

# August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1914

## Responding to Empire



### Canada Gets Moving

The response from Canada to the news of the imminent war in Europe is very rapid. The Minister of Militia, Sam Huges, sends calls from Ottawa for units and volunteers, without much planning. The response from British-born soldiers and potential recruits is immediate.

David Lloyd George, at the time Chancellor of the Exchequer in the British Government, later described Canada's scramble as seen from London:

«**The Canadian Government, watching events from thousands of miles away, foresaw that war was inevitable, and on the 31<sup>st</sup> July, the day before Germany declared war on Russia, began to lay its plans for the mobilisation of its forces. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August, the enrolment of volunteers began. As soon as our ultimatum expired, a message was sent on behalf of the Canadian Ministry: Canada stands united from the Pacific to**

**the Atlantic in her determination to uphold the honour and traditions of the Empire.» Party conflict immediately ceased. Sir Robert Borden, the Premier, of British stock, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the veteran leader of the Opposition, of French lineage, joined hands. The official call for troops was promulgated throughout the Dominion on 5<sup>th</sup> August, and in one week recruiting had to be stopped because more than 100,000 men had already offered themselves.»<sup>1</sup>**

**On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1914**, Montreal millionaire Andrew Hamilton Gault decided that he would create an infantry unit from his own private resources and name it after **Lady Patricia**, daughter of the Duke of Connaught, the current Governor General of Canada.

– Gault meant **The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry** to rush overseas before anyone else.

<sup>1</sup>●David Lloyd George, Memoirs, Book IV, p. 1728; Beaverbrook, Men and Power, p. 272; Sandra Gwyn, Tapestry of War, 65-8



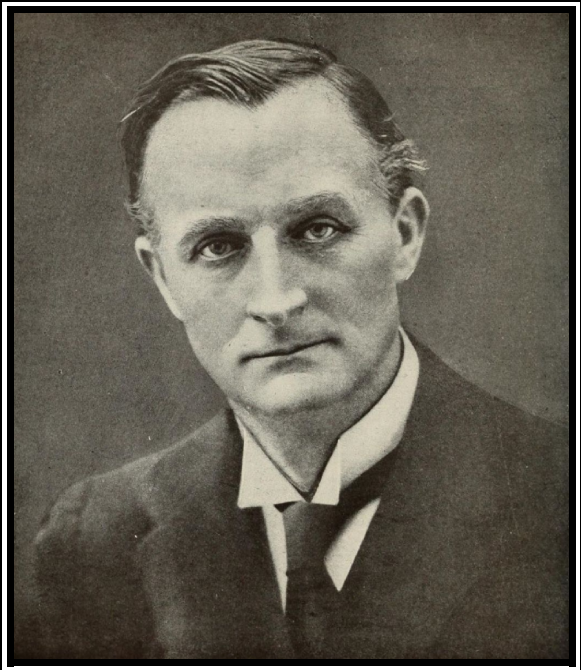
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August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1914

## Germany Declares War on Russia



### France, Belgium Mobilized

Seeing the full mobilization of the Russian forces, Germany declares War to Russia on August 1<sup>st</sup>. This immediately prompts the full mobilization of France and Belgium, in the expectation that Germany will want to secure its western frontier before taking on Russia in the field.

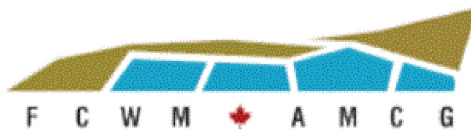
These apprehensions are confirmed when the German mobilization is seen to include movements of troops through the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and marching in the Eastern Flanders. This positioning can not not be followed by an entry into Belgium, which the Belgian King is determined to prevent. It is indeed followed on **August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1914**, by a German request for its forces to enter Belgium.

Great Britain, on her part, still remains aloof of the fray, conscious that any military coordination that may

have taken place in the past with France is not part of a formal treaty. There is therefore no automatic triggering of hostilities in her case. However, French Ambassador Cambon in London is quick to remind the Foreign Secretary, **Edward Grey**, that there is a formal naval treaty between France and Great Britain by which the French Government has agreed to withdraw its Navy from the Channel to cover the Mediterranean, so that the Royal Navy can concentrate around the British islands. This is something that Grey has to recognize and bring to Parliament. Great Britain is thus obliged to intervene against any German naval element that might attempts to attack France in the Channel, or from the Atlantic. That is in itself an important commitment.

There is also the matter of Belgium. Great Britain is committed since the Treaty of 1839 to defend Belgium's sovereignty. Belgium also represents a friendly power on the Channel that should not be dominated by a commercial rival.

— Foreign Secretary **Grey** is in a grave dilemma.



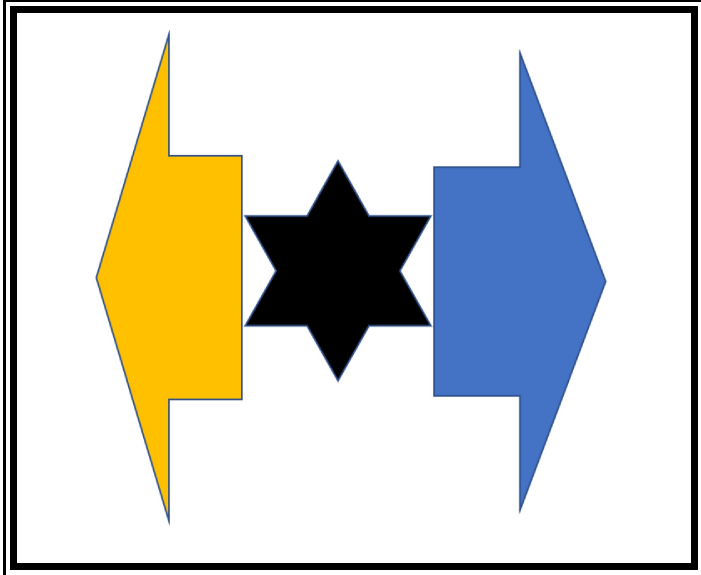
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**August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1914**

## **Between a Rock and a Hard Place**



### **Germany's Two Wars**

It is one of Germany's fate of geopolitics that she stands in the middle of Europe and has found her potential enemies to be both east and west. Chancellor Bismarck has dealt with this difficulty throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and he inherited and passed on the challenge that dogs Europe since Charlemagne.

Modern Germany, which was unified as a single nation only thirty five years before, has thought about 'encirclement' a lot. Her great generals, Moltke, and his successor, Schlieffen, have made plans. They have come to the conclusion that Germany must always be ready for two simultaneous wars, one against France, and one against Russia.

Her worse fears have become reality since these two powers have united by a Treaty of reciprocal military support. War has now been declared against Russia, and France is in motion to mobilize.

Schlieffen's strategic plan is to address France first, to sweep to Paris at high speed, and get an armistice there, and then turn to Russia and crush that power in turn. The key to success, for this famous Schlieffen Plan, is to force the allies one after the other, and not allow them to push simultaneously. Logistics preparations are all synchronized.

The time that Russia takes to mobilize is therefore precious time. Each day is one in which success should be gained against the French. There is therefore no time to loose. War with France has not yet been declared, but progressing through Belgium in the direction of Paris is of utmost urgency.

On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1914, Belgium refuses free entry. This will not stop the Germans, but it will slow them down. They must therefore declare war to France to enter her territory and progress straight toward Paris.

— What follows is the Battle of the Frontiers, where the Germans march west at double-time. against French defences.



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**August 4, 1914**  
**Here We Go !!!**



## **The British Empire at War** **Canada Included**

**On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1914**, the German Army did not take No for an answer from Belgium and pushed with two armies through Luxembourg toward Liège in the hope of progressing further west and exiting between Charleroi and Maubeuge, to descend on Paris.

This is the moment when Great Britain commits to joining the War. The violation of the Belgian borders is the tripwire that convinces the British Government that its interest lay in defending Belgium and France against the German invasion.

The Declaration of War against Germany, which comes late at night, at 23h00 (midnight German time) means that the whole of the British Empire is at war against Germany.

The full mobilization of all Imperial forces is commanded for 00h01, August 5<sup>th</sup>. The Royal Navy is at war stations since sunrise under the command of its freshly appointed Admiral-in-Chief, Jellicoe. At midnight, the Admiralty sends out the message: **«COMMENCE HOSTILITIES AGAINST GERMANY»**.

Canada is immediately included in this Imperial Order. The Governor General wires the King:

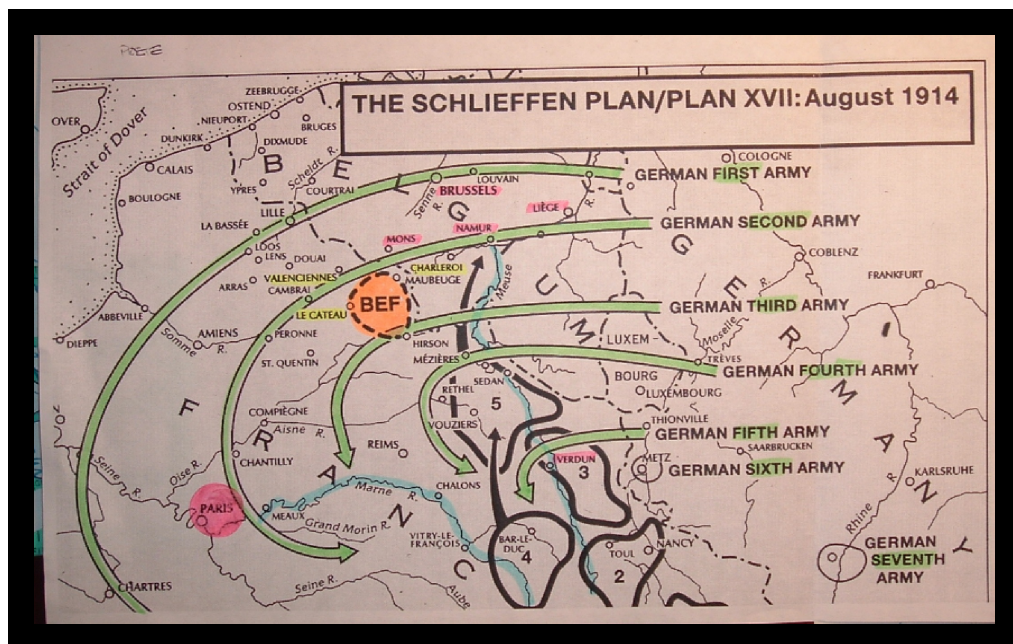
**«CANADA STANDS UNITED FROM PACIFIC TO THE ATLANTIC  
IN HER DETERMINATION TO UPHOLD  
THE HONOUR AND TRADITION OF OUR EMPIRE.»**

— Here We Go!

•Duguid, Colonel A. Fortescue, *Official History of The Canadian Forces in The Great War 1914-1919. The Record of Five Years of Active Service*. General Series, Volume 1: *From the Outbreak of War to the formation of the Canadian Corps, August 1914 to September 1915*. (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 1938). Separate book,

**August 5, 1914**

**The Long March of the German right Wing**



**General Schlieffen's Sweeping Plan**

The Plan that the Germans are using for the extremely effective deployment of 1.5 million men involved in the assault of France is a sweeping one, where all hinges on speed.

Seven armies are lined up from north to south, all with a path to follow so as to sweep counter-clockwise and hit the French from the north as they concentrate on their main attack near their great fortresses, at Metz and

Nancy, east of Paris.

The five French armies deployed in defence along the frontiers follow Plan XVII, centered on the retaking of Alsace-Lorraine, a French obsession.

First and Second German armies have a long way to go through Belgium, and then to sweep around Paris. Their march will be well over 500 kilometres, that they will have to fight all along the way.

– Going fast will be a challenge, to say the least. – Stopping them to!

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, 164.

**August 6, 1914**

## **The Contemptible Are Coming!**

### **A small, professional army of Volunteers**

The whole gamut of declarations of war is completed when Austria-Hungary reluctantly declares war to Russia. This means that part of her Army will have to be dedicated to defend the provinces of the Empire to the East, to prevent a Russian advance through the Balkans. This is hard geography, and the locals are not all friendly with Vienna. The Germans are also so busy with operations in Belgium and France in the west, with the Schlieffen Plan, and in Prussia in the east, where they must try to keep the Russians at bay, that they cannot lend a hand.

In London, Marshal Oratio Kitchener, recently brought back from the Middle East, has now been named Secretary for War, a post that was cumulated by the Prime Minister up to now. He immediately resolves to send the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), a small army, but one of professional Volunteers, to France. It will be commanded by **General John French**

In a theatre in which the Germans have seven and the French five larger field armies, the single British little field army, with its 80,000 men and 30,000 horses, will be isolated, but it is determined to fight alongside the French as a sixth army. The BEF is to take position near the border Belgium-France at Maubeuge, on the left of the French Fifth Army, and prepare defences such as to prevent the further advance of the two German armies that will come out of Belgium toward Paris.

The Belgian resistance is so far producing a well-felt delay, but the Germans will soon find the methods to blast their way through their fortresses. Railway lines are being dismantled and locomotives and rolling stocks sent to France.

For the moment the British soldiers are being prepared in ports to be transported to France. — They have already been called 'contemptible' by the Kaiser.



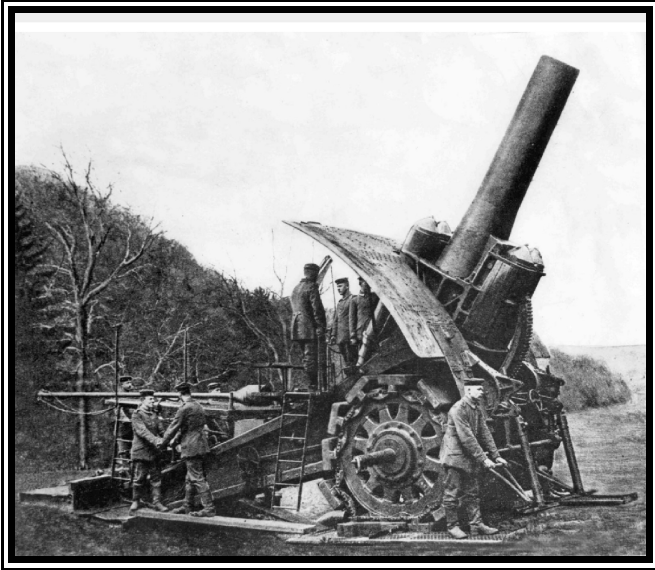
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# August 7, 1914

## The Fat Ladies Sing



### The Krupp revolution in siege artillery

The German Army simply ignored the King of Belgium's protest against entering his national territory and pushed forward from Luxemburg and Cologne toward the west.

The Belgian army immediately blew bridges on the River Ourthe and Meuse, and occupied the strong Brialmont fortresses that were built in the XIXth Century to prevent such invasions.

A network of a dozen fortresses centre within 10 miles of Liège, where the army can find reserves of supplies, ammunitions, and solid shelter. The fortress artillery, particularly precise because of its permanent position, can beat the whole area in crossfire. Getting near these fortresses is very difficult.

But the Germans are currently waiting for their special artillery to come forward. Immense «mortars» (most call them «howitzers») which can be disassembled and transported in trucks, have been ordered brought to Belgium for the fortresses task. They are either Krupp 420mm (16,5-inch) or Skoda 305mm (12-inch), of a type of guns that has never been seen on the battlefields before. They pack shells of up to 800 kg that can reach 9 km. The effects of those shells are devastating on cement or stone. They can be fitted with delay fuses that allow them to sink in earth or through roofs before exploding. They will begin on August 11<sup>th</sup> against Fortress Pontisse.

— After the «Big Berthas» are finished singing, the show will be over in Liège.

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, 165-70, 180-1, Map 165; ●Macmillan, Road to 1914, p. 275; Griffiths, William R., The Great War, p. 24.



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August 8, 1914

## Changing the Legislative process



**DORA**

### The Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act (1914)

The War Book of the British Government, completed only a few weeks before the War, contains a series of initiatives that are to take place in case of escalation toward an armed conflict. The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), a sub-committee of the Cabinet, was the central agency

to prepare the War Book, but all departments were involved in its compilation over many years. Co-ordinations were made for the timely release of various laws and instructions that were to help orchestrate a response to mounting tensions.

One of the important initiatives that were prepared well in advance of the need was the draft of a law that gives unusual powers to the Government so that it can decree with Orders-in-Council in many more fields than usual. Orders-in-Council are executive decrees that need only to be approved by Cabinet and undersigned by the King before becoming law. However, in the British Parliamentary system, their use are restricted narrowly to specific types of laws.

With the **Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act (DORA)**<sup>1</sup> proposed in the War Book, once this law is approved by Parliament, the Government is authorized to decree on much larger spheres of subjects related to public safety and the defence of the realm. Issues of war strategies thus do not have to be debated in public before Parliament.

**On 8 August 1914**, Parliament votes in favour of giving «His Majesty in Council» (the current Government) this much wider legislative authority. The Act also consolidates a series of enactments that give authority to Government to proceed immediately with measures affecting the armed services, including authorities to limit citizens' freedoms for the purposes of the War.

— By this voluntary reduction of its own power of oversight, Parlement is introducing «the high water mark of executive power in British history.»<sup>2</sup>

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•Great Britain, Public General Statutes, LIII, 21-22: 5 George V, c.8. •<sup>2</sup> Snyder, Historic Documents of World War I, 127-8



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# August 9, 1914

## A British Army for France



### The BEF Embarks for France

The 80,000-men British Expeditionary Force begins to embark for the continent on **9 August 1914**. The movement of this small field army of four infantry divisions and one cavalry division and all of its auxiliary services will take two weeks. Its armament consists of 315 field guns and 125 machine guns.

The move takes place from Southampton and Portsmouth to Boulogne, Rouen and Le Havre.

The Secretary for War, Marshal Kitchener, has

already decided that this contingent will do only for a while. He has already obtained Parliament approval for the immediate raising of 500,000 Volunteers, launching an appeal for men between the ages of 9 and 30, to enlist for three years or the duration of the war. His plan is to raise New Armies of 100,000 men each 'with six divisions of all arms and services».

The response will be immediate. «Kitchener's Armies» will come together before clothing and arms can be produced for them. They represent a challenge for the industry and for military instructors. Very few officers and NCOs can be spared for the training of these waves of men. Many are brought back from retirement to address the needs.

— For those who believe that the war will be over by Christmas, there is great impatience to get «Over There» soon.

•«The British Army», TIMES History of the War, Vol. I, Chap 7, p. 121-40.



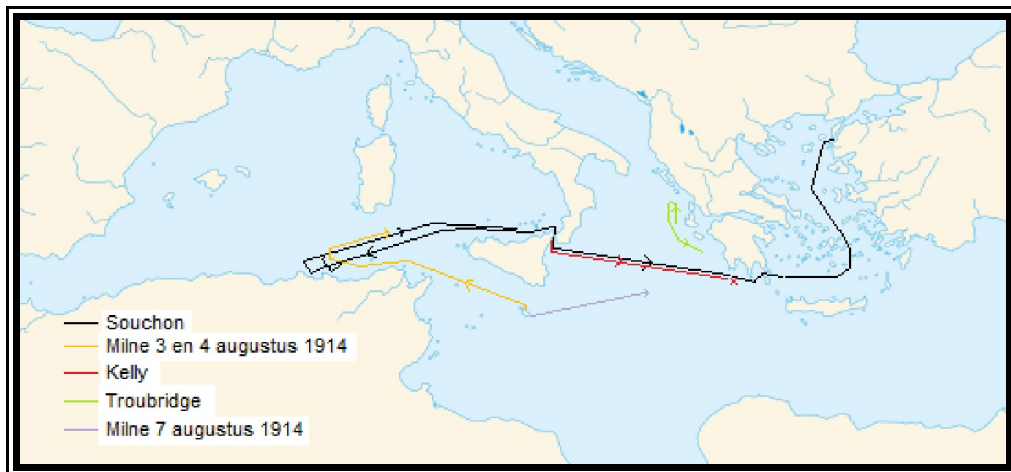
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# August 10, 1914

## Dogs of war in a Deadly Chase



### ***Goeben and Breslau*** **Out the Turkish Door**

At the start of the War, Winston Churchill, Minister at the Admiralty, seized two war ships under construction already paid \$30 million by Turkey. The *Sultan Osman* and the *Reshadieh* were commandeered for 'own needs in this crisis.'

At the same time, in the Mediterranean, two

German ships, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* were given their first mission of the war to attack French troopships due to transport colonial troops from the ports of Philippeville and Bône, in northern Africa, to Toulon, so they could join French forces in the field.

But the German ships were soon disrupted in their task by the British Mediterranean fleet from Malta. *Indomitable*, *Indefatigable*, and *Gloucester* were involved in a chase in which the German ships barely succeeded in finding refuge at the east end of the Mediterranean.

When Admiral Souchon, the German commander, found himself cornered in the Aegean Sea, the Germans offered to sell the two ships to Turkey in compensation for those taken by the British. The deal was accepted and the *Breslau* and *Goeben* were both guided through the Turkish minefields of the Dardanelles to reach the secure and still neutral port of Constantinople. The two ships were renamed *Jawus* and *Midilli*, at the great joy of the Turkish government.

*Jawus* and *Midilli* were, however, never handed over to Turkish crew. Souchon remained in command and the two ships were used for bombardment of Russian ports in the Black Sea and forcing the Turkish government, at gunpoint, to join the war on the German side.

— This naval chase is at the root of the history of the Middle east in the XXth Century, with its dire consequences.

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, Chap 10: 'Goeben...An Enemy Then Flying», p. 137-62.



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# August 10, 1914

## The Battle of the Frontiers



### The Belgian Left Flank

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1914, the Commander of the French Fifth Army, Général Lanzerac, is troubled by the progress of the German armies through the Meuse River, and their advance in Belgium.

What he finds more troublesome is the fact that the King of the Belgians, King Albert, is now directing his armies to withdraw in the direction of Antwerp, where the defences are very strong, and where a well protected port can be used in

conjunction with a network of canals to resist for a long time.

This movement to the north by the Belgian army is leaving a gap south of Brussels where the German will advance easily. Due to the position of the French armies, which were counting on Belgian line of defence withdrawing along the coast, there is now a wide gap between Lanzerac's army and the coast.

Arrangements were made with the British to fill that gap, but the small BEF is just being transported and will not assume a solid position to defend before fifteen days from now, at best.

Président Poincaré of France is now sending emissaries to King Albert's headquarters to get him to relinquish Antwerp and join in to the French plan of defence. But for Albert this represents the abandonment of his national territory.

— He is convinced that Antwerp can be kept as a kernel of national territory so that Belgium and its civilian population are never completely abandoned by their armies.

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● Strachan, *The First World War*, Vol. 1: *To Arms* (Oxford UP, 2001), p. 208-23.

# August 12, 1914

## The Russian Plan 19A



## Rushing Out to Taunt the Beasts

The Russian mobilization plan, called 19A, includes provisions for deployment of front line troops before the full mobilization is completed. In fact, as little of 50% of mobilized troops will be mustered before the front formation will move out to their position of battle along the line. The plan caters for advances in the north or advances in the south.

**On 12 August 1914**, it is evident that the Austrian-Hungarian Army is poised to attack Belgrade, and that a Russian threat to the Hungarian provinces in the east would force the Hungarians to divert some of their forces to the east to face the Russians.

The situation is similar in the north. Any advance in East Prussia, near the Baltic Sea, will force the Germans to divert forces from the France

and Belgium Front, to prevent loss of territory, especially in Prussia, the historical bulwark against the Slav.

This is why the commanding generals of all front line formations of the Russian armies are urged to move forward as soon as they see their units capable of marching, without waiting for completion of preparedness.

The full mobilization of the Russian armies is expected to take twice as long as the sixteen days required by the Germans and Austro-Hungarians. But General Rennenkampf of the First Russian Army, in the North, has already penetrated five miles into the Prussian territory.

— He is taunting the German beast to make it turn its head.

•Macmillant, Road to 1914, 368; •Tuchman, Guns of 1914, 264.



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August 13, 1914

## The Austro-Hungarian Invasion of Serbia



### The Crossing of the Drina River

The Austrian-Hungarian forces have been preparing secretly for some time for the invasion of Serbia. But the Serbian leadership has foreseen that the invasion would take place when the Vienna Ultimatum proved so threatening.

General Radomir Putnik, the Chief of the General Staff of the Serbian Army, has been putting plans together to defend Serbia. He knows that he has much smaller forces than the Austro-Hungarians can bring to bear, but his small army has seen combat in two Balkan wars in the last three years. The Serbs are also very determined to keep their

independence from Vienna, all the more so since Moscow has now vowed to protect their Slav culture from Germanic authority, and has mobilized to prove it.

After having disposed small forces along the most likely crossings on the Danube, to the N. of Belgrade, and on the Save and Drina Rivers, to the N-W and W., General Putnik concentrates his main force in the centre of Serbia.

**On 13 August 1914**, the Austrian-Hungarian forces bombard Belgrade heavily, but their crossing takes place in the W. across the Drina, to the N. of Zvornik. The landing takes the Jadar River valley as the main axis of advance toward Valievo, the Serbian vital ground that they want to capture.

— The Battle of the Jadar River will rage for 11 days. It will pit a modern European power against a modest people of heroes.

• TIMES History of the War, II, Chap 39, p. 277-90, and 40, p. 291-316; Kirchberger, An Eyewitness to History, p. 75.



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# Le 14 août, 1914

## La Bataille de Belgique



### La Bataille de Belgique: Un retrait continu

Les grands mortiers allemands sont arrivés à Liège il y a deux jours. Il ne leur a pas fallu plus de temps pour éventrer toutes les forteresses de la ville, libérant ainsi les voies principales pour permettre à la Première Armée allemande du général von Kluck de progresser vers l'ouest.

Tous les artères sont envahis par des divisions en marche qui avancent au pas, de ville en ville.

Les armées belges sont en désarroi par le peu de temps qu'il a fallu aux Allemands pour traverser leurs défenses, hier encore imprenables. Elles reculent de carefour en carefour, tentant de retarder l'avance. À quelques reprises, des coups solides, lorsqu'on trouve des mitrailleuses, retardent les éclaireurs à cheval, les Oulans, rapides et habiles. Mais la plupart du temps, les Allemands ripostent aussitôt avec leur artillerie mobile, en tête, puissante et précise, infligeant des pertes énormes aux Belges, sans protections creusées.

Le mouvement des Allemands en Belgique est inexorable. Ils imposent leur autorité sur tous les lieux, neutralisent les civils, leur imposent des réquisitions drastiques, et punissent les actes de résistance par des sanctions communes qui incluent souvent des fullillades publiques de prisonniers.

Rapidement le gouvernement de Belgique implore les Français de venir à la rescousse. Leur pays est conquis par des barbares très disciplinés, qui avancent quarante milles par jour.

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●Ed. Chris Wrigley, A.J.P. Taylor – From the Boer War to the Cold War: Essays on Twentieth-Century Europe (Penguin Books, 1996), «War by Time-Table», p. 116-81, tirés d'écrits de l'auteur.



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**Le 15 août, 1914**

**Français! Au Secours des Belges!**

### **Le Général Joffre envoie la Cinquième armée vers la Belgique**

Les rapports qui parviennent à Paris des Attachés français auprès des armées de la Belgique font état d'une situation tout à fait imprévue. Les Allemands progressent à une vitesse incroyable et ne ralentissent pas devant les défenses, qu'elles soient fortes ou non. Les autorités belges implorent les Français de venir à leur aide.

**Le général Joseph Joffre**, le Commandant-en-Chef des armées françaises, voit sur la carte que sa Cinquième Armée, sur la gauche, va se faire déborder et ne pourra pas réussir à frapper les deux armées allemandes en marche vers l'ouest. Joffre émet donc l'ordre au général Lanzerac de bouger rapidement vers le nord-est pour prendre position aux fleuves Sambre et Meuse, pour en défendre la traversée.

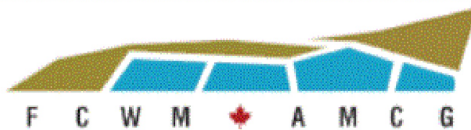
Il est déjà trop tard pour Lanzerac, qui doit protéger son flanc droit tout en marchant 120 km vers la gauche. Le trou sur son flanc devait être bouché par l'Armée anglaise, qui débarque présentement dans les ports de la Manche, et qui marche de son mieux vers Le Cateau, où il n'est peut-être pas trop tard pour intervenir.

Le Général French du BEF se rend justement à Paris pour rencontrer Joffre. Il peut y voir les plans de déploiement des armées françaises, et le trou béant que Lanzerac vient de recevoir l'ordre de refermer.

Le général French laisse bien comprendre qu'il n'est pas une armée française et que les ordres de Joffre ne sont pas des ordres nationaux pour lui. Il comprend la situation, va tenter d'y remédier, mais la façon de le faire sera la sienne.

— Joffre n'est pas trop certain de ce qu'il peut escompter de French. Dans les circonstances, il ne peut que se réjouir de le voir arriver, conciliant ou pas...

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, p. 212-3.



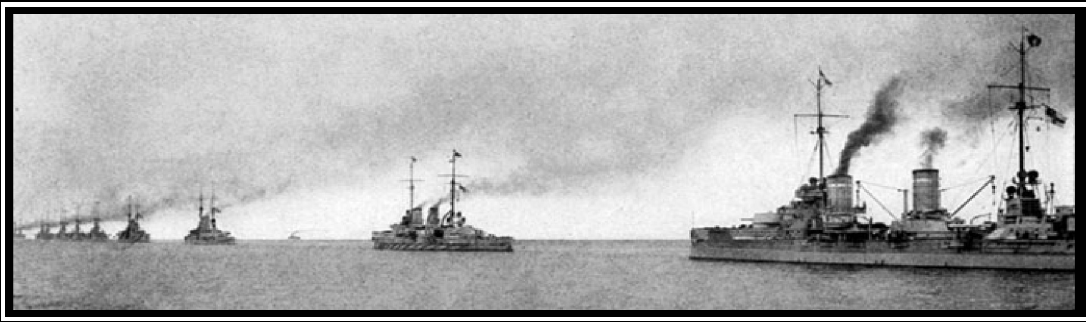
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**August 16, 1914**

## **Deterrence by the Being There**



### **The German High Seas Fleet does not come out**

At a moment of high vulnerability, when the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) is being ferried across the Channel to go to

France, the Royal Navy is certain that the German High Seas Fleet will attack.

Since August 14<sup>th</sup>, the divisions of the BEF have been pouring troops in the French ports of Boulogne, Rouen and Le Havre. This transport will last another three days, with a total of 137 crossings. To cover their movement the British Channel Fleet was deployed to block any sudden attack. Even the Grand Fleet has been moved below the 56<sup>th</sup> Parallel (Firth of Forth, N. of Edinburgh, Scotland) to be able to rush South to hit in the flank of any attacking unit coming out of the protected German ports. In fact, the opportunity may very well force a clash of the respective great navies in the North Sea.

But the German High Seas Fleet does not move. Although the Secretary of the Navy, Admiral von Tirpitz, would want to go all out, he has been marginalised by the Kaiser's inner Cabinet of sycophants and personal advisors. Wilhelm has been mesmerized by the famous book by Alfred Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power on History, which speaks of the importance of a fleet «in being», as a reserved instrument of diplomacy. Wilhelm does not want his beloved Fleet of some 180 warships damaged.

**On 16 August 1914**, Admiral Jellicoe, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Grand Fleet, is poised for a Battle Royal in the North Sea over the fate of the BEF.

— He is not particularly mindful of seeing his Fleet damaged. He just wants the German one scared off.

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, 329-41.



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# August 17, 1914

## Both Brains and Brawn



### First Clash in East Prussia: The Battle of Stalluponen

The Russian Army is under great pressure to force a clash both with the German forces in North Germany and against the Austrian-Hungarian forces in the South, so as to relieve pressure on France. If the French can prevent a quick victory in the West, a concentration of forces in the East will be very difficult for the Germans.

Grand Duke Nicholas, the Commander of the Army Groups that are tasked with rushing forward to achieve a provocation, settles on a foray toward Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad, in Lithuania, on the Bay of the Vistula, Baltic Sea) as

a threat to East Prussia. He knows that the Eighth German Army (the seven first are in France) is there on the defensive, waiting for reinforcement when the War in the West will be over.

Nicholas resolves that two Russian armies will first attack the Eighth German Army simultaneously, coming from each side of the Mansurian Lakes, in the area of Allenstein.

The Eighth German army is under the command of General von Prittwitz. His chief of staff is the soon to become famous Colonel Max Hoffmann.

The attack of the Russians is mishandled by Generals Rennenkampf (First Russian Army) and Samsonov (Second), who cannot use the railways because of gauge differences, have no codes for their wireless and telephone communications, and soon run out of munitions because of lack of supply trains.

It also happens that the German Commander of I German Corps, General von François, seizes an opportunity, disobeys orders, and mauls the 27<sup>th</sup> Russian Division, stopping the Russians in their tracks at Stalluponen, five miles from the Russian border.

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, 272-3.



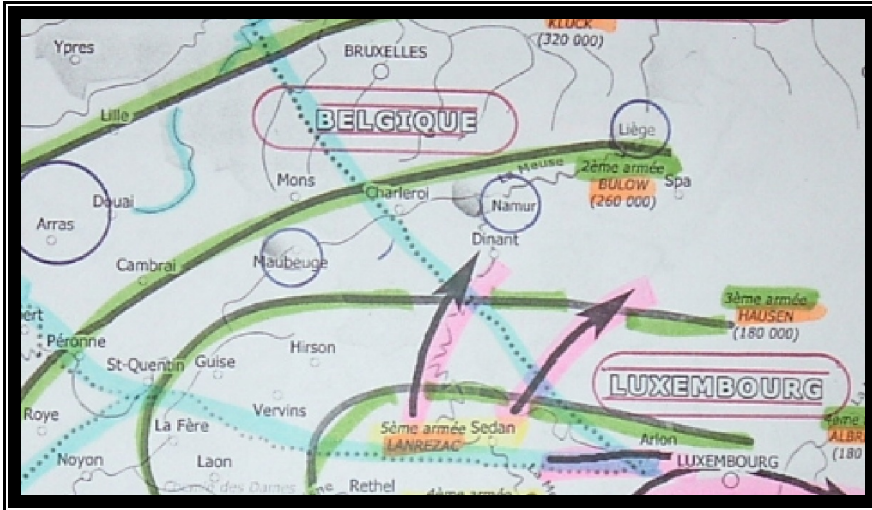
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# Le 18 août 1914

## La bataille des Frontières



### Tensions dans le Nord

En Belgique, le Roi Albert oriente le retrait de ses troupes vers Anvers, où il espère établir une place-forte qui pourra résister à l'assaut ennemi, et, peut-être, recevoir des renforts par l'Escaut. Mais cette manoeuvre ouvre encore plus large l'espace béant qui demeure entre les armées françaises et les armées belges.

Trois armées allemandes s'avancent maintenant vers ce trou. La Première (Kluck), Deuxième (Bulow) et Troisième (Hausen), très

puissantes, progressent rapidement. L'armée de Von Kluck doit prendre Anvers d'assaut, ne serait-ce que pour empêcher les contre-attaques sur son flanc pendant que le gros de son Armée continue vers l'ouest. Plus au sud, d'autres de ses corps progressent vers Louvain, tout près de Bruxelles. Il veut éliminer les résistances dans ces villes et neutraliser la capitale en tant que centre du gouvernement. Plus au sud, le gros de l'artillerie lourde, avec von Bulow, se dirige maintenant vers Namur, où la Sambre entre dans la Meuse. Un autre noyau de citadelles puissantes n'espère plus y retarder l'avance.

De Paris, le Grand Quartier Général français suit la situation. Non seulement le mouvement de la Cinquième Armée, près de Sedan, pour fermer le trou belge, semble-t-il tardif, mais il doit maintenant aller franchir la Sambre pour connecter avec les éléments de la droite belge, derrière Namur. Lanzerac voit aussi venir à sa droite l'armée de von Hausen qui franchit les Ardennes vers Dinant. Il fait donc face à un coup énorme imminent.

Le général anglais French visite justement Lanzerac aujourd'hui. Dès que l'Armée anglaise sera réunie à Le Cateau, elle prendra position près de Maubeuge pour arrêter ce qui viendra de Namur, Charleroi ou Mons.

• TIMES History of the War, Vol. I, Chap 22: «German advance to Brussels», p. 361-86.



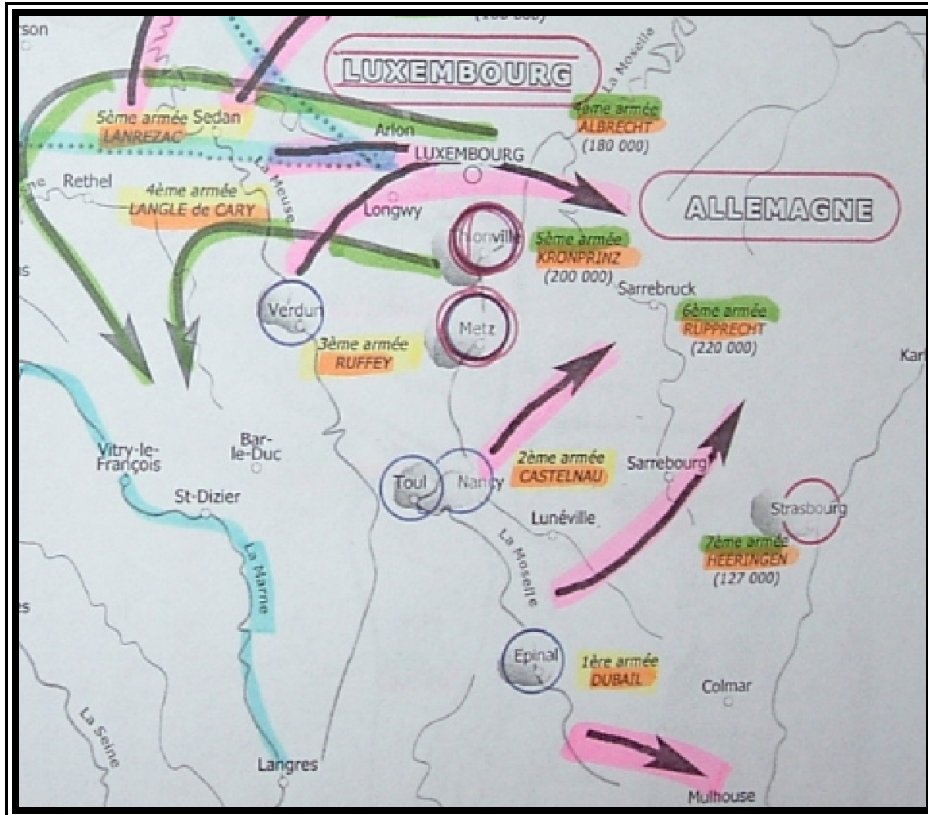
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# Le 19 août, 1914

## Batailles d'Alsace et de Lorraine



### Premiers contacts durs dans le sud

Pendant que Lanzerac (5eF) pousse vers le nord pour toucher la droite des Belges, Langle de Cary (4eF) glisse pour appuyer sa droite et amortir le coup de Heusen (3eA).

Ailleurs, des contacts durs se produisent au sud des Ardennes, en Lorraine et en Alsace.

Dans les Ardennes, Albrecht (4eA) avance vers Sedan, que Langle de Cary (4eF) vient de prendre de Lanzerac (5eF). Langle de Cary devra donc faire face à deux armées attaquantes, celles de Albrecht (4eA) et de Hausen (3eA)

En Lorraine, le Prince Royal (5eA) a poussé fort vers Metz et

Thionville, et Ruffey (4eF) a répondu de Verdun pour défendre.

En Alsace, le Prince Rupprecht (6eA) a laissé avancer Castelnau (2eF) de Nancy vers un piège tendu pour attirer les défenseurs plus au nord. Il referme le piège aujourd'hui.

**Le 19 août 1914** est un jour important pour les Allemands. Leur plan énorme, avec son grand tournant au nord par la Belgique pour aller frapper Paris en quarante jours, ne doit pas être compromis par des succès français au sud.

— Les combats sont terriblement meurtriers.

• TIMES History of the War, Vol. I, Chap 23: «The First French Offensive in Alsace», p. 387-400.



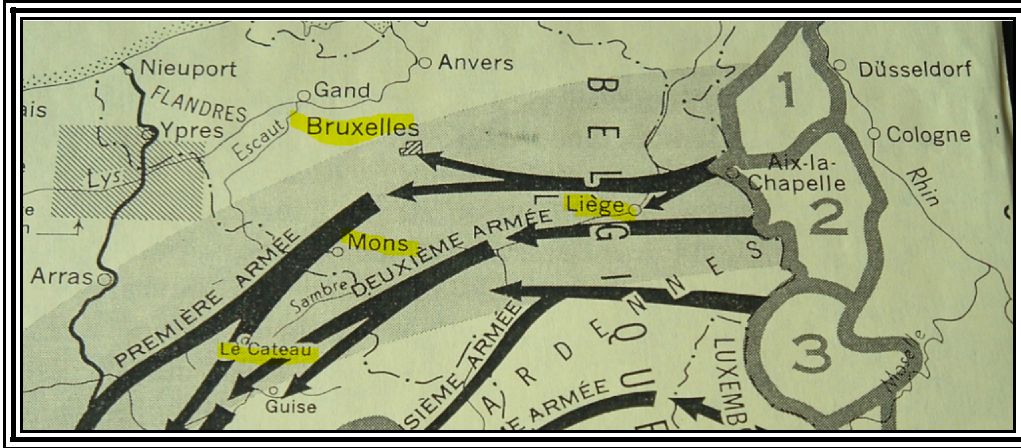
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**Le 20 août, 1914**

## **Premiers Signes de Déséquilibre**



### **La Coordination des Armées allemande**

Hier, toutes les armées allemandes étaient en contact violent avec les défenseurs en face d'elles, belges ou français. Les sept armées ont réagi au choc, chacune à sa façon. Il s'est agi d'une journée cruciale pour les jours qui vont suivre et pour toute l'issue de la Bataille des Frontières.

Au nord, les trois premières armées traversent la Belgique. La Première arrive à Bruxelles et force le gouvernement à se replier vers Anvers. La Deuxième arrive à Namur et s'apprête à y détruire les forteresses sur la Sambre et Meuse. Les éléments avancés de Lanzerac se mettent en défense derrière Namur pour tenter d'arrêter la progression, mais Lanzerac est pessimiste. La Troisième avance vers Dinant et entre en contact avec le flanc de Lanzerac et la gauche de Langle de Cary, que Joffre retient pour le moment.

La droite allemande commence à montrer des signes d'un manque de coordination. Il n'y a pas là de commandant de groupe d'armées, et von Kluck et von Bulow travaillent mal ensemble. Moltke, au GQG de Coblenz, est trop loin pour ajuster les frontières interarmées et les vitesses de progression.

Il arrive aussi que les armées du sud ont fait une erreur. Au lieu de laisser progresser les Français dans une contre-attaque en Lorraine et Alsace, où il se seraient éloignés de leurs grandes citadelles (Verdun, Metz et Nancy), les chefs de groupes d'armées ont réagi trop fort et repoussé les Français sur leur ligne de défense. Joffre saisit le moment et réassigne des corps d'armée du sud au nord, pour retarder la course en Belgique.

— Voici le moment critique qui va permettre la Bataille de la Marne que personne n'entrevoit encore.

• Barnett, *The Swordbearers*, 60; • Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (Pan, 1976), 53; • Tuchman, *Guns of 1914*, 228, 275-81, 315-8.



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August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1914

## General Lanzerac's Battle for Survival



### Charleroi

On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1914, the situation anticipated through the fog of war by **General Charles Lanzerac, Commander of the French Fifth Army**, becomes a harsh reality.

On the same day, his army is hit hard by the Second German Army in Namur, and by the Third German Army in the area of Dinant. This is all the more hurtful as his army was on the move to adjust to the northern threat developing in Belgium, which in the process of passing him by to his left, on its way to Paris.

In attempting to intercept First and Second German armies in Belgium, he is hit in the flank by the Third German Army on the French side of the Belgian frontier. Fourth French Army is too far to the south and too involved in fighting off the Fourth and Fifth German armies in the difficult ground of the Ardennes to be able to help significantly.

Lanzerac is to all practical purposes defending his army from annihilation against three enemy armies with the momentum on their side.

In the three-day **Battle of Charleroi** (August 22-24), Lanzerac will succeed in extricating his army from annihilation, ignoring admonitions from Joffre and lack of comprehension by the BEF's General French.

The mere fact that Lanzerac was able to keep his Cinquième armée in being was a feat, although Joffre was not pleased in the end, and never gave Lanzerac the credit that he deserved.

— For his part, General John French was involved independently on his left, and may very well have inadvertently saved him.

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●Barnett, *The Swordbearers*, 69; Liddell Hart, *WW1*, 55; ●Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, 240; ●Tuchman, *Guns of 1914*, 240; ●Griffiths, *The Great War*, 28; ●TIMES *History of the War*, 1:26, 441-68, «The German advance on Paris: Battles of Namur, Charleroi, Mons» [441]



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**August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1914**

## **The BEF derails a big train with a rock**



### **Mons**

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) landed in France between August 14 and 18. From the Channel it marched to Maubeuge, then to Mons, in the hope of blocking the German advance within Belgium.

To the east, Cinquième Armée is involved in the deadly battle of Charleroi, threatened to be encircled and annihilated by the three German armies ramming it on three sides.

**In the night of 22/23 August 1914**, the BEF is hastily dug in in Mons when the

reconnaissance of the Second German Army arrives, hoping to hit the French Fifth on the east side. Von Kluck did not know exactly where the BEF was and is surprised that it is already settled in Mons. His Intelligence thought it was still on the march from the coast.

Early in the morning, solid contact is made between the two armies. The BEF has four divisions, von Kluck's Army twice as many, with much more mobile artillery. But von Kluck Army Corps advance straight into a withering fire of the professional army's 'fifteen round rapid fire' across the Condé-Mons canal, which creates havoc among the German infantry.

The glorious stand of the British army in Mons earns her the vouted nickname of 'Contemptible Little Army,' from a Kaiser's insult on the same day. Those Contemptibles have covered the left flank of the Fifth French Army at the exact moment when it was needed.

— Then they vanished as fast as they came.

•Tuchman, Guns of 1914, 251-5; •Griffiths, The Great War, 28; •Bennett, The Swordbearers, 74.



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**August 24, 1914**

## **The Sideshows Call for Attention**



### **All hands to the Deck:**

#### **Russia and Austria-Hungary**

While the attention of Europe is drawn mostly on the Battle of the Frontiers in France, there are developments in the Russian Front and in Serbia that are not positive for German arms.

In East Prussia, the Eighth German Army started well with a superb divisional victory at Stallupōnien by General von François, against Rennenkampf's Vilna

Army and Samsonov's Warsaw Army, but the days after were a disaster for the Germans. General Prittwitz was caught by the Russians at the Battle of Gumbinnen, on August 20<sup>th</sup>, with substantial losses. Immediately Moltke decided to replace Prittwitz by an old retired General, **Hindenburg**, and a whipper-snapper of the General Staff, lately successful in Belgium, **Ludendorff**. The pair is rushed to Eastern Prussia to re-establish the situation.

In Serbia, the Austro-Hungarian attack across the Drina River onto the Battle of the Jadar River, valley and heights, has been repulsed by the heroic Serbs, fighting for their country in the center-west. The Chief of Staff of the Austrian-Hungarian army, von Hötendorf, is now faced with having to resume the campaign from the wrong side of the Drina, keeping in mind that the Russians are now assaulting in the east, at Lublin, Krasnik and the Tavev Forest, and that some more of his forces will have to be assigned east.

Moltke, in charge of all German fronts from GHQ in Coblenz, takes the very wrong decision of reassigning six divisions from the western front to accompany the Hindenburg-Ludendorff team, and to support Hötendorf in Serbia.

— This comes at a very wrong time and from a very wrong place.

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●Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff, 163-6; Barnett, The Swordbearers, 71.



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# Le 25 août, 1914

## Le Viol de la Belgique



### L'incendie de Louvain

Au cours du progrès des armées allemandes à travers de la Belgique, les villes et villages sont exploités pour la nourriture et les fournitures diverses qu'on peut y trouver à mettre au profit des soldats. Les officiers se comportent comme des conquérants et veulent bien faire sentir qu'ils considèrent le refus du roi Albert d'acquiescer à un passage pacifique, un affront pour lequel la population doit payer.

Il y a aussi entre les Belges et les Allemands, particulièrement ceux de langue et de culture françaises, des tensions ethniques qui se sont considérablement envenimées depuis le début des combats de la Bataille des Frontières.

Les armées allemandes subissent des pertes énormes dans le sud, et tous savent que la campagne de France doit se terminer rapidement puisqu'il va falloir faire face aux Russes immédiatement après, dans des combats qui vont être là aussi, terriblement acharnés.

Les Allemands ne tolèrent donc quelque lamentation que ce soit chez les Belges, dont les hommes sont encore en arme, en repli vers Anvers ou vers la France.

Quelques mouvements de résistance par des individus immédiatement déclarés 'francs-tireurs' donnent lieu à des exactions et exécutions violentes et publiques, pour terroriser et subjuguer les populations captives.

**Le 25 août 1914**, la politique de terreur trouve son apogée dans l'incendie de l'université de Louvain, la plus vieille université d'Europe, conservatoire des plus grands trésors académiques du pays.

— Le «viol de la Belgique», va indisposer la population des États-Unis, qui lit les reporters neutres qui y sont.

• TIMES History of the War, Vol I, Chaps 24 and 25, pp. 401-30, 431-40; • Tuchman, *Guns of 1914*, 318, 33809.



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# August 26, 1914

## Rethinking Strategy

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**INSTRUCTION GÉNÉRALE No.2**  
PARIS, LE 26 AOÛT 1914

### Adopting a New Stance in France

On 26 August 1914, five German armies have now entered the national French territory deep enough that the Battle of the Frontiers can be considered finished.

Joffre's Plan XVII 'for active defence' originally intended to hit hardest in Lorraine, from the startline of the great citadels there. Then a strong counter-attack aimed to cut the attackers in two, before penetrating Germany with French «*offensive à outrance*», so as to create panic and confusion.

The French General Staff now recognizes that the key Battle of Lorraine has been lost, and that the main impetus of the German invasion is on their right wing, with three gigantic armies involved in the process of wheeling west in Belgium, then south, so as to reach Paris and knock out the central coordination of French government and military forces. The German plan calls for achieving Armistice in Paris before 10 September.

General Joffre's « Plan VII » is therefore at an end, after not having succeeded in blocking the German advance at the frontiers with Germany and Belgium. There is a need for a new disposition to re-establish a line of defence, which Joffre now defines as the line AMIENS-REIMS-VERDUN.

He reassigns armies to new positions and creates a Sixième Armée out of elements of the armies to the south, to better address the heavy northern threat. Paris is also prepared as a citadel, with the Governor, General Gallieni, tasked with defending strongly around the north-east perimeter. Sixième Armée will be introduced between Cinquième and Quatrième, where a gap has opened, thus allowing Cinquième to move further north.

— This can be compared to an emergency strategic defensive move in a chess game: Joffre has just rooked.

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•Tuchman, The Guns of August, Chap 19: «Retreat», 341-72.

# Le 27 août, 1914

## Regroupement français



### Effet du regroupement français

Le 27 août 1914, l'effet du regroupement français, suite à la Directive générale No. 2 du général Joffre, le 26, est que la pression entre les armées engagées diminue pour permettre le mouvement des armées françaises qui glissent latéralement vers le nord. Aussitôt les Allemands en déduisent que les forces françaises en retrait plient sous le choc. Le Grand Quartier Général allemand *OHL-Oberste Heeresleitung* (Supreme Army Command) à Coblenz, le ressent immédiatement dans les rapports des armées. Le général Moltke, de Coblenz, qui est trop loin pour bien évaluer la situation, peut donc envoyer le télégramme suivant: « **L'ENNEMI, BATTU SUR TOUTE**

**LA LIGNE, EST EN RETRAIT COMPLET... ET N'EST PAS CAPABLE D'OFFRIR DE RESISTANCE SÉRIEUSE À L'AVANCE ALLEMANDE.»**

Pourtant la situation n'est pas si confortable. Le transport des éléments qui formeront la nouvelle Sixième Armée française se fait par trains avec célérité. Les Cinquième et Quatrième armées françaises se regroupent et repositionnent pour reprendre la défense plus fermement. La préparation de Paris s'organise aussi selon des plans neufs.

Du côté allemand, les armées de l'aile droite ont perdu beaucoup des troupes, d'abord dans les combats, mais aussi pour assurer des garnisons dans les villes belges qu'elles ont laissées derrière, et aussi par le départ des divisions ré-assignées vers la Russie pour y colmater la brèche.

De plusieurs façons l'aile droite de trois armées gigantesques, que le plan de Schlieffen avait voulue puissante, s'est amincie. Elle se désagrège aussi par manque de coordination et par fatigue. Les soldats ont traversé plusieurs centaines de kilomètres, et se sont battus dans des combats laborieux. Paris est maintenant trop loin pour l'envelopper par le nord.

— Moltke se réjouit trop vite!



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August 28, 1914

## A Coalition Government in France

### France's «Union Sacrée»

At the beginning of the War, the President of France, Raymond Poincaré, asked both Chambers of the French Parliament to consider appointing a Government of «Union Sacrée», in essence a coalition government given powers to rule without a Parliament during the War.

The Deputies and Senators have been considering this proposition since then, but the recent defeats in the Battle of the Frontiers have unleashed strong criticism of the socialist government elected in June. The Minister of War, Messiny, is being accused of having interfered in military matters and having hampered the military in its tasks.

The wide-spread desire for a coalition government and the criticism of the present government add up to arrive at a decision, on **28 August 1914**, to create such a **Government of Sacred Union**, endowed with the powers of decision so as to support the French armed forces with all the might of the nation, without

political interference. The mandate is for one year.

The present **Président du Conseil, René Viviani**, remains in the post, but his ministers are drawn from the spectrum of political parties. Leading names of the Assembly and Senate are drawn to assume departments, such as Cochin, Ribot, Delcassé, Caillaux, Malvy. Alexandre Millerand, the New Minister of War, a Socialist like the Prime Minister, will muster Labor for the creation of a War industry, transforming commercial manufacturing into arms, vehicles, ammunitions and military equipment production.

The Government of Sacred Union will remain until October 1915.

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•Brogan, D.W., The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939, p. 512.



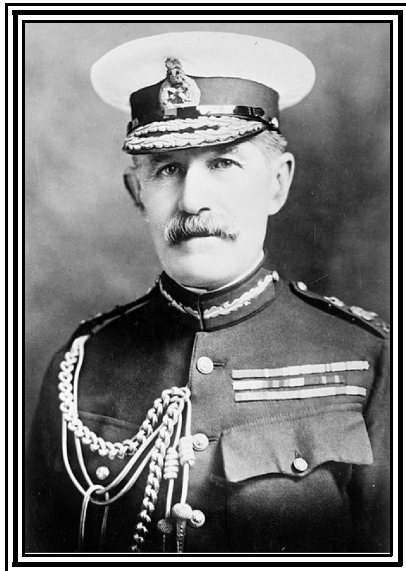
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# August 29, 1914

## Twice Bitten, Once Shy



### The BEF is avoiding the enemy

The BEF has had a rough time since its first encounter with the advancing enemy, at Mons, on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. The stand there was impressive, but casualties were high. The BEF has been on withdrawal since then.

Another stand, at Le Cateau, on August 26<sup>th</sup>, was the toughest. When the Germans caught up in their pursuit in the night of 25/26 August, the Commander of II British Corps, **General Horace Smith-Dorrien**, took the rapid stand to allow I Corps (General Haig) to escape. General Allenby's Cavalry Division was instrumental in warning and delaying, but the two divisions of II Corps once again met the advancing Germans with obstinate and deadly fire. But the Germans were not surprised, as at Mons. They maneuvered and attacked repeatedly with the intent of crippling once and for all this «contemptible little army» blocking their way.

II Corps fought valiantly and extricated itself brilliantly from the very unequal battle. But the BEF is now badly hurting. Its losses are troubling Field Marshal French, who did not want Smith-Dorrien to make his costly stand.

On **August 29<sup>th</sup> 1914**, French wants to distance himself sufficiently to be able to stop, rest and reorganize. His meeting with General Joffre, three days ago, was an unpleasant mutual recrimination, blaming each other that the French had not provided flank protection and that the BEF was withdrawing too much. The placid and stern «Papa Joffre» wants more out of the British, but he is no less demanding of the French armies, in particular of the Cinquième that flanks the BEF, involved today in the vicious Battle of Guise.

– Both Joffre and French will have to admit, a few days later, that Smith-Dorrien's delaying action made a difference in setting up for the battle of the Marne. But they just don't know it yet.

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●Keegan, WWI, Chap 4; ●Beckett and Corvi, Haig's Generals, p. 200-1; Tuchman, Guns of 1914, p. 359.



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## Le 30 août, 1914

### La Gloire de Goliath



#### La bataille de Tannenberg (25-31 août 1914)

Les incursions d'un groupe d'armées russe en Prusse de l'Est ont piqué la fierté des Allemands. La première incursion vers Königsberg, poussée par le Grand Duke Nicholas, le 17 août, a été marquée par une défaite à Stallupönen, mais trois jours plus tard, les Russes ont infligé une revanche humiliante à la Huitième Armée allemande, qui a coûté son poste au Général Prisswick, décontenancé.

En toute hâte, le Commandant Suprême a nommé le général à la retraite **Paul von Beneckendorff und Hindenburg**, et un héros de l'éclatante prise de Liège, l'officier d'état-major général Éric Ludendorff, pour aller

commander la Huitième armée et reprendre le contrôle dans le nord, alors justement que les Autrichiens-Hongrois ont des difficultés contre le groupe d'armées russe du sud, près de Lemberg. Il faut arrêter les Russes à moindre prix. Six divisions précieuses du front ouest accompagnent Hindenburg pour y arriver.

Le 25 août, une bataille qui prendra le nom de Tannenberg s'engage avec une fermeté nouvelle. Un officier génial de l'état-major général de la Huitième Armée, Hoffmann, a déjà conçu un plan audacieux auquel Ludendorff souscrit. L'attaque allemande profite de plusieurs avantages matériels, notamment l'interception des communications russes et leur manque de munitions. Elle sépare les deux armées russes et les anéantit totalement, tour à tour, dans des marécages.

La bataille de Tannenberg est un énorme succès pour l'Allemagne entière. Elle réduit la menace russe sur le front Est pendant la bataille de France et encourage les Autrichiens-Hongrois dans leurs déboires.

Hindenburg, en un jour, devient le Goliath victorieux de l'Allemagne. Tannenberg fait de lui le héros suprême du Haut Commandement.

— Pourtant il n'a rien fait que d'avoir ce visage de pierre impitoyable, qui sera exploité par la propagande.



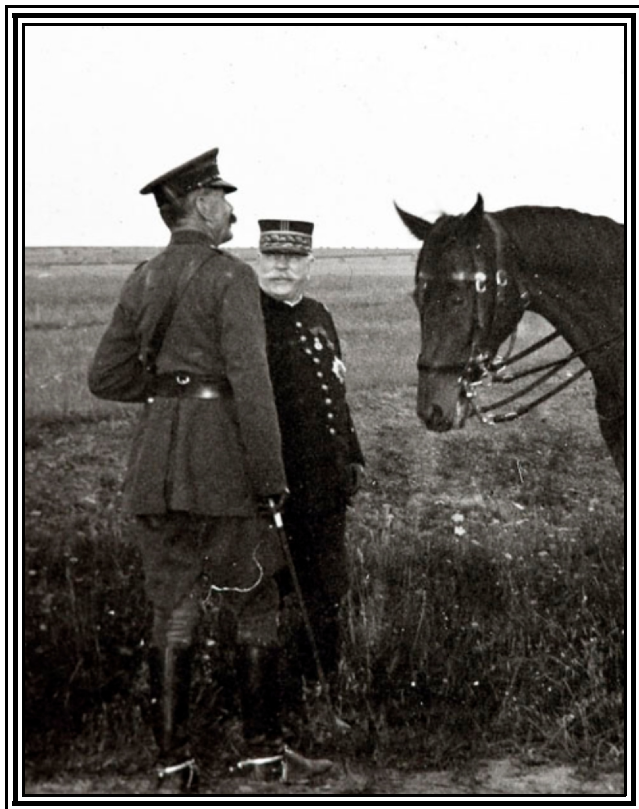
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August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1914

## Get It From the Horse's Mouth



### The Great Marshal goes to France

The British Secretary of State for War, **Field Marshal Horatio Kitchener**, has been reading the fiery reports coming from Field Marshal John French, the Commander of the BEF in France. He has also been informed by other sources that Sir John is in blasted terms with the French. His conversations with Général Joffre, *Commandant des Armées*, and Général Lanzerac, the Commander of *Cinquième Armée*, have been marred by language incomprehension and lack of understanding of each other's intents and methods.

Kitchener is quite unhappy with French and decides to pay a visit to France, and sort out why the movement of the BEF is so detached from the French overall plan, when the BEF was instructed that, within the limits of national chain of command, it should coordinate and cooperate with Joffre's plans and Lanzerac's flank formation.

The situation is unusual, here. The minister is himself a Field Marshal of immense reputation, visiting his subordinate, another Field Marshal, of much lesser

stature. For the French, the title of *Maréchal* is something altogether different. It conveys a «'dignity of state' conferred on victors»<sup>1</sup>. This all makes for many complications for which the punctilious and self-conscious 'Irish' John French is not particularly happy in France.

-- Kitchener is determined to see if he has the right horse in the race. He will speak directly with the French, and also get it from his horse's mouth.

<sup>1</sup> •Keegan, The First World War, p. 103.



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