victories of the First World War. The encirclement and destruction of the Russian Second Army in late August 1914 virtually ended Russia's invasion of East Prussia. This war had enormous political ramifications and stands, as a case study of numerous errors and contributing misjudgements and became a tragic testament to Russia's weak leadership coupled, with inadequate logistics. The classic application of operational strategy in this battle will remain an area of interest for students of military history for times to come.

***Aim***

4. To carry out an analytical study of the battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes with a view to understanding the impact of the strategic environment on operational planning and to draw relevant lessons.

***Scope***

5. The paper is developed to have an overview of campaign on the Eastern Theatre in general and Prussian Theatre of Operation in particular. Following aspects are covered:-

a. **Part-I: Strategic Environment and its Impact**

- (1) Prelude to the War
- (2) The Balance of Power
- (3) Emergence of Alliances
- (4) War Strategies

b. **Part-II: Operational Environment and War Plans**

- (1) Operational Environment on Eastern Front
- (2) War Plans

c. **Part-III: The Battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes**

- (1) Zone of Operation
- (2) Opposing Forces
- (3) Opposing Plans
- (4) Conduct of Operations

d. **Part-IV: Analysis and Lessons Learnt**

- (1) Analysis
- (2) Lessons Learnt.



**PART – I**

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT AND ITS IMPACT**

**Prelude to War**

1. During Franco-German Conflict of 1870-71, France had suffered total defeat at the hands of Germany and lost the Provinces of Lorraine and Alsace. During the later decades, France remained obsessed with the aim of recapturing her lost territories and Germany kept conspiring to keep France weak, isolated and powerless. In Europe, the turn of the century was also witnessing a period of nationalistic fervour; Austro-Russian dispute over the spoils of the receding Ottoman Empire in Balkans, clash of interests over colonial expansions and unprecedented commercial rivalries were the hallmark of that period.

2. In World War I, Germany was regarded to be the offender for invading Belgium and France in August 1914. As Britain had pledged to protect Belgium, German invasion compelled her to join war. The deep-rooted causes of War existed in the rise of nationalism, build up of military power, colonial expansion and military alliances:-

- a. **Nationalism.** The Napoleonic era had spread the political idea, that people of same ethnicity, language and political ideology had the right to exist as independent states. This concept of nationalism increased the possibility of war due to conflict of national interests amongst various nations.
- b. **Colonial Expansion.** The industrial development of Europe was dependant on colonies in Asia and Africa for raw material and markets for investment. The race for colonial expansion gave way to strained relations and limited military conflicts amongst rival powers.
- c. **Military Expansion.** All great states set about building up their strength by increasing their military

organisations with the objective of absolute power to project their own collective image.

### **The Balance of Power**

3. The balance of power in Europe was a major issue, when World War-1 was declared in August 1914. The major protagonists; Germany, Great Britain, France and Russia believed that they held the balance of power when war was declared and the statistics seemed to bear this out, if each nation studied only its own strengths. However, the mutual suspicion amongst all major powers resulted into formulation of alliances to thwart the lingering threats. The combination of old tactics and new weapons led to the horrors of trench warfare and all that is associated with it, something the powers had failed to add into their calculations with regards to the balance of power in Europe:

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Great Britain</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>A-Hungary</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
Population (M)	46	40	167	65	50	21
Soldiers*	0.71	3.5	4.4	8.5	3	0.36
Merchant fleet (tons in M)	11.5	1.1	0.5	3.1	0.56	0.07
Battleships	64	28	16	40	16	-
Cruisers	121	34	14	57	12	-
Submarines	64	73	29	23	6	-
Value foreign trade (£)	1,223	424	190	1,030	199	67
Steel prod (M)**	7	4	4	17	2	-
Railways ***	23,441	25,471	46,573	39,439	27,545	3,882

\* In 1914 on mobilisation

^ including British Empire

~ Emergency maximum figure

\*\* tons

\*\*\* miles

(Source: <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk>)

## **Emergence of Alliances**

4. **General (Map-1).** The pulls and pressures in the volatile geo-political environment of Europe saw various nations forging military alliances. The two distinct alliances, therefore, emerged before the outbreak of First World War:

- a. **Tripple Alliance.** The alliance between Germany and Austria was natural. Both spoke the same language (German) and had a similar culture. In previous centuries, they had both been part of the Holy Roman Empire. Austria was in political trouble in the southeast of Europe-the Balkans. She needed the might of Germany to back her up, if trouble got worse. Italy had joined these countries, as she feared their power on her northern borders. Germany was mainland, Europe's most powerful country, so from Italy's point of view, being an ally of Germany was an obvious choice. Besides that, Italy was hurt due to French occupation of Tunisia. Each member of the Tripple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy) promised to help the others if they were attacked by another country.
- b. **Tripple Entente.** The Tripple Entente was less structured than the Tripple Alliance. 'Entente' means understanding and the members of the Entente (Britain, France and Russia) did not have to promise to help the other two if they got attacked by other countries but the understanding was that each member would support the others, but the terms were not fixed. France was suspicious of Germany. She had a huge army but a poor navy. Britain had the world's most powerful navy and a small army. Britain was also concerned about Germany, because she was building up a new and powerful navy. The inclusion of Russia seemed odd when Russia was so far from France and Britain. Russia also had a huge army and with France on the west of Germany, the 'message' sent to Germany was well pronounced.



## **War Strategies**

5. **German Strategy.** The German strategy was as under:-
  - a. The Germans were faced with dilemma of two front wars and that the combined forces of Germany and Austria were inferior in strength to those of France and Russia. However, while exploiting the advantage of their central position, they also anticipated that Russia's mobilization would be too slow to allow her to exert serious pressure in the opening weeks of war.
  - b. The strategy, therefore, adopted by Germany was to undertake a rapid offensive against France in the west. In the east, Russian advance was to be held with the help of Austro-Hungary. Later, Germany was to destroy Russian Army, after shifting of forces from the west.
  
6. **French-Russian Strategy.** The joint strategy was aimed at initiating a two front's war against Germany. France would undertake offensive operations on western front, while Russian operations in the east would aim at forcing Germany to shift forces from west to the east, thereby, releasing the pressure from French forces. Russian strategy was to attack Germany in East Prussia, with a view to exerting pull on German troops in the west and also to undertake a major offensive against Austro-Hungarian forces.

**PART – II**  
**OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND WAR PLANS**

**Operational Environment on Eastern Front (Map-1)**

1. Russia shared a common border with Germany and Austria-Hungary that extended for more than 100 miles. Poland, then a Russian province, formed a 250 miles wide salient, abutting Germany on the west and northwest and Austria-Hungary on the south. Its western border was only 180 miles from Berlin. To its north was East Prussia, 80 miles of German territory sandwiched between Poland and the Baltic Sea that could be severed through a successful drive from the rest of Germany. The Austro-Hungary also had a vulnerable province, Galicia, whose rich lands were separated from the rest of Austria-Hungary by the Carpathian Mountains. The strategy of the Eastern Front belligerents was influenced by these geographic conditions. Hence, Eastern Front defined the German border of East Prussia with Russia and Russian Poland, Austro-Hungarian border facing Russian Poland in the north and her Galician border with Russia in the east.

2. In the final stages of planning, as the political events unfolded, Russians gave more importance to deal with Austro-Hungarian Empire. Russian envisaged launching offensive on German East Prussia with two armies, while remaining four armies were deployed along Austro-Hungarian border. Russian inclination to concentrate against Austria first was primarily for racial motives. However, French pressure to launch simultaneous offensive against Germany forced Russians to plan an offensive in East Prussia in earlier time frame.

3. Austria had planned to deal with Serbia with bulk of the forces initially and later focus on Russia, as she visualized slow Russian mobilization. Germans wanted Austrians to concentrate against Russia to dilute and divert her effort against Germany in East Prussia. In the wake of German pressure, Austria planned to launch a major offensive against Russia to expel Russians from Poland. They also expected, and had also undertaking, that Germans would

launch offensive from East Prussia into Poland and join Austrian forces to cut off Russians.

### **War Plans**

4. **German Schlieffen Plan.** Count Alfred Von Schlieffen (1833-1913) was the German Chief of General Staff. Much influenced by the battle of Cannae, he dwelt on the need for the left wing to fall back before the French, drawing them deeper into the trap. Having won a decisive victory in the west, Germany could then use interior lines to shift armies to the east to beat the Russians, who would then sue for peace. However, the Schlieffen Plan underwent a number of changes from its conception till final adoption in 1914, due to geo-political, as well as military reasons:-

- a. **Original Schlieffen Plan (Map-2).** The Schlieffen Plan was Germany's key war plan for invading France at the start of World War-I. It involved marching through Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg in order to knock France out of the war quickly. It was also called the 'Hammer Plan'. The plan called for sending 91% of the German troops to France and 9% to Russia. His goal was to defeat France in six weeks, the time it took for Russia to mobilize its army, and turn back to the Eastern Front before Russia could react. Kaiser Wilhelm II is quoted as having said "*Paris for lunch, dinner at St. Petersburg*". It envisioned a rapid German mobilization, disregard of the neutrality of Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands, and an overwhelming sweep of the powerful German right wing southwest through Belgium and Northern France, "letting the last man on the right, brush the Channel with his sleeve", in the words of Schlieffen, while maintaining only a defensive posture on the central and left wings, in Lorraine, the Vosges, and the Moselle:-

- (1) **Western Theatre**

- (a) **Northern Wing.** Main Effort, comprising First, Second, and Third Armies (70 Divisions) to operate along Belgium – Dutch

frontiers to outflank French forces and reach Paris.

- (b) **Central Sector.** Auxiliary Effort, comprising Fourth and Fifth Armies (5 Divisions) to form a pivot on fortresses of Metz and Thionville facing Verdun.
  - (c) **Southern Wing.** Auxiliary Effort, comprising Sixth and Seventh Armies (5 Divisions) to conduct retrograde battle to lure the French out of their fortifications to attack Lorraine and Alsace.
- (2) **East Prussian Theatre.** Eighth Army (10 Divisions) was dedicated to hold Russians up till River Vistula.
  - (3) **Time Framework.** Annihilation of French forces was planned by fourth week of offensive to shift forces to East by sixth week.
- b. **Modified Schlieffen-Moltke Plan (1906-1914) (Map-3).** Von Moltke succeeded Schlieffen as German Chief of Staff on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1906. Like Schlieffen, Moltke the Younger was also seduced by the possibility of the double envelopment of the entire French Army by the right wing coming from the north and west of France and the left wing coming from the east, before the 'Russian Steamroller' would be able to mobilize and descend upon East Prussia. He modified the plan, owing to a number of operational/ political compulsions. He disagreed with at least some of the Schlieffen Plan, thinking it to be too risky. The Plan, however, having been devised in 1905, was now too much a part of German military thinking to be abandoned completely, so all Moltke could do was modify it. Moltke decided to pull significant numbers of troops away from the main force entering France from the north, in order to fortify the forces in Alsace-Lorraine, and the forces at the Russian border. The other

significant change he made was not to enter through the Netherlands, instead sending troops through Belgium alone. The changed Plan was as following:-

- (1) **Northern Wing.** Effort comprising First, Second, and Third Armies (58 Divisions) to operate along Belgium – Luxemburg frontiers to outflank French forces.
- (2) **Southern Wing.** Effort comprising Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Armies (20 Divisions) to push the French Armies westwards and to complete the envelopment.
- (3) **Reserve.** Ninth Army was kept in the centre to reinforce either theatre.
- (4) **East Prussian Theatre.** Eighth Army (10 Divisions) was to hold Russians till shifting of forces from west to the east.

5. **French Plan XVII (Map-4).** The plan was based on two faulty assumptions firstly, the Germans would not bring in reserves along with their active formations and secondly the main weight of German offensive would come through Ardennes. The plan was based on exaggerated French offensive doctrine. Its design was to stall German offensive by dividing the two wings of German Armies through a frontal rupture at German centre. The French armies were disposed off as following:

- a. First Army at Epinal to advance along axis Baccaret-Surreburg.
- b. Second Army to advance along axis Chateau Salins-Sarrebrucken.
- c. Third Army at Verdun.
- d. Fourth Army at St. Dizlar to move north or south of Third Army, depending upon the German attack from Ardennes or from Alsace-Lorraine.

- e. Fifth Army at Sedan to stand guard against a German flanking movement from Luxembourg and Belgian Ardennes.
6. **Russian Plan No. 19 (Map-5).** The Russian plan no.19 was as under:-
- a. Plan No. 19 was written in 1912. It was based on the need to save the French from isolation in the initial weeks of the war. It envisaged an attack on East Prussia from east and south with four armies. The aim was to help divert German troops from the west. The plan was based on the assumption that Germans would leave between 16 to 25 divisions in the east.
  - b. In May 1912, Plan No. 19 'Altered' came into existence. It had two variants; Plan G and Plan A.
  - c. Plan G (Germania) would materialize in case Germany attacked Russia, while Plan A (Austria) dealt with the situation in case Germany attacked France and was finally implemented.
  - d. Third, Fourth, Fifth and Eighth Armies, as south-western group to provide concentration of Russian troops against Austro-Hungarian Army.
  - e. First and Second Armies (29 Infantry and 8 Cavalry Divisions), as north-western group, to launch offensive against East Prussia.
  - f. Ninth Army was kept in reserve at Warsaw.



**PART- III**  
**THE BATTLES OF TANNENBERG AND MASURIAN LAKES**

**Zone of Operation (Map-6)**

1. **General.** The salient of East Prussia was 160 – 180 miles in length and 80 – 100 miles in width. River Vistula was at its base in the west. Extending from north to south, 50 miles long chain of Masurian Lakes, almost in the centre of East Prussia, divided it in three distinct sectors. Combined with this was a natural system of rivers having numerous tributaries, mostly emanating from the lakes. From north to south, the country was separated into four distinct regions as follows:-

- a. **Konigsberg Area.** A fortified zone with a depth of about 20 miles; it was protected by a non-fordable Deime River in the east and line of field works in the south. It was a very strong flanking position, which would threaten any force passing towards its south, through the Insterburg Gap.
- b. **Insterburg Gap.** It was a 43 miles wide gap north of the lakes and south of River Pregel, through which ran the Insterburg – Allenstein railway line. The area was open, undulating, at places marshy and having large forests like Rominten Forest. It constituted a suitable corridor for combined combat forces. River Angerap running north to south upto Angerburg gave strength to this gap and provided a natural defence line.
- c. **Masurian Lakes.** Located in the northern part of Poland, lies the Masurian Lakes Plateau, known as the 'Land of a Thousand Lakes'. It has the biggest concentration of lakes in Poland, with 15% of area covered by water. These lakes are remnants of the ice age, when all of north-eastern Poland and parts of Europe were covered by ice. There are over 4000 lakes in the whole area, linked by rivers and canals to form an intricate system of water ways. A 50 miles long,



continuous chain of lakes, extending from Angerburg in the north to Johannesburg in the south, constituted a strategic barrier. It was considered a complete obstacle and was easily defensible but unsuitable for offensive action.

- d. **Johannesburg – Soldau Sector.** A 75 miles stretch from Johannesburg to Soldau, was a waste land on the Russian side. It was characterized by sandy soil, badly tended forest and marshy streams. The German side of frontier with roads and a parallel railway lines was better developed. Tannenberg was a small village of no significance, located approximately 15 miles north of Soldau.

2. **Communication Infrastructure.** Military considerations for developing or ignoring to develop roads and railways on both the sides had a profound effect on the conduct as well as on the final outcome of the campaign:-

- a. **Railways**

- (1) **German Railways.** To meet the operational requirements within their strategic designs, the Germans had developed an excellent railway network consisting of 17 lines in East Prussia, which allowed movement of 500 trains each day. This system allowed transportation of huge army in a short time. Multiple rail spurs diverged from main lines to numerous frontier areas for rapid shifting of troops to meet emergencies. Two main railway lines of significance in East Prussia were:

- (a) Insterburg–Konigsberg–Marienburg – Soldau.
- (b) Insterburg – Allenstein – Osterode – Soldau.

- (2) **Russian Railways.** Russians had deliberately ignored to develop the railways in their territory. They had mainly 6 lines leading to Warsaw from interior Russia. Main railway lines had a few branches which had little military use. Moreover, Russians had a different railway gauge, which was

not compatible with the ones available in the projected area of operation, thus, precluding the use of existing system across the frontier.

- b. **Roads.** Owing to the fear of a German onslaught in the south, the road communication on the Russian side was deliberately ignored. The state of the roads was particularly poor in the southern area, where the main pincer of the Russian offensive was to materialize.
- c. **Penetrants.** The available penetrants on the both sides were as under:-
  - (1) **Russian Side**
    - (a) Vilna – Kovno – Stalluponen.
    - (b) Bialystock–Lyck – Lotzen.
    - (c) Warsaw – Mlawa.
  - (2) **East Prussian Side**
    - (a) Konigsberg – Stalluponen.
    - (b) Konigsberg – Lotzen.
    - (c) Marienburg – Eylau – Soldau.
- d. **Laterals.** The existing laterals in the area were as follows:
  - (1) **Russian Side.** Vilna – Bialystock – Warsaw.
  - (2) **East Prussian Side**
    - (a) Konigsberg – Marienburg – Eylau.
    - (b) Insterburg – Allenstein – Eylau.

3. **Salient Conclusions from Zone of Operation (Map-6).**

The major conclusions from Zone of operations are:-

- a. East Prussian Salient was prone to double pincer/envelopment.
- b. The strategic barrier formed by Masurian Lakes denied mutual support to offensive pincers.
- c. Successive lines of defence were available to Germans; Masurian Lakes – Angerapp River, Gumbinean–Insterburg - Bischofsburg, Deime River – Alle River, Konigsberg – Prigel River – Tannenberg – Saladu and Vistula River.

- d. Königsberg Garrison was an important pivot of manoeuvre for projecting operations in the north.
- e. Well-developed road and railroad communication infrastructure in East Prussian salient provided strategic advantage of a central position and operations on interior lines to the defender.
- f. The terrain friction in the Salient helped the defender, while curtailing freedom of movement of attacker. Space for employment of large scale forces was restricted in the north and through the Masurian Lakes, however, southern part afforded employment of large scale offensive forces.
- g. Difficult terrain in the south and un-developed communication infrastructure had retarding effects on the logistic back up for the offensive, thus, having serious implications on the speed of operation.
- h. River Vistula provided a strong defensive line at the base of Salient.
- i. Area bounded by Insterburg – Brandenburg – Allenstein was critical for ensuring freedom of movement.

#### **Opposing Forces**

4. **German Forces.** German Eighth Army was assigned to defend East Prussia and was initially commanded by General Prittwitz. Within a few days of the campaign, Prittwitz was replaced by General Hindenburg who was assisted by General Ludendorff as his Chief of Staff. The composition of Eighth Army was as under:

- a. 1 Corps.
- b. 17 Corps.
- c. 20 Corps.
- d. Reserve Corps (1).
- e. 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Division.
- f. Cavalry Division (1).
- g. Guns (774).

5. **Russian Forces.** For the operations in East Prussia, North Western Army Group, commanded by General Zhilinski, had two armies, the First Army and the Second Army:

- a. **First Army.** Commanded by General Rennenkampf. It consisted of:
  - (1) 3 Corps.
  - (2) 4 Corps.
  - (3) 20 Corps.
  - (4) Cavalry Divisions (5).
  - (5) Guns (492).
- b. **Second Army.** Commanded by General Samsonov. It consisted of:
  - (1) 1 Corps.
  - (2) 2 Corps.
  - (3) 6 Corps.
  - (4) 13 Corps.
  - (5) 15 Corps.
  - (6) 23 Corps.
  - (7) Cavalry Divisions (3).
  - (8) Guns (738).

6. **Relative Strength.** The comparison of opposing forces in the East Prussian Theatre was:-

	<b>German</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
Infantry Divisions	13	29	1 : 2.23
Cavalry Divisions	1	8	1 : 8
Guns	774	1230	1 : 1.58

(Source: Edmund Ironside, Major General. "Tannenberg, the First Thirty Days in East Prussia", William Blackwood and Sons 1925)

7. **Quality of Forces**

- a. **Personnel.** In terms of quality of manpower, the state was under:
  - (1) **Russia.** Mostly illiterates, 75 percent non commissioned officers were conscripts who lacked

initiative. Russian units composed of two-third Russians and one-third subject races, such as Letts, Balts, and Poles. On mobilisation, units were filled up by local reservists.

- (2) **Germany.** Percentage of illiterates was negligible. In Germany, the reserve of officers and non commissioned officers was proportionately the highest in Europe. German units were strictly territorial. The esprit de corps of German units was distinctly higher than that of Russian units.

b. **Armament**

- (1) The Germans were superior to the Russians in Artillery, especially in Heavy Artillery, the proportion of Guns to Rifles in the two Armies being:

(a) **Russian Army:** 1 Gun to 292 Rifles.

(b) **German Army:** 1 Gun to 166 Rifles.

- (2) In Heavy Artillery, the superiority in favour of the Germans was 10 to 1. A German Infantry Division, with 12,000 rifles and 72 guns, was a much stronger fighting instrument than a Russian Infantry Division with 14,000 rifles and 48 guns. In Russia, reserves of all armament were small due to small industrial resources and isolated position.

- c. **Transport.** At the outbreak of war Russia possessed only 679 motor vehicles, while there were 475 civilian motor vehicles in the country which could be requisitioned. The Germans, on the other hand, were well supplied. The Russians had to depend wholly upon horse transport in front of railhead. The German Army was, thus, more mobile than the Russian Army.

- d. **Aircrafts.** Aircrafts did not play a great part in the campaign in East Prussia, except for a few reconnaissance missions.

- e. **Training.** The general standard of training in the Russian Army was inferior to that in the German Army. Great strides had, however, been made since the days of the Manchurian War, especially in the Artillery. The Cavalry appears to have failed to keep up with the rest of the Army, and was the most deficient in training of all the arms.
- f. **Technical Equipment.** In the Russian Army the most serious deficiency lay in the lack of telephone, wireless, and telegraph personnel and equipment. On the other hand, the Germans were well supplied with signal equipment.
- g. **Leadership.** The Russian Commanders had all risen to high rank at a comparatively young age. They had had opportunities of commanding large units in peace. While most of the time in their career remaining on staff appointments, they had little experience of commanding smaller units. The majority had gained recent war experience in the Manchurian War, whereas, the German Commanders had no recent war experience. The German command and staff had been created by years of profound study of war in all its bearings. The greatest weakness of the Russian Command and Staff lay in their ignorance of organisation and administration which were, perhaps, the strongest points of the Germans. Old rivalry between commanders of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Armies also had a telling effect on the outcome of war.

### **Opposing Plans**

8. **Russian Offensive Plan (Map-7).** Russian North West Group was tasked to defeat German Forces in East Prussia, thereby, creating conditions favourable for advance towards Berlin, through induction of a new army:-

- a. **Design of Operation.** Using converging directions with two pincers; Northern pincer to draw bulk of German

forces while the Southern pincer to envelop German forces for ultimate annihilation.

b. **Scheme of Operation**

(1) **Main Effort.** Commencing operation on 19<sup>th</sup> August, Second Russian Army was to advance from south in north-westerly direction to secure Line Rastenburg-Seeburg linking up with Auxiliary Effort at Allenstein to strike a decisive blow on German forces.

(2) **Auxiliary Effort.** Commencing operation on 17<sup>th</sup> August, First Russian Army was to advance to Line Insterburg–Angerburg, turning to the Masurian Lakes from the north with a view to distracting the largest possible part of the German forces towards northeast.

c. **Coordinating Aspect**

(1) Protective manoeuvre through Masurian Lakes between both Armies was the responsibility of Second Army.

(2) Advance to be proceeded by reconnaissance in force by cavalry of respective armies.

9. **German Plan.** The German plan was as follow:-

a. **Tasks Assigned to Eighth Army.** To delay enemy and defend East Prussia till arrival of reinforcement. However, contingent to overwhelming strength, may withdraw behind River Vistula.

b. **Plan of Eighth Army (Map-8)**

(1) **Design of Operation.** To strike with full strength against whichever Russian pincer came first within striking distance, while containing the other, then move swiftly to strike second pincer.

(2) **Scheme of Operation.** Visualizing the Northern pincer to be commencing earlier, Commander Eighth Army decided to concentrate the bulk of his Army in Northern Sector while

holding Southern Sector, with one Corps and maintaining adequate reserves at Bischofsburg.

- (3) **Northern Sector**
  - (a) **Extreme Left.** Second Landwehr Brigade on extreme left flank along River Memel.
  - (b) **Left.** First Corps along Line Gumbinnen–Insterburg.
  - (c) **Centre and Right.** First Reserve Corps in the centre and right along River Angerap from Lake Mauer northwards.
  - (d) **Extreme Right.** Third Reserve Division holding gaps between the Lakes from Nicolaiken to Lotzen.
- (4) **Southern Sector**
  - (a) Twentieth Corps was to protect the right flank and was deployed around Ortelsburg.
  - (b) **Rear Area Security.** Garrison troops and Seventieth Landwehr Brigade occupying positions on extreme south of Twentieth Corps.
- (5) **Reserves.** Seventeenth Corps, on the main lateral in general area Bischofsburg.
- (6) **Surveillance Elements.** Under respective corps.

### **Conduct of Operations**

10. Battles in East Prussian Theatre can be divided in three phases:-

- a. **Phase I:** Battles of Gumbinnen.
- b. **Phase II:** Move of German Eighth Army to South.
- c. **Phase III:** Battle of Tannenberg.
- d. **Phase IV:** Battle of Masurian Lakes.

11. **Phase I – Battle of Gumbinnen (Map-9).** Russian First Army's (3, 4 and 20 Corps) offensive opened in North Eastern Sector as under:-



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- a. The disjointed and delayed advance of Russian First Army on 17<sup>th</sup> August was exploited by an attack by German Army's First Corps, which was defending Insterburg Gap with an exaggerated forward defensive posture. The leading Russian formation i.e. Third Corps was defeated, Germans later successfully fell back to Gumbinnen.
- b. After the initial setback, Russian advance continued westwards.
- c. Meanwhile Russian Second Army had started its move towards frontier on 19<sup>th</sup> August, raising concerns in German Eighth Army Headquarters.
- d. Eighth Army launched a hasty and disjointed frontal attack on 20<sup>th</sup> August at Gumbinnen but with a partial success.
- e. Under unfavourable situation the Germans retreated towards rear position.
- f. Commander First Russian Army misread the German withdrawal to be a general retreat and made the fatal decision of holding back the pursuit, thus, losing contact.
- g. This decision had a profound impact on subsequent operations in the Theatre.
- h. Anticipating Russian First Army's pursuit through the Insterburg Gap, thereby, splitting his Army into two parts and mindful of move of Russian Second Army from south, Commander Eighth German Army General Prittwitz decided for a general retreat behind River Vistula to save his Army from annihilation.
- i. Prittwitz sought blessing of German High Command for his intended retreat, his proposal was immediately turned down by Moltke and on 21<sup>st</sup> August, Prittwitz along with his Chief of Staff were replaced by General Hindenburg along with Major General Ludendorff as Chief of Staff.

- j. Moltke also ordered move of two corps (11 Corps and Reserve Cavalry Corps) from Western Theatre to reinforce Eastern Theatre.
12. **Phase II – Move of German Eighth Army to South (Map-10).** The scheme of operation in phase-II was as under:-
- a. **Modified German Plan.** The inactivity of Russian First Army, confirmed by wireless intercepts prompted German General Staff to a modified plan, approved by new Commander, to leave only necessary troops to screen the Russians in the north while shifting the bulk of the Eighth Army to the south against the Russian Second Army. The plan envisaged:
    - (1) Only First Cavalry Division minus to screen Northern Sector.
    - (2) First Reserve Corps, Seventeenth Corps and a cavalry brigade to move through road along the lakes to reinforce left flank of German Twentieth Corps deployed in the south.
    - (3) First Corps and Third Reserve Division to move by rail to deploy on the right and left flanks of Twentieth Corps respectively.
  - b. The move and concentration of German Army completed in 3 days from 23-25 August.
13. **Phase III – Battle of Tannenberg (Map-11).** The phase-III envisaged following plans:-
- a. **Russian Plan.** Russian Second Army's Plan was to attack with the strong centre having flank protection and link-up with the First Army, trapping the German forces retreating from north as following:
    - (1) Thirteenth and Fifteenth Corps to advance towards modified objectives of Allenstein-Osterode, with Twenty-Third Corps as reserves. This was westward of originally assigned objectives.
    - (2) While protecting the left flank, First Corps was to engage enemy in general area Lautenberg.

- (3) Protective manoeuvre on right flank by Sixth Corps, while advancing towards Bischofsburg.
  - (4) The broader analysis is as under:-
    - (a) It was based on the faulty perception about German Army that it would be on retreat and Southern Sector would be lightly held.
    - (b) Strategic line of advance on over extended frontages presented an exposed right flank of Second Army and dilution in space.
    - (c) Plan did not cater for the depleted logistic condition of the Army.
- b. **German Plan**
- (1) **Plan.** To exploit the vulnerabilities of Russian Second Army's over extended frontages and exposed right flank, the Germans decided to execute a double envelopment.
  - (2) **Dispositions.** The dispositions were as under:-
    - (a) Twentieth Corps already in defence to serve as pivot of manoeuvre.
    - (b) First Corps to attack Russian left flank.
    - (c) Seventeenth Corps and First Reserve Corps to penetrate and turn the right flank of the Russian Second Army.
    - (d) Having penetrated the flanks, the Russian Centre was to be enveloped.
- c. **Conduct of Battle**
- (1) On 26<sup>th</sup> August, the Russian strong centre (Thirteenth and Fifteenth Corps) contacted the German's weak centre (Twentieth Corps), inflicting heavy initial losses to the Germans. The Germans pulled back to Tannenberg – Muhlen.
  - (2) However, on the same day, Russian Sixth Corps on extreme right, was surprised by newly arrived German Seventeenth Corps' attack, forcing it to retreat towards Ortelsburg. The right flank of the

Russian centre was turned, exposing the rear and flank of the main thrust.

- (3) On 27<sup>th</sup> August, the German First Corps breached left flank of Russian Second Army through Russian First Corps.
- (4) The Russian Central Corps (Thirteenth, Fifteenth and Twenty-Third Corps) knew little about their southern/ western flanks and continued advancing.
- (5) On 27<sup>th</sup> August, German First Corps pierced through the Russian left flank at Usdau, while German Seventeenth Corps tightened the noose from the north (right flank) hastening to complete the envelopment-blocking exit for escape of Russian Army.
- (6) By 31<sup>st</sup> August, Russian Thirteenth, Fifteenth and Twenty-Third Corps had been completely destroyed, whereas, their First and Sixth Corps had been badly mauled. Germans had taken 92,000 Russian prisoners. In extreme humiliation, Commander Second Russian Army, General Samsonov committed suicide.

14. **Phase IV - Battle of Masurian Lakes (Map-12).** Phase-IV was executed as follows:-

- a. **Russian Plan.** The capitulation of Russian Second Army forced Russian First Army in the Northern Sector to a defensive posture. The Plan envisaged a strong defensive line along the rivers to cover Insterburg Gap and the Masurian Lakes.
  - (1) It was a linear deployment without depth and reserves.
  - (2) Bias of defence towards Konigsberg was based on faulty perception, whereas, threat was from south.
- b. **German Plan.** With reinforcement of two corps and a cavalry division from the Western Front, the German Plan contemplated envelopment of Russians from the South i.e. Russian left flank:

- (1) **Plan**
    - (a) 4 x Corps (8x divisions) were to launch wide frontal attack through the Insterburg Gap.
    - (b) Seventeenth Corps (two divisions) was to move through Lotzen Gap conducting a shallow enveloping manoeuvre.
    - (c) First Corps (two divisions) with Third Reserve Division (plus) was tasked a deep enveloping manoeuvre from south of Masurian Lakes.
  - (2) **Analysis.** The distribution of forces between the main effort (main thrust) and the auxiliary effort (turning movement) was not proportional.
- c. **Conduct of Battle**
- (1) Contact between opposing armies was established on 7<sup>th</sup> September.
  - (2) On 8<sup>th</sup> September, German offensive all along the front met little success upto the line of River Dieme. However, First Corps' turning movement from south was successful.
  - (3) The German main thrust in the centre remained stalled till 9<sup>th</sup> September. Meanwhile, First Corps continued its northwards thrust, wheeling inwards to release Russian pressure at Lotzen Gap. This helped Seventeenth Corps to execute its manoeuvre and affect link-up with First Corps.
  - (4) By 10<sup>th</sup> September, the situation for the Russian First Army had become hopeless.
  - (5) Fearing severance of lines of communications of his Army by German forces and subsequent encirclement, General Rennenkampf ordered a retreat and deserted his Army. Russians crossed the Frontier by 13<sup>th</sup> September, leaving behind 45,000 prisoners.

### **Factors Determining Major Operational Decisions**

15. General Prittwitz' Decision on 19<sup>th</sup> August to Open Offensive against First Russian Army along Northern Front. The following

factors led to the decision to open offensive on 20<sup>th</sup> August all along northern front against Russian First Army and thus bring about the Battle of Gumbinnen:-

- a. Main thrust of First Russian Army was north of Rominten Forest.
- b. German First Corps had inflicted a severe set back to the Russian right flank and the Line Angerap was firmly held by Germans.
- c. Russian First Army was halting that day.
- d. Samsonov's 2nd Army in the south was still on the move.

16. General Prittwitz Decision to Withdraw Eighth Army behind River Vistula. General Prittwitz lost his nerves due to following factors and decided to withdraw west of River Vistula:

- a. Defeat of German Seventeenth Corps at the Battle of Gumbinnen on 20<sup>th</sup> August.
- b. Reports of move of 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army from south to north. Reports of another column moving further west of Second Russian Army. It was, in fact, one of the corps of Second Army.
- c. General Prittwitz feared that enemy could reach Vistula and envelop his Army, cutting off his retreat to that line.
- d. In war games, prior to the War, withdrawing to the Vistula was one of the contingencies.

17. **Ludendorff's Decision to deal with Second Russian Army (Main Effort) in the South.** It had following impact:-

- a. Extremely slow advance by First Russian Army.
- b. Opportunity to strike left flank of Samsonov's Second Army.
- c. Availability of railway lines and roads to switch forces from north to the south in minimum time frame.



**PART - IV**  
**ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNT**

**Analysis – Campaign in East Prussian Theatre of Operation**

1. **The Schlieffen-Moltke Plan (Map-2 & 3).** The analysis of this plan is restricted to its impact on East Prussian Theatre:-
  - a. The strategy of offensive in west and containment in east was well conceived and supported by central position of Germany.
  - b. The plan had been worked out on ambitious timings, when viewed in the context of aim of annihilation of French forces and shifting of forces from west to the east in six weeks.
  - c. Imbalance was created in the right wing of western Front during conduct phase, by detaching forces to reinforce East Prussian Theatre, thus compromising the design.
  - d. In the days when Schlieffen Plan was conceived in 1900, Russia was perceived as backward country with scarce communication infrastructure (especially railways), under strength army, a little capacity for defence productions and with obsolete military doctrines and tactics. However by 1914, Russia had overcome most of these problems and could be compared to some extent with major powers of Europe. The mobilization process had also been improved. In this backdrop, original plan of holding Russia in East Prussia with 10 divisions was bound to create crisis situation for Germans in 1914. It was utter incompetence of Russians, which allowed Germans to deal the superior force in piecemeal.
  - e. In the Eastern Theatre, German strategy was defensive-offensive in nature. Initially the Russians were to be held through defence in the east, while offensive was launched



in the Western Front. Later, on completion of offensive in Western Theatre, forces were to be shifted to East for offensive. However, the forces earmarked for the defence in the east, based on faulty perception of Russian strength, were insufficient to effectively hold Russians. The War highlighted, inherent psychological weakness in a defensive-offensive strategy, with regard to sensitivity of loss of territory. The limited loss of territory in East Prussia caused panic in general public and forced military leadership to fall back on River Vistula and had to despatch two corps to East Prussia, thus, weakening German's main effort in Western Theatre.

2. **Analysis of German and Russian Plans in East Prussian Theatre of Operation.** A close study reveals following facts:-

a. **German 8<sup>th</sup> Army Plan (Map-8)**

- (1) A bold plan, based purely on perceived hypothesis with a very well balanced deployment. This was attained by deploying two corps (1 and 1<sup>st</sup> Reserve Corps) in the north, 20<sup>th</sup> Corps in the south and 17<sup>th</sup> Corps in the centre, as reserve to reinforce either of the sectors.
- (2) The critical space (area bounded by Wormditt, Bischofstein and Allenstein) adequately defended with a forward defensive posture in both sectors.
- (3) Correct incorporation of ground friction in the shape of Masurian Lakes.

b. **Russian North West Army Group Plan (Map-7)**

- (1) The Plan had the potential of dislocating the German 8<sup>th</sup> Army.
- (2) Time synchronization seemed ambitious, because of logistics and slow rate of advance of main effort.

- (3) The widely separated pincers with no lateral communication and lack of protective manoeuvre were vulnerable to piecemeal destruction.

3. **Manoeuvre on Interior Lines (Map-8).** The German operational strategy was directed at gaining time to manipulate their relative strength against two widely spaced Russian pincers, while retaining their critical space. Utilizing the available railway and road infrastructure in East Prussia, Germans disengaged from 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Army in the north and moved bulk of the forces to south to deal with 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army. 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and 3<sup>rd</sup> Reserve Divisions were moved from Gumbinnen to Seeburg and the area north of Tannenberg respectively utilizing two different rail routes, whereas, 1<sup>st</sup> Reserve Corps and 17<sup>th</sup> Corps were moved by road to join battle in the south. This was the classic application of the concept of manoeuvre on interior lines, hence, exploiting the advantage of central position.

4. **Time, Space and Relative Strength (TSR) (Map-9 to 11).** Following was ensured to perfect the interplay of TSR:-

a. **Time and Space**

- (1) Forward defensive posture in both sectors and conduct of retrograde operation in Southern Sector by 20<sup>th</sup> Corps against Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army.
- (2) The time differential of 5 days between two pincers was exploited to gain time to move forces against Southern Pincer, while space was traded in north by a weak force till completion of operation in the south.

b. **Relative Strength.** Superior relative strength ratio at the point of application to offset disadvantage of numerical inferiority was achieved against both Russian Armies at decisive place and time by:

- (1) Well-balanced deployment and central reserves at the outset to influence strength ratio.

- (2) Prevention of link-up of converging pincers through piecemeal engagement.
- (3) The containment of 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Army with a cavalry screen, and concentration of bulk of 8<sup>th</sup> Army against 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army (Main Effort of Russian North West Army Group).

5. **Manoeuvre on Exterior Lines (Map-5).** Russian manoeuvres on exterior lines could have annihilated the German forces through bold execution and efficient coordination between two pincers. The widely separated pincers with no lateral communication and lack of protective manoeuvres were vulnerable to piecemeal destruction. The fault did not lie in conception but in the execution due to following reasons:

- a. **Time Synchronization.** The designed time differential of 48 hours between pincers extended due to slow rate of advance of 2<sup>nd</sup> Army and undue operational pause of 1<sup>st</sup> Army, thus, granting Germans to execute intra theatre switching of forces.
- b. **Relative Strength Superiority.** At no stage Russians exploited their numerical superiority.
  - (1) Non-maintenance of constant pressure by both pincers to dilute strength of German 8<sup>th</sup> Army.
  - (2) 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Army, overwhelmingly superior in strength, failed to push back a weak screen.

6. **Culminating Point.** The premature offensive employment of both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Armies without waiting for completion of their concentration, subsequently, led to hasten the culminating point. Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army suffered from logistic imbalance from the outset of its mobilization. The forced march of the half starved Army, to keep pace with operational timings, coupled with the employment of troops on rear area duties and casualties/ sickness took a toll of teeth to tail ratio. The offensive, therefore, was a non-starter from the

beginning. All that was desired from the defender was to deliver a strong counter-blow, which was executed with perfection.

7. **Balance.** Maintaining balance is the key factor for outcome of wars. How this critical factor was addressed by the rivals, is being elucidated as under:-

- a. **German 8<sup>th</sup> Army (Map-8).** In the opening stages of the battle, Germans retained balance through skilful disposition of forces at the disposal of 8<sup>th</sup> Army. However, an imbalance was created in the north when bulk of German 8<sup>th</sup> Army moved towards south leaving behind a screen of weak cavalry division in the north to hold Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Army.
- b. **Russian Armies (Map-8).** Balance in Russian forces could have been a product of supportable application of the two pincers, timed to cause dispersion and multiple threats to create reaction dilemma for German 8<sup>th</sup> Army. However, lack of coordination between the two Russian efforts presented their vulnerability, which was adequately exploited by Germans for piecemeal destruction of Russian Forces. Russians also failed to exploit the imbalance in German 8<sup>th</sup> Army by striking from the north by 1<sup>st</sup> Army when the whole weight of German Army had shifted to the south against 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army.

8. **Centre of Gravity (Map-8).** Identification of correct centre of gravity is extremely vital. Germans were successful in this regard, whereas their rivals could not exactly hit German centre of gravity. A detailed analysis is as under:-

- a. **Germans.** The German centre of gravity rested in their central position and lines of communication, which enabled them to operate on interior lines but these were never threatened/ severed by the Russians.
- b. **Russians.** Russian centre of gravity lied in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, as it was to generate the main effects but it offered

vulnerability from outset due to imbalances. This centre of gravity was correctly identified by the Germans who overwhelmed this even at the cost of creating imbalance in their own defensive system.

9. **Physical and Mental Mobility.** Germans proved their excellence in both mental and physical mobility, as can be ascertained from following factors:-

- a. **Tactical Mobility.** German infantry could march 18-20 miles per day; on the contrary Russian soldiers could manage 9 to 12 miles in a day's long march.
- b. **Strategic Mobility.** The superior communication networks in East Prussia granted Germans advantage of maintaining relative superiority and operate on interior lines to shift forces from north to south with relative ease. Germans shifted the weight of 8<sup>th</sup> Army three times in fifteen days. They were able to move 500 trains in 24 hours.
- c. **Mental Mobility.** Immediately on assumption of command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, General Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff Ludendorff took timely and correct decisions and developed plan to deal with 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army.

10. **Failure of Command (Map-7).** Launching of two pincers from distant bases of operation required a real time coherent coordination by the North West Army Group Headquarters, commanded by General Yakov Zhilinski. He remained ineffective in exercise of his command and could not assert on both Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Army to maintain contact with the retreating German 8<sup>th</sup> Army in the Northern Sector and check westward drift of Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army.

11. **Intelligence.** Lack of information on Russian side played an important role in the outcome of Battle of Tannenberg. Russians could not identify the correct quantum and direction of German movements after the Battle of Gumbinnen and thereafter. On the other hand, Germans made good use of communication intelligence

and other means to gather intelligence and exploited the signal security weakness of Russians to their advantage, especially in operations against 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army.

12. **Logistics.** On the logistic side too there was visible difference e.g:

- a. The ambitious mobilization plan of Russian armed forces did not match with the available resources. The poor management of logistic resources also showed incompetence and lack of foresight.
- b. The failure of mobilization of rear services of Russian 1<sup>st</sup> Army after preliminary operations compromised pursuance of any gains.
- c. 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army had a critical shortage of rations and supplies from the outset. The Army was half starved and ill equipped when launched for operations.

13. **Impact of Military Leadership.** As Napoleon said, '*it is the man, not men, who counts*', the quality of commanders at all tiers made the difference between the two belligerents. Details are given as follows:-

- a. **Germans.** The conceptual clarity of operational strategy by Commanders and General Staff ensured its practical manifestations in most befitting manner and acted as a force multiplier.
  - (1) **General Von Prittwitz.** He was Commander of German 8<sup>th</sup> Army. Defeat in the Battle of Gumbinnen and at the news that Samsonov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Army was advancing from the south; he got unnerved and took premature decision to withdraw west of Vistula. General Moltke dismissed him on that account.
  - (2) **General Hindenburg.** He was 67 years old, a retired General, who replaced Prittwitz. A man of immense proportions, his physical appearance

alone inspired confidence. He maintained personal touch with his field formations and inspired his under command.

- (3) **General Ludendorff.** He was Deputy Chief of Staff in 2<sup>nd</sup> German Army in the Western Front when he was appointed Chief of Staff of 8<sup>th</sup> Army in East Prussia. A man of great military competence, he was capable of taking bold decisions and calculated risks. He outwitted the Russian counterparts from the outset. His conception of plan in dealing with advancing enemy in the south led to the encirclement and annihilation of 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army.
  - (4) **General Von Francois.** He was promoted in 1913 and appointed Commander 1 Corps. He was a skilful commander but a difficult subordinate. Due to his initiatives and boldness, Russian 2<sup>nd</sup> Army was trapped and annihilated.
- b. **Russian Army.** The Russians had a bankruptcy of generalship, which could not be offset by brilliance of lower commanders. Friction between Army Commanders accentuated the professional inadequacy of Russian Commanders.
- (1) **General Zhilinski.** He was the overall commander of Russian North Western Group. He was not assertive in his command and had an indifferent attitude to the problems of his armies which were unleashed with sound logistic back-up in an undeveloped hostile country. Unprecedented defeat of Russian forces despite their numerical superiority can be attributed to the failure of his command function.
  - (2) **General Rennenkampf.** The Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Army, who was incompetent to handle an

Army, he lacked drive and decision power. In the initial stages of the battle, he allowed Germans to break contact and move south unnoticed. He made no attempt to raise the fighting spirit of his troops. He deserted his troops on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1914, after having heard the reverses of his Army.

- (3) **General Samsonov.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> Russian Army commander was a popular general in his troops. He degenerated during the period of peace before the War. He was ill suited for high command in the field. Despite clear orders from Zhilinski, he deliberately drifted to west, which extended his front and widened gap with 1<sup>st</sup> Army. His mishandling of the Army led to its total destruction and his suicide.

14. **Effects of the Victory at Tannenberg on the German Strategy (Map-1).** Overall effects of German strategy in this battle were as under:-

a. **Short Term Implications**

(1) **Germany**

- (a) The remarkable victory in East Prussia was so well timed that it completely faded the German strategic defeat at the Battle of Marne (5-11 September) hence public attention was diverted and German Supreme Command and General Von Moltke were saved from the criticism and public wrath.
- (b) The Germans took sigh of relief from the fact that the Russian did not posses enough steam to roll on to their capital Berlin.
- (c) The perception that shifting of two corps and a cavalry division from the Western Front could have been a reason for non-capture of Paris.



- (2) **Russia.** The immediate fallouts of disaster at Tannenberg were largely offset by the defeat of the Austro – Hungarian Forces at the hand of Russians at Galicia. However the other effects included:
  - (a) Lack of confidence amongst the politicians with regards to capability of Russia to compete with Germany.
  - (b) A large portion of the Russian Army disappeared within the first a few weeks of the war - a loss from which it never properly recovered.
- b. **Long Term Effects**
  - (1) In the words of J. F. C. Fuller, although it had no decisive influence on the war, had the Germans lost it, it would have changed its course completely.
  - (2) As per Edmund’s comments, “It had nevertheless, a definite effect on the course of the war; for its elevation into a great victory, raised such high hopes of war in the East that the Schlieffen – Moltke plan, for settling with France first, was abandoned and in 1915 large German forces were employed in winning ground in Russia”.
  - (3) Precious time was accorded to British Empire to organize and put new armies into the fields.
  - (4) Because of the Russian failure, the war dragged on for another four years during which both sides suffered tremendous losses.

### **Lessons Learnt**

15. **Relevance to Own Environment.** Although much has changed in the shape of means of mobility, lethality of weapon systems and electronic warfare means, the physical characteristics of terrain continue to exert their peculiar influences. In our case there are a few areas where situations somewhat similar to the one in the

Battle of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes are possible. The pertinent lessons can be grouped under three captions:

a. **Lessons at Strategic Level**

- (1) **Two Front War Scenarios.** Situation after Mumbai attacks created a two front scenario when Pakistan Army was required to take essential safeguards on the eastern border despite maintaining the momentum of ongoing operations on the Western Front. Therefore, it is imperative for us to avoid a two front war to remain balanced.
- (2) **Treaties and Alliances.** We cannot afford to have hostile front on both sides. It is worth mentioning that our adversary is currently busy in investing heavily in Afghanistan. To offset the inherent dilemma of lack of strategic depth and two front war, Pakistan must stress upon alliances with regional and extra-regional powers. Having friendly relations with Iran and Afghanistan for deterring threats from the east is important for us.
- (3) **National Effort to Support the War.** Germans were able to gear their entire national effort to support the war and planned it during peacetime. We should steer our developmental projects in line with our perceived operational planning for offensive and defensive operations and accordingly should be able to muster maximum national effort to support the war machinery in the times of crisis.
- (4) **Exterior Manoeuvre.** Under the nuclear overhang, it has become important to exploit all diplomatic channels to thwart our adversary from any misadventure.
- (5) **Reappraisal of Concepts and Doctrines.** Concepts and doctrines should be constantly revised and updated while keeping in pace with the

latest technological developments and threat perception.

b. **Lessons at Operational Level**

- (1) **Configuration of Border and Availability of Obstacles.** On Pakistan's eastern border, at places, the salients and enclaves pose generally similar dilemmas on the defender. The pondages along the border have many similarities with the Masurian Lakes. The defender can draw the advantage of operating on interior lines, while dealing successively with the different offensive efforts. There is one major difference as the main communication artery in our case runs parallel to the obstacle, whereas, in the other case it ran perpendicularly from the Lakes' northern edge. The possibility of trading space for time before our main communication artery is threatened will not be available in our case.
- (2) **Defensive Offensive Strategy.** Military plans must be psychologically sound and acceptable; loss of territory for an ultimate offensive must not create such psychological effects, which could compromise the offensive plan and overall design of battle. Commanders at each tier should understand the overall design of battle so that their efforts are directed towards the attainment of ultimate objective.
- (3) **Operations on Interior Lines.** Though the Germans were numerically inferior to the Russians, this imbalance was aptly converted into strength through superior manoeuvres and skilful use of interior lines to their advantage. We can attain the same in a given theatre of operations against our adversary.

- (4) **Time, Space and Relative Strength (TSR) Matrix.** Numerical superiority of the enemy can be neutralised by concentrating forces in a sector achieving better troops to space ratio at the decisive point and time against our enemy. The vulnerability thus created can then be exploited to own advantage.
- (5) **Exploiting the Logistic Vulnerabilities–Russians/ Indians.** Though the Indians have developed their communication infrastructure close to their western border but still their forces moving from Eastern Command are vulnerable due to long logistic chain, which can be exploited.
- (6) **Balance.** The Germans required retention of adequate space for assembly and generation of combat power of their counter offensive. Thus the retention of critical space of the two railway laterals was a compulsion for the Germans to retain balance in defence and flexibility in launching counter offensive. The Germans balanced the delicate equation of time and space with their initial deployment based on the Napoleonic concept of interior lines which envisaged deploying a Corps each in the northern and southern sectors holding Masurian Lakes lightly, while retaining remaining force as reserve located centrally along the railway network to be effective in either of the sectors in a favourable time frame. Most of our eastern border and communication infrastructure is configured in a way that in a given operational setting, we can attain the balance in the similar manner.

c. **Lessons at Tactical Level**

- (1) **Leadership.** Quality leadership can overcome a superior force. Leaders must be able to set personal example and infuse confidence in their soldiers.

- (2) **Mobilisation Scheme.** Mobilisation schemes must be updated and should utilize all possible resources to generate maximum combat strength at a required time and space.
- (3) **Effects of Change of Command.** Change of command can have both encouraging and adverse effects. Replacing an incompetent and non-compliant commander at the eleventh hour with a dynamic and bold commander should auger well with the already conceived plan.
- (4) **Correct Reading of the Enemy.** Correct reading of the enemy should be based on sound facts reported through reliable intelligence. The plans must accordingly be modified to suit own design of battle.
- (5) **Weapons and Equipment.** Needless to say, that the weapons and equipment must be superior to that of the enemy and operationally fit to frustrate enemy's edge of overwhelming numerical strength.

### **Conclusion**

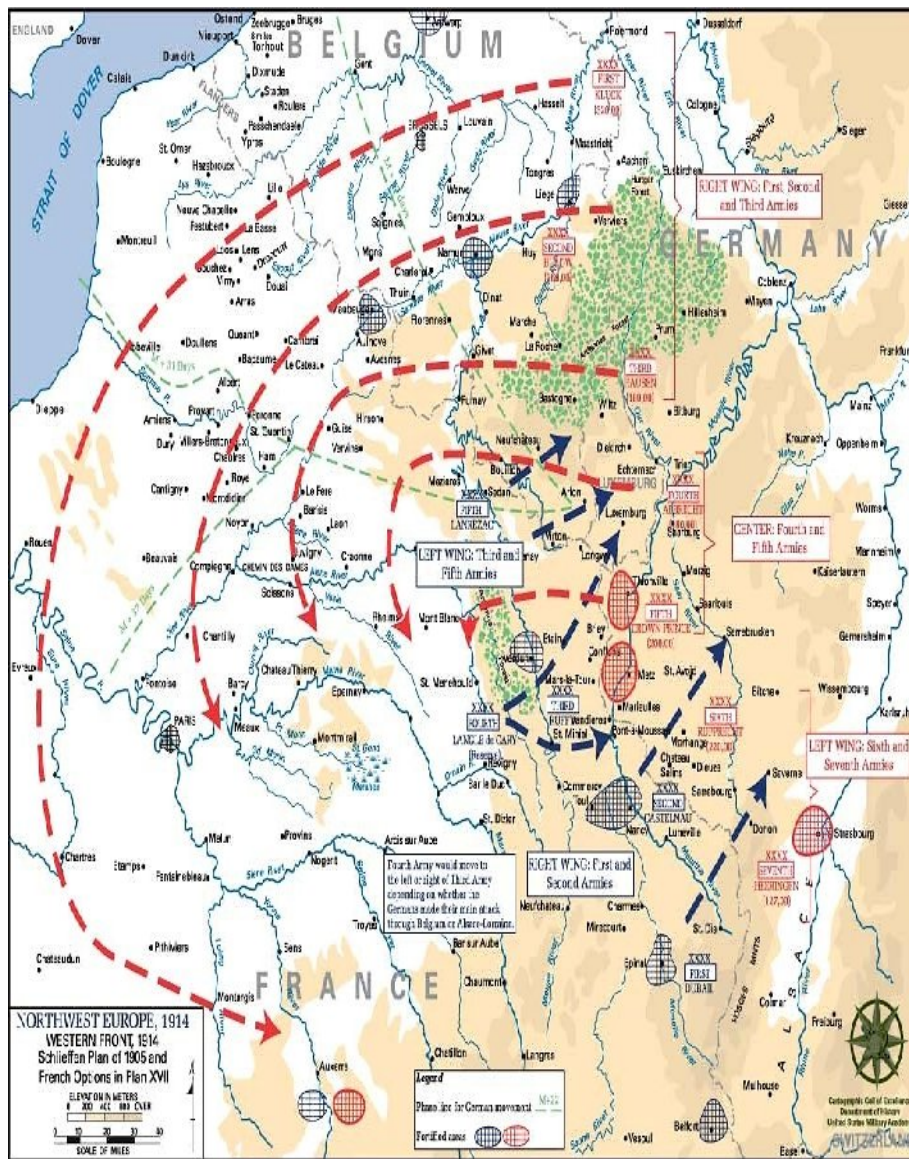
17. The East Prussian campaign was militarily most decisive victory achieved by any combatants in history of modern wars. It demonstrated not only the efficacy of operations on interior lines, conducted in complete harmony to ideal teachings, but also the impact of the broader subtle aspects of operational strategy to defeat a numerically superior enemy. The campaign also highlighted the devastating results for non-adherence to basic concepts of operations on exterior lines as demonstrated by Russian commanders, which led to the destruction of the Russian Northwest Army Group. Battle of Tannenberg offers a lot to a student of military history to learn about successful application or vice versa, of certain notions of operational strategy. It certainly highlights many lessons for us to learn, for clarity of thought in application when the time comes.

Map-1: Emergence of Alliances

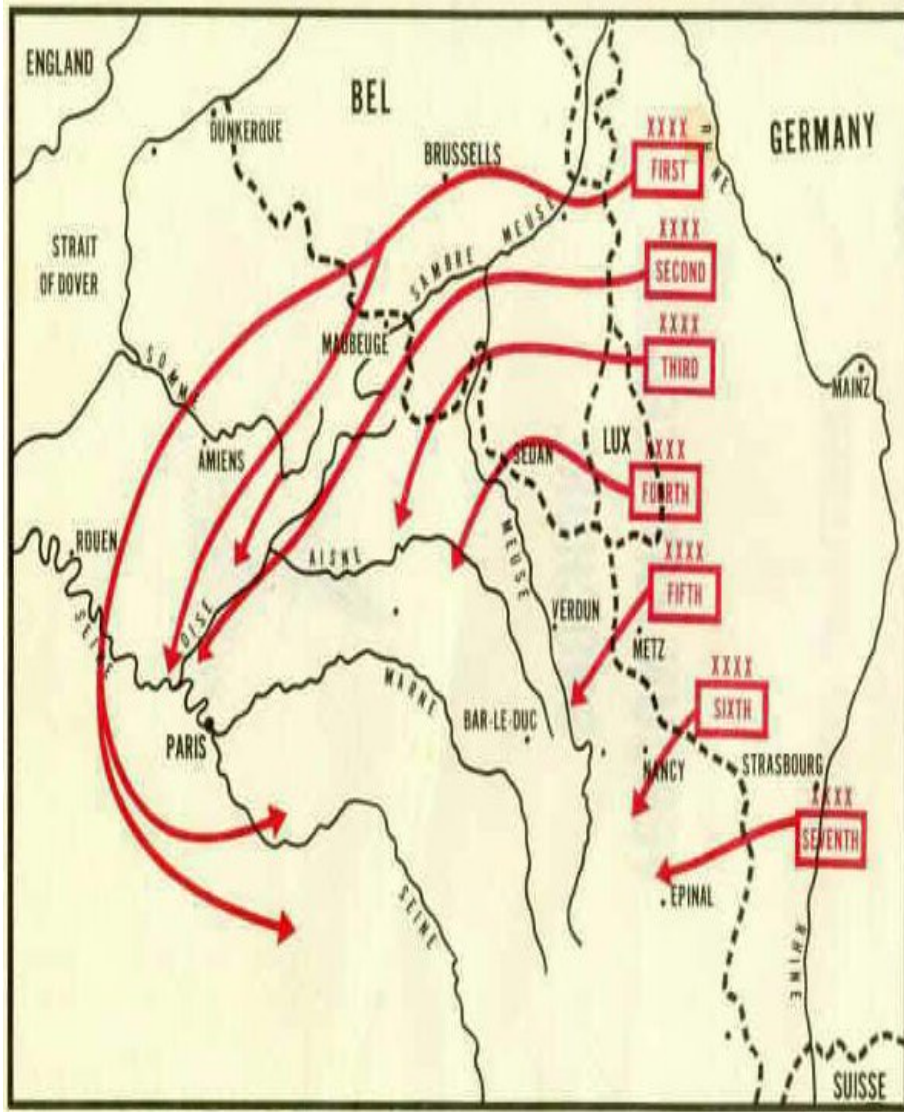




### Map-2: Original Schlieffen Plan

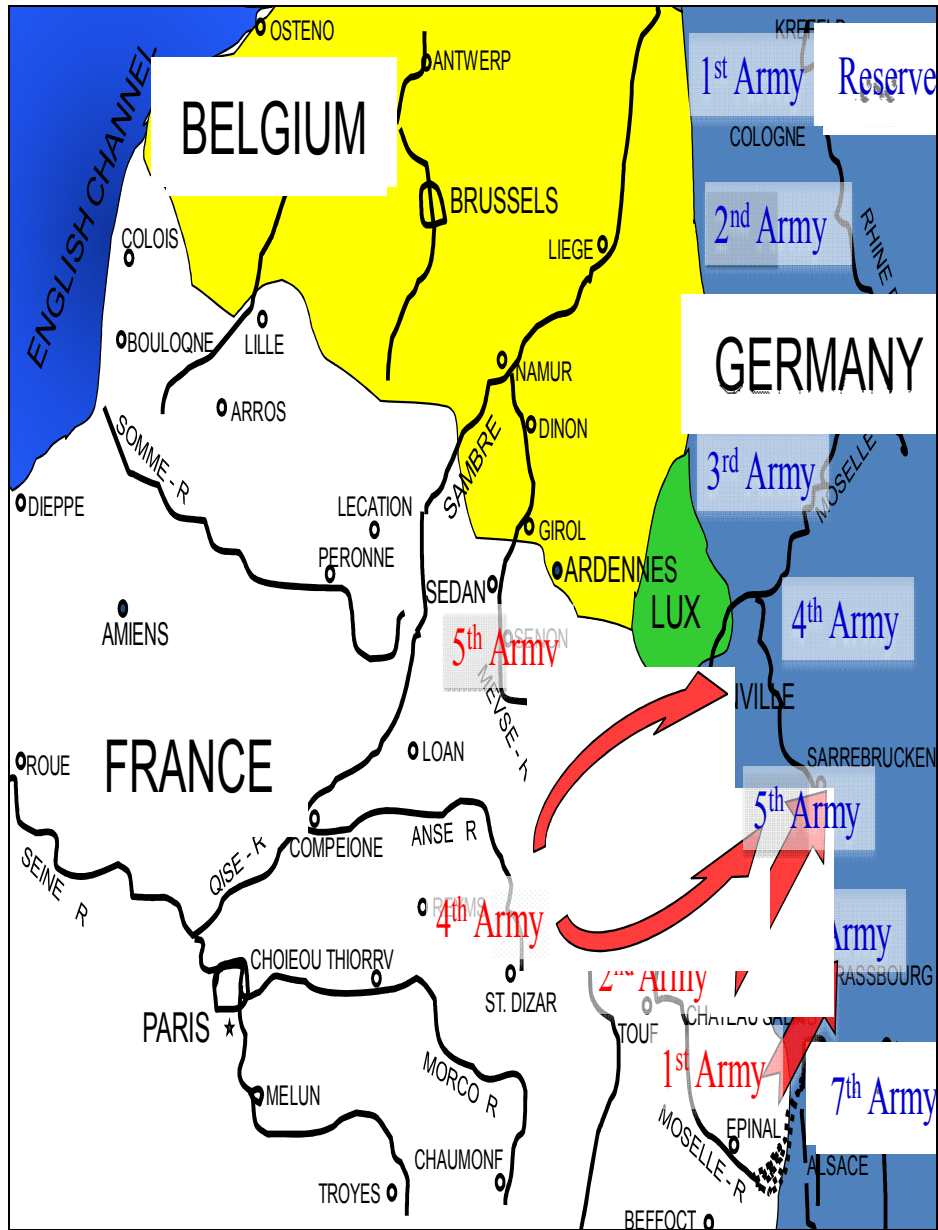


Map-3: Modified Schlieffen-Moltke Plan (1906-1914)

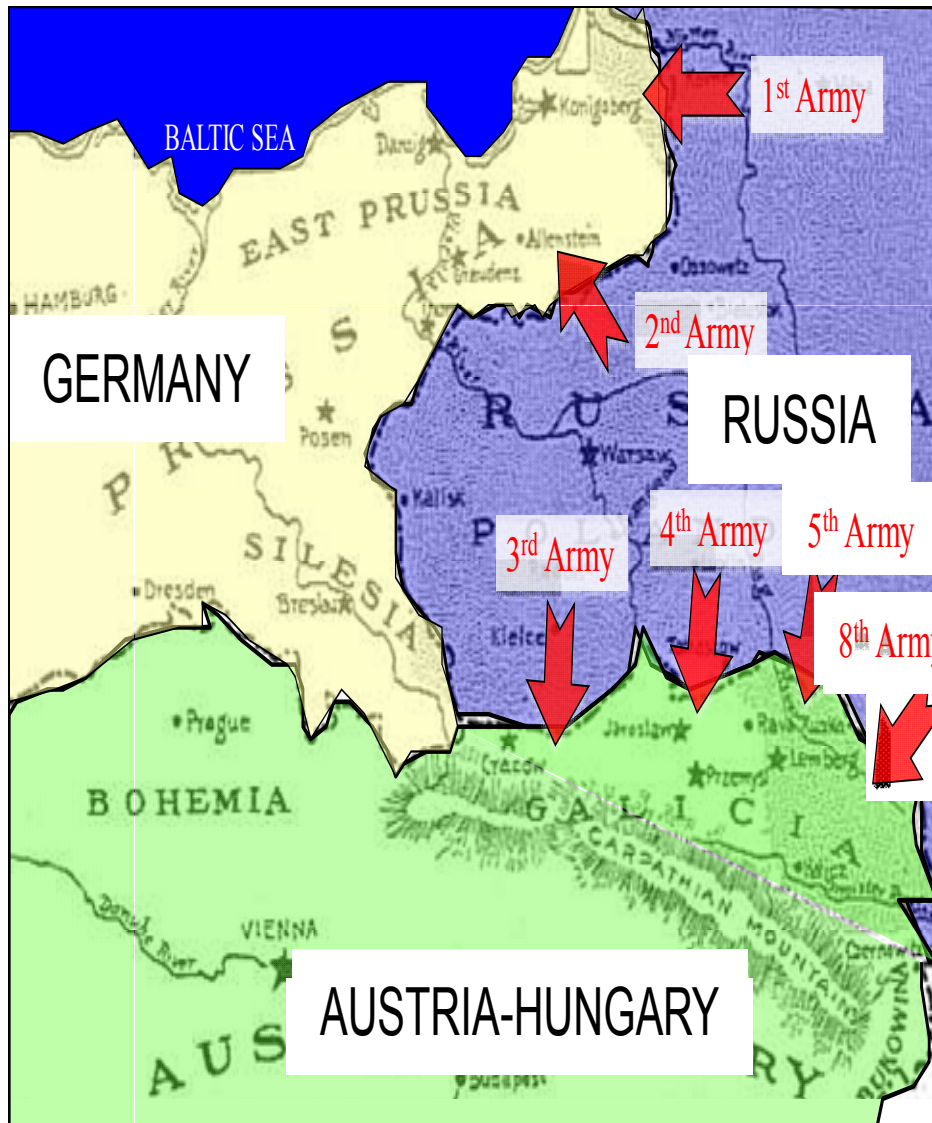




Map-4: French Plan XVII



Map-5: Russian Plan No-19



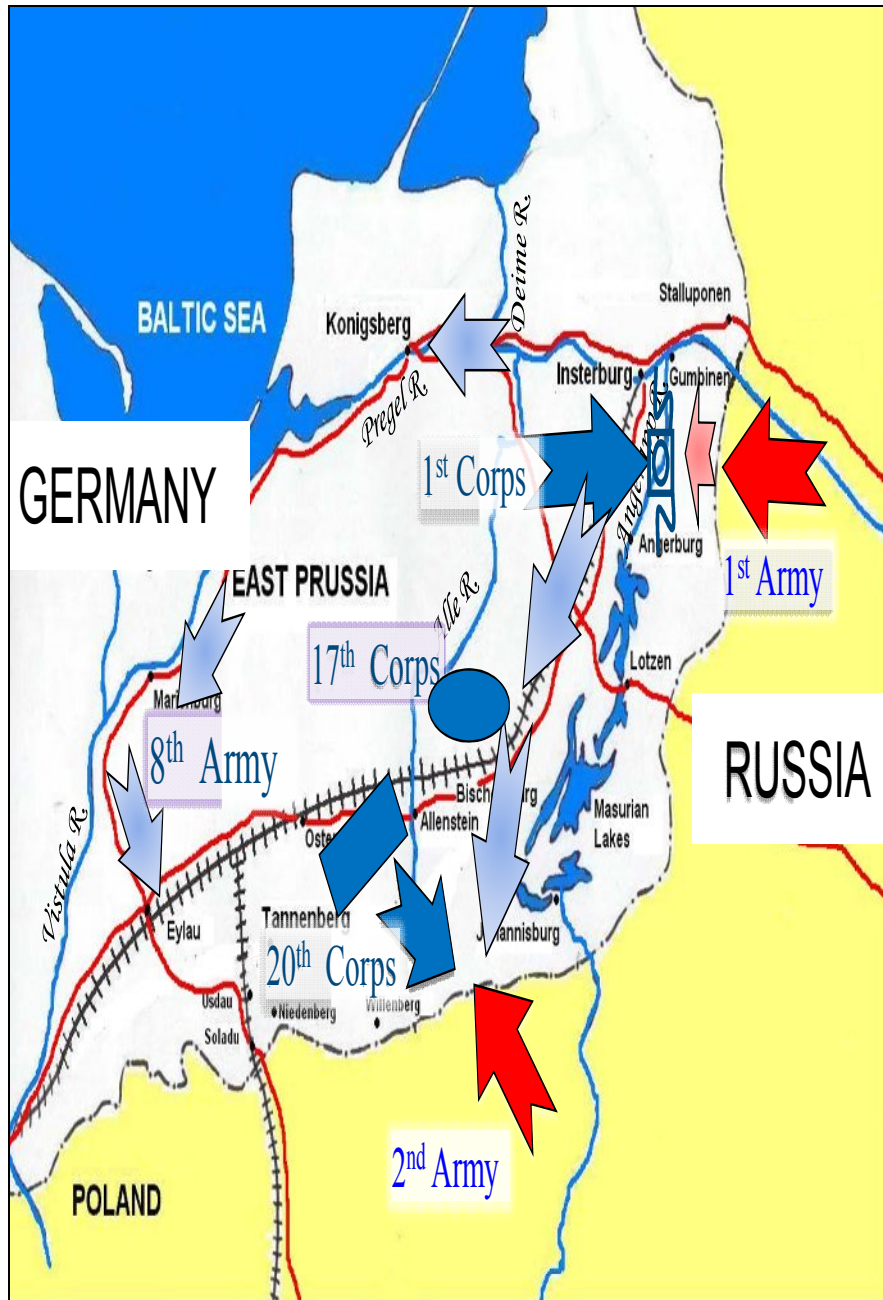
Map-6: Zones of Operations



Map-7: Russian Offensive Plan

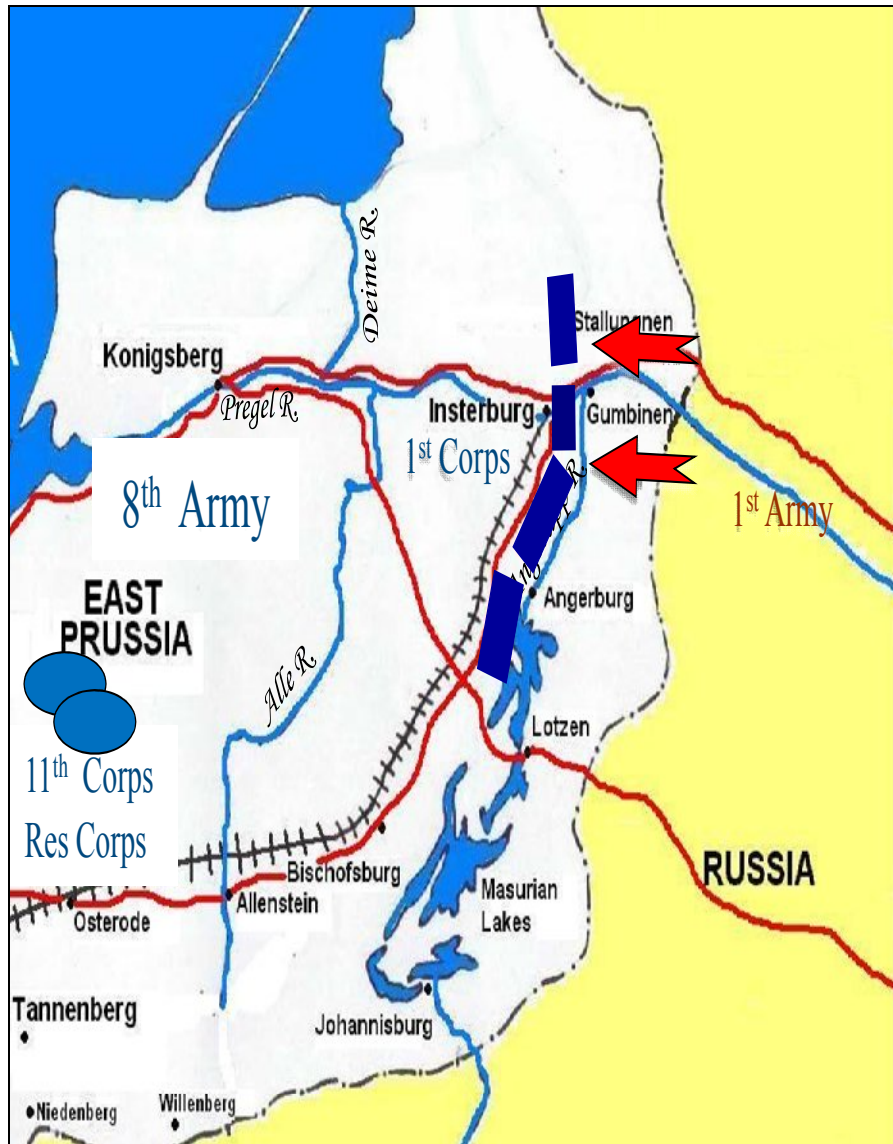


Map 8: Plan of Eighth Army

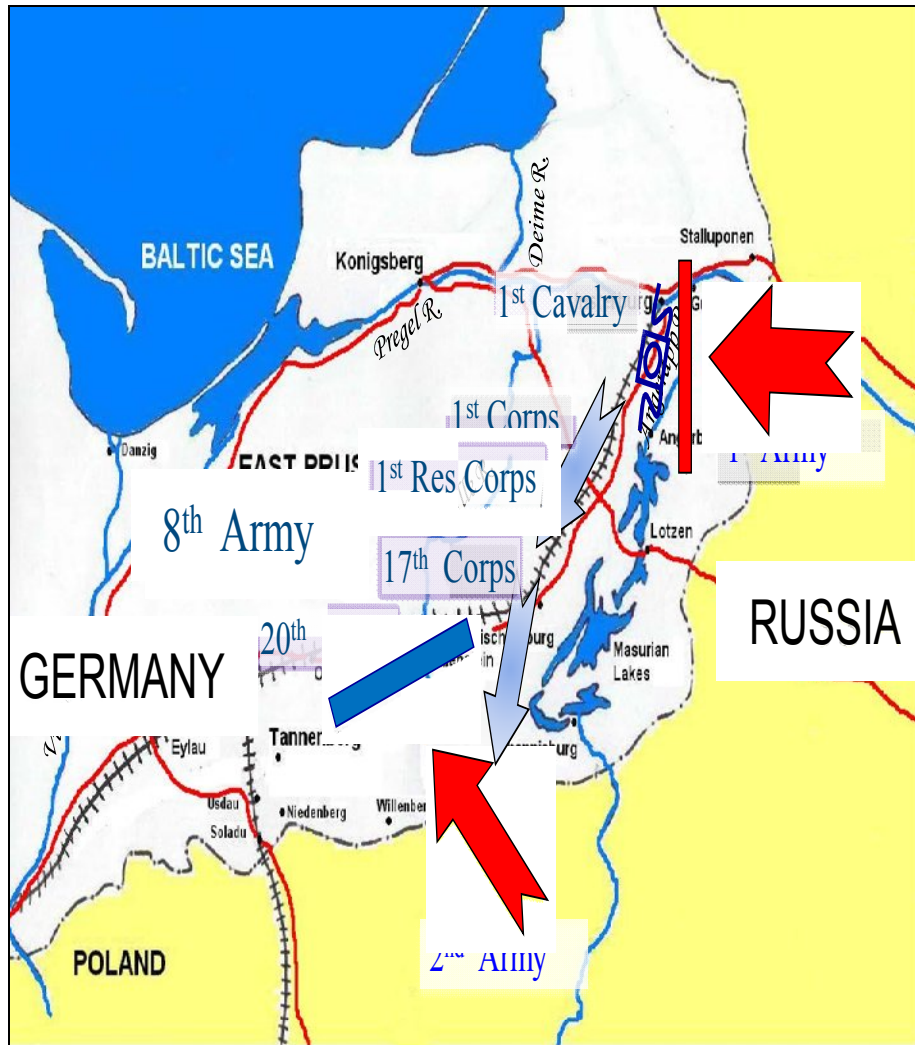




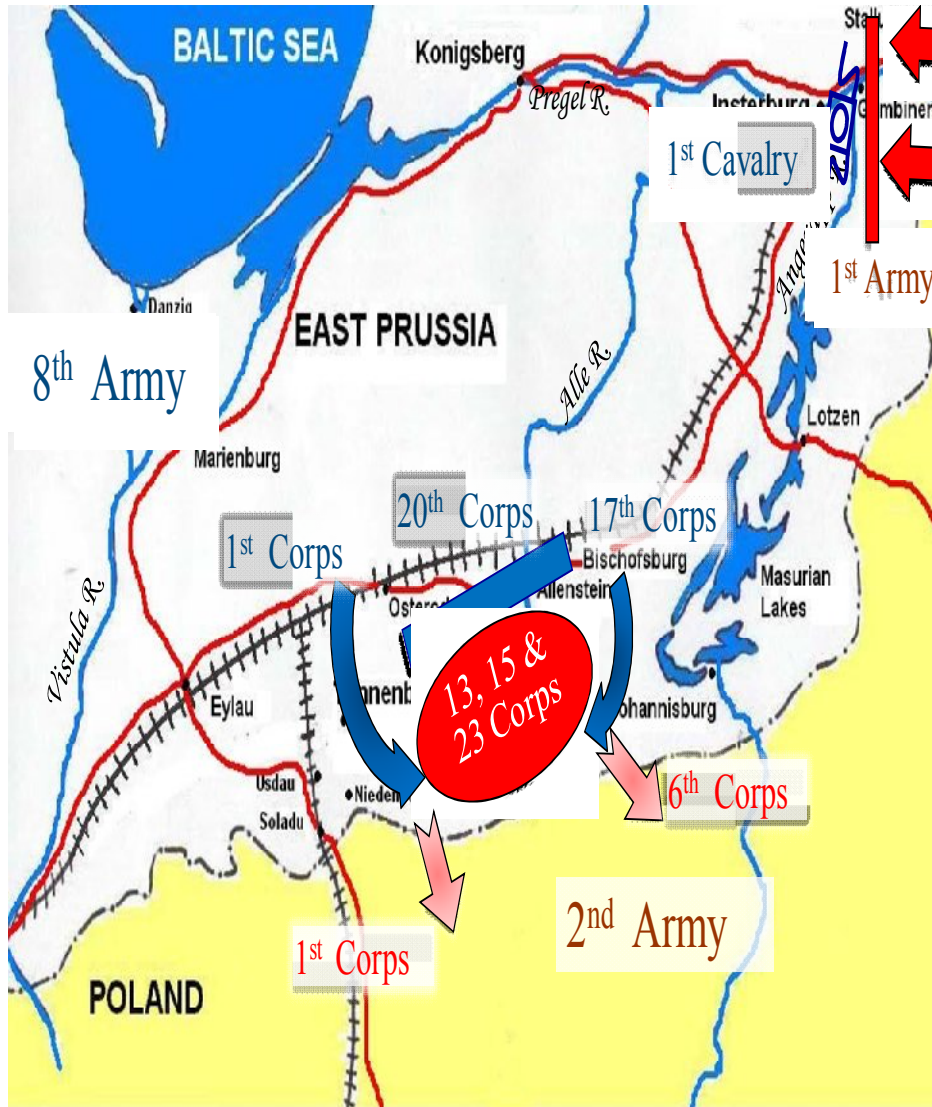
**Map-9: Battle of Gumbinnen**



Map-10: Move of German Eighth Army to South

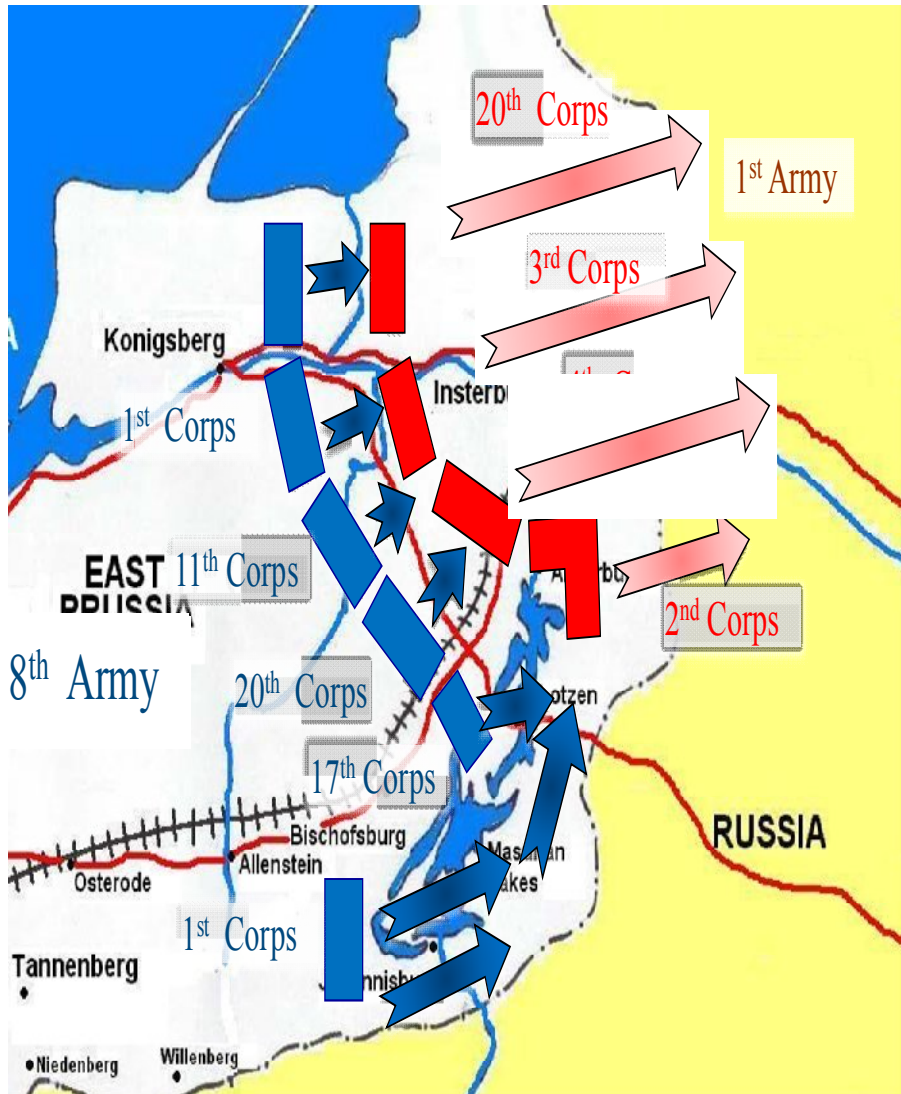


Map-11: Battle of Tannenberg





Map-12: Battle of Masurian Lakes



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- <http://greatwar.nl/>
- <http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/visite.html>
- <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk>