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Modern Military History Series.

A STUDY OF THE STRATEGY AND TACTICS

OF THE

EAST PRUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

1914.

ILLUSTRATING THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR.

BATTLES DESCRIBED.

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OF THE  
EAST PRUSSIAN CAMPAIGN.  
1914.

ILLUSTRATING THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR.  
BATTLES DESCRIBED.

BY  
A. KEARSEY, D.S.O., O.B.E., P.S.C.  
(*Late Lieutenant-Colonel General Staff.*)

WITH THREE MAPS

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## CHAPTER I.

**A summary of the strategy and tactics of the Campaign in East Prussia.**

The campaign in East Prussia is interesting as it emphasises clearly that the success of the Germans was due mainly to their application of three principles of war, namely, concentration of force, mobility and economy of force.

The German main plan was to concentrate every available man against her chief enemy—France, leaving the minimum force to operate against the Russians. The Russian main plan on the other hand included offensive operations against both Austria and Germany without any adequate concentration of force against either enemy.

Hindenburg, in carrying out his plan, decided where the decisive place was and concentrated there all available force. He ensured that the maximum force was available by reducing his detachments to a minimum.

He made full use of the mobility of his force after the battle of Gumbinnen.

He sent forward the Strasburg garrison to threaten the left flank of the Second Russian Army. From Angerapp he sent his I Corps to attack the left flank of the Russian II Corps. Against the isolated right wing of the Second Russian army in the vicinity of Lensburg he directed his I Reserve Corps.

On the other hand the Russians suffered under the handicap of administrative inefficiency. At the last minute their plans for operations in East Prussia had been changed, and were started before the troops were complete in all their transport and supply services.

In order to carry out their plan successfully correct timing was essential, and careful arrangements for entraining, detraining, marching and maintenance were necessary, so that their two armies would have the mobility for their concentric advance for the envelopment of the inferior German forces in East Prussia.

It will now be necessary to consider the geography of the area of operations before discussing the details of the plans of the combatants; as these plans were largely affected by the country.

### Geography.

The basis of successful action by the Germans would have to be rapidity of movement in concentrating against one Russian army before the other one could intervene and cooperate.

The Germans counted on a rising of the Poles as soon as the Polish frontier was crossed.

There was no considerable physical obstacle to a Prussian invasion of Poland. Through the centre of this country runs the R. Vistula entering it from Galicia and flowing north and north-west to Warsaw, and then in a westerly direction until it enters Germany near Thorn.

This river was the chief strategic factor in the centre of Poland.

The Germans were astride its lower reaches, and thus could enter Poland along both its banks, where, however the river curved in a southerly direction at Warsaw it presented an obstacle at right angles to the German line of advance from the south.

The R. Vistula had important tributaries.

On the north the river Narew, which entered the R. Vistula below Warsaw, formed with its tributary the Bobr an important line almost to the R. Niemen at Grodno.

West of Warsaw, the river Bzura with the river Rawa formed valuable lines on which the Russians were able to check the German advance.

The Russian Baltic provinces of Kovno and Courland were flat plains for the most part thinly populated. At least a quarter of this area was covered with forests.

The natural frontier of Russia was formed by the R. Niemen.

This river protects in part the vital main line of railway from Petrograd to Warsaw as it runs parallel with the eastern frontier of East Prussia for eighty miles between Grodno and Kovno some fifty miles from the Prussian frontier. At the point where it enters Prussia it is approximately five hundred yards wide.

The southern half of the strip of land eighty miles by fifty between the R. Niemen and East Prussia is nearly filled by the forest of Augustow.

Any advance through this forest was limited to a causeway running from Suwalki up to the R. Niemen.

The German province of East Prussia consists of a great plain sloping down to the Baltic sandhills. Its special

characteristics which played an important part in the battles at the end of August and the beginning of September were the swamps, the woods and the forest of Augustow and the Masurian Lakes.

As to Russia's isolated position it must be noted that except at Vladivostok on the Pacific, she was everywhere cut off from the open sea. The Baltic was closed to her by the German fleet on the declaration of war.

After Turkey declared war, the Black Sea was sealed for the whole winter. Archangel was shut in by ice between October and May, and was inadequately served by rail.

These geographical factors added considerably to the difficulty of the Allies campaign; as Russia had to obtain the bulk of her stores from the Allies. These had to be sent for the most part through Archangel and Vladivostok.

As to the configuration of her frontier, it must be noted that the salient position of the province of Poland thrust into Germany made her position there difficult and vulnerable.

On the north of this salient were Prussian provinces.

On the south of it was the Austrian province of Galicia, covering the whole southern Polish border and reaching as far as the Russian provinces of Volhynia and Podolia. Thus Poland was bounded on three sides by enemy territory. From these sides attacks could be made at Warsaw, which was the centre and the most important city in Poland.

On the other hand the Russians had no great physical obstacles for an invasion of Posen and Silesia when circumstances should make this possible.

Between the R. Vistula, south of Thorn, and the R. Warta the Polish frontier was covered by marshes, which again recurred south of this river.

The valley of the R. Warta, however, afforded a practical and natural means of ingress into Prussia. The distance to Berlin from the point where the R. Warta crosses from Poland into Germany is only 130 miles.

The Russians, however, were more interested in the invasion of Silesia than in occupying Posen.

In Silesia were the greatest manufacturing and mining areas of Eastern Germany. In the vicinity of Beuthen close to the Polish frontier, were the richest zinc deposits in Europe.

Zaborze and Königshütte in Silesia were rich mining centres with large iron works. A prosperous glass industry was within fifteen miles of the Polish frontier at Gledwitz. This important industrial district of Germany was where the

first assault of the Russian invasion would be. If work stopped in manufactories and mines the effect would be paralyzing on the morale of the German nation, and on her capacity for continuing the war.

Once the Russians were established in Silesia they could advance either towards Berlin or between the Carpathians and the Sudetic Mountains towards Vienna.

It is now necessary to consider the entrenchments in the area of operations of the Powers involved.

### Fortifications.

**GERMANY.** The whole of the line of the lower Vistula was strongly held.

An important strategic strong point was Bromberg, thirty-two miles W.N.W. of Thorn. It was the centre of many railways, and it guarded the bridges across the R. Netze.

At Thorn, ninety miles south of Danzig, and twelve miles from the Russian frontier, the railway from Warsaw entered Prussian territory.

This place on the right bank of the R. Vistula, one of the chief features of the defences of Eastern Germany, was a strongly fortified bridge-head and formed the pivot of Hindenburg's railway strategy. The strong fortress of Danzig at the mouth of the R. Vistula has been compared to Strasburg. It was a first-class fortress, and could be inundated on the eastern side.

Twenty miles further south on the R. Vistula there were strong entrenchments opposite Dirschau, forming a bridge-head to guard the main lines to Königsberg and to Petrograd. Graudenz, forty miles further south, on the right bank of the R. Vistula formed another valuable bridge-head. Königsberg on the gulf of the Danzig, at the mouth of the R. Pregel, was a first-class fortress. It consisted of two lines of works beyond which were six detached forts on either side of the R. Pregel. West of the city was Freidrichsburg, strongly fortified on an island in the river. Inside the detached forts on the eastern side of Königsberg was the strongly entrenched position of Kaserne Kronprinz. Pillau, thirty miles from Königsberg, was an entrenched camp, on the detached spit of land in the gulf of Danzig.

The region of the Masurian lakes was strengthened with blockhouses and the small fort of Boyen. The railway centre of Posen directly covering Berlin in an advance from Warsaw, was converted into a large entrenched camp.

South of Posen the line of the R. Oder covered a marshy area. On this river Oppeln and Breslau were both fortified. In the gap between Oppeln and the south of Silesia was the large entrenched camp at Neisse on the eastern side of the Sudetic Mountains.

North-west of Breslau was the fortress of Glogau at an important railway junction.

Kustrin, fifty miles east of Berlin, was the remaining fortress covering the German capital from the east. Stettin, near the mouth of the R. Oder, was strongly fortified.

**AUSTRIA.** In Galicia the principal Austrian fortress was Przemysl on the R. San, sixty miles west of Lemberg.

At Lemberg, the capital of Galicia, the defences had been neglected. In Bukowina there was only one fortified point. This was at Zaleszcyski on the R. Dniester. Cracow, in the western area of Galicia, was surrounded by a ring of strong forts, situated on both banks of the R. Vistula. The five principal passes, namely, the Lupkow, the Uzsok, the Volsez the Delatyn and the Borgo, over the Carpathians were fortified.

### Russia's Plans.

Russia had enormous difficulties in carrying out her plans. They had a hundred and seventy-three million people.

They had not accumulated in sufficient quantities guns, rifles, equipment and clothing on the large scale required for mobilization, and to convert their masses when mobilized into efficient combatants.

In addition the further difficulties were the configuration and character of the frontier, their isolation during the winter and their lack of railways as compared with Austria and Germany. On the German eastern frontier there was a network of strategic railways. The Austrian province of Galicia was well served by suitable railway lines. On the Russian side of the common frontier there were no lateral railways running parallel to her western boundary as was the case on German territory.

The routes which an invasion of East Prussia by Russia must follow were apparent, as they were dictated by the three main lines of communication which the Russians possessed.

The first was from Petrograd to Berlin, crossing the R. Niemen at the fortress of Kovno, passing the frontier at Wirballen—Eydtkuhnen and passing through Insterburg,

Allenstein and Eylau to Thorn. The second railway left the main Vilna—Warsaw line at Bialystok, passed the fortress of Osowiec, crossed the frontier beyond Grajevo and at Lyck entered the lake country. The third line ran from Mlawa to Eylau and Danzig.

The Russian plan in East Prussia was to make a concentric advance by their First and Second Armies, with the object of enveloping and crushing von Prittwitz's German Eighth army. The two Russian armies under Jilinsky were to be 800,000 strong. The German Eighth Army never exceeded 200,000 men.

The first Russian army under Rennenkampf, based on Vilna, was to advance north of the Masurian Lakes, and was to draw the greatest possible enemy strength eastward upon itself.

The second Russian army under Samsonoff, based on Warsaw, was to advance in a north-westerly direction cross the southern frontier of East Prussia, and attack the German Eighth Army in the flank and rear.

In order to deal with the Hungarians the Russians wished to secure the passes of the Carpathians giving access to their country.

Once Russian armies were at or near Buda-Pesth it was hoped that the Magyars would recede from Austria and conclude a separate peace. In addition, by invading Hungary later, pressure on Serbia's army could be relieved, and by holding the crest of the Carpathians the Russians would fully protect their left flank during a forward movement in a westerly direction towards the German capital.

#### German Plans.

The German plans on their eastern frontier were based on the assumption that the Russian mobilization would be slow. They, therefore, decided not to undertake any offensive operations at first on a large scale.

They wished, first, to overthrow France, and then to endeavour to deal with Russia. Every available man was to be concentrated against their main enemy, France, while their Eighth Army (200,000 men) was to contain the two Russian armies.

General von Prittwitz, the commander of the Eighth Army, decided to attack the first Russian Army advancing on Gumbinnen and Königsberg north of the Masurian lakes and to leave the XX Corps in front of the Second Russian

Army which would be attacked later. His forward bases were Insterburg for his Eighth Army and Allenstein for his XX Corps. Von Prittwitz sent one Landwehr Brigade to watch the line of the Masurian Lakes.

Germany's plans with Austria-Hungary was for the Austro-Hungarian armies in Galicia to advance into Poland towards Warsaw and eastwards into Volhynia in the direction of Kieff.

The chief duty allotted to the Austrians was to contain as many Russians as possible while the main German armies enveloped the Allies' left wing after passing through Belgium and Northern France.

#### General Result of the Plans.

Subsequent events did not occur as the Germans had planned.

The Austrian advance from Przemyśl reached only to Lublin, and then the Austrians again withdrew to their own country.

The invasion of Volhynia ended as abruptly as it had begun.

The Russians even after their defeat at Tannenberg continued to invade Galicia.

Germany's plans were also upset by the Russian mobilization being quicker than she had expected. By the 17th August the First Russian Army had crossed the frontier into East Prussia. A few days later the Russians were marching into Galicia and were clearing the flanks of Poland.

By violating the neutrality of Belgium Germany alienated the sympathy of the civilised world, and thus lost any chance of gaining a full and decisive victory.

Had Germany acted vigorously in co-operation with Austria-Hungary she might have paralyzed further Russian efforts, and then turned with a prospect of success against the French forces in the west.

In East Prussia the German plan had taken definite shape by the 20th August, when they were on the line Angerburg—Insterburg.

The Russian's general advance had begun on the seventh day of their mobilization. On the 17th August their leading troops crossed the frontier and encountered part of the German I Königsberg Army Corps at Stallupönen. Here the first battle of the war was fought.

The commander of the 27th Russian division tried to make

an outflanking movement, which led to his flank and rear being in turn attacked and driven back. The Germans claimed to have captured 3,000 prisoners and six machine guns before they withdraw after dark to Gumbinnen.

The German commander had hoped that the Russians would now advance and attack them in their strong position. However, the Russian orders for the 19th and 20th had been picked up by wireless, and it was then known that the Russians meant to halt on the 20th. In addition the German commander knew that Samsonoff's Second Russian Army was advancing. Von Prittwitz then had to make a decision as to whether he would remain in his position between Angerburg and Kraupischken or whether he would advance to attack the enemy and so give up the advantages of his prepared position.

If he remained in his position he would have to order his I Corps back from the vicinity of Gumbinnen or to move the remainder of his Eighth Army up into line with it.

Von Francois, the I Corps Commander, urged the Army Commander to carry out the latter course, and von Prittwitz acquiesced. Von Francois then issued orders for an attack on the 20th August.

#### Battle of Gumbinnen.

The first attack by the northern division of the I Corps completely surprised the Russians who had not secured their position with the usual protective detachments. The Russian cavalry operating on the northern flank of their army in the vicinity of Spullen withdrew fifteen miles when they were attacked. The 1st German Cavalry Division were thus able to harass the Russian's northern flank and to attack their transport five miles in rear of their right flank.

In this battle neither the German Army Commander nor the Corps Commanders kept any reserves in hand and the result was that though the Germans actually concentrated at this battle a numerical superiority of the troops engaged, they were forced to withdraw.

Von Prittwitz failed to deal with the situation on his front. His attacks were disjointed with tired troops acting without any central idea given to the Corps Commanders except to assault the enemy on their front as soon as they were encountered. His Corps Commanders were not accurately informed as to the strength, composition and location of their enemy. He did not synchronize his efforts or control

the battle. His three corps came into action at intervals of four hours starting with the I Corps at 4 a.m.

His 3rd Reserve Division on the right rear of the I Reserve Corps did not come into action at all throughout the day.

Even in the I German Corps where the Commander had prepared for an attack, there was no synchronized action. The frontal attack by the 1st Division was made before the flank attack by the 2nd Division round the 28th Russian Division had fully developed, and long before there was any support by the XVII Corps on the south.

Thus the 2nd German Division was unable to gain ground, and the full effects of von Francois' turning movement were not obtained.

The next Corps to make an attack was the XVII German Corps south of the I Corps, four hours later than the first assault, after an eighteen-mile night march. The Commander of this Corps, thinking that the Russians were retreating, sent his divisions forward as they arrived, and without artillery support.

The result was that his 35th and 36th Divisions were repulsed with loss by the two divisions of the III Russian Corps and the 40th Russian Division.

The third isolated battle on the German front was fought ten miles south-west of the southern flank of von Mackensen's XVII Corps between Goldap and Grischkehmen. It started four hours after the corps on their left had begun to attack. The assaults were made on arrival at the Russian's positions with insufficient knowledge as to the situation on their front. At first the Commander of this I Reserve Corps hoped to be able to co-operate with the XVII Corps on their left and to strike the southern flank of the III Russian Corps.

Instead they had to turn south-east and meet the IV Russian Corps. They could not make any progress, as they were much exhausted after their long march.

The 3rd German Reserve Division only arrived within ten miles of the Russian's positions.

The result of this battle of Gumbinnen was that the Russians gained a strategical success, as though the Germans actually had superior number their Commander failed in dealing with the situation.

The Russian Army Commander was lucky in the result of the day's fighting, but he took little advantage of his good fortune.

Von Prittwitz evidently considered that his position on

the evening of the 20th August was hopeless. He appears to have been overwhelmed by the information that the Second Russian Army was between Jucha and Mlawa, and that his XVII Corps would not be able to deal with an attack if made in force by the three divisions on its front.

He did not sufficiently realise that the Russians had had heavy casualties and that on his northern flank his I Corps was doing well. There was no justification for his order at the end of the battle of Gumbinnen for a general retirement behind the R. Vistula.

This contemplated withdrawal of a hundred and fifty miles would have had a most demoralising effect on the German nation as well as on the Eighth German Army.

#### Operations Leading up to the Battle of Tannenburg.

On the 21st August von Prittwitz was dismissed from his command.

On the 22nd August Ludendorff became Chief of the Staff to Hindenburg, who was appointed Commander-in-Chief in East Prussia. Orders were at once issued for a concentration of troops for offensive action against Samsonoff's Second Russian Army by the envelopment of both flanks of his army.

The retirement in front of the First Russian Army was checked, and troops were moved by rail and by march to positions in front of the Second Russian Army.

Rennenkampf lost touch with the Germans in his front in spite of his great superiority in cavalry.

He did not resume his advance until the 23rd August. On this day the First Russian Army reached Insterburg, and on the following day occupied it in force.

After this Rennenkampf's advance was practically unopposed, but he appears to have taken no steps to gain contact with the Narew Army. On the 27th August during the critical period of the battle of Tannenburg when the Germans were starting their envelopment of the two centre Corps of the First Russian Army, Rennenkampf was unaware of the situation on any part of the area of operations, and continued to move slowly forward towards Königsberg with the XX Corps north of the Insterburg—Königsberg railway, and the IV and III Corps south of it.

In the meantime Samsonoff's Second Army had recklessly advanced in a westerly direction to the line Ortelsburg—

Soldau by the 23rd August in the belief that the Germans were rapidly retiring in front of them.

Actually the Germans were moving in easterly and southerly directions to attack the Second Russian Army.

Samsonoff did not send forward his three cavalry divisions to reconnoitre. Consequently he was completely ignorant of the concentration of German troops.

After his army's march of 115 miles in seven days from its detraining stations there were wide gaps between the columns and his corps were on an unduly extended front. Owing to insufficient supplies his troops became exhausted before his objectives were reached, and there was much straggling on the march and much sickness. The wastage during his advance became excessive, so that just when his army was gaining contact with the Germans it was in an unfit state to carry out offensive operations.

By the 24th August, Samsonoff had his army on a front of sixty miles between Ribben and Waplitz. He was thus marching his army twenty miles away from the area of concentration to which he had been ordered to go. His army should have been moving to an area between Rastenburg and Seeburg on a twenty mile front.

By his dispersion and widening of the gap between the two Russian armies he was facilitating the task of the German commander in concentrating in turn against each of the Russian armies.

The German plan of attacking, at first against the Russian right, then against the Russian left and finally against the Russian centre, was now beginning to take effect.

Hindenburg had the great advantage of an excellent railway system to add to the mobility of his army. His resources in men were, however, limited.

To disengage his forces after the battle of Gumbinnen should have been difficult if Rennenkampf had been active. However, by the evening of the 26th August the withdrawal of his troops from in front of the First Russian Army had been carried out in accordance with the pre-arranged plans from left to right. At this date Samsonoff had sent his VI Corps to the vicinity of Rothfliess and Bischofsburg twenty miles from the right flank of the rest of his army in the vicinity of Allenstein. He sent his 4th Cavalry Division to Sensburg, fifteen miles further east of Bischofsburg. These detachments could carry out no useful purpose, and they were isolated with only the vague orders to protect the flank of the Second Russian Army.

### Battle of Tannenburg.

The battle started on the 26th August: by the end of the month the Russians had lost 125,000 prisoners and 500 guns, and had suffered the greatest single defeat of any of the combatants during the war. In this battle the Russian Army was exhausted, and had, in addition, the handicaps of indifferent and irresolute leadership, inferior armament and equipment, incompetent staff work, ineffective cavalry and air force, and poor communications.

Samsonoff had no objective in the advance of the three separate portions of his army. Nor did he make any attempt to find out the strength and location of the Germans on his front.

The result was that the VI Corps was surprised and defeated by the XVII German Corps advancing from Lautern and Seeburg. The VI Corps Commander then marched his 4th and 16th Divisions back, thirty-one and twenty-seven miles respectively, from the battlefield to Wallen and Olschienen. His Corps, owing to fatigue, hunger and confusion during this retreat, became as completely demoralized as he was himself. He maintained a passive attitude until the 29th August, and he forgot to inform Samsonoff of his retreat until 2 a.m. on the 27th August.

Owing to the withdrawal and collapse of the VI Russian Corps, the XVII German Corps was able on the 27th to continue its march unhindered through Ortelsburg for operations against the right flank of the remainder of the Second Russian Army.

The I German Reserve Corps was able to march unopposed on the 27th August to Allenstein and to join in the attack on the Russian centre.

On the 26th August on the Russian's left flank their I Corps was engaged with the German I Corps in the vicinity of Seeben and Grillau. In this area the Russians were holding a seven-mile front from Uzdau, south of the Soldau—Lautenburg railway. The Uzdau position was a most important one for the Russians to hold. Yet the Russian I Corps Commander allowed von François' German Corps to detrain and to form up for attack without interruption from his two cavalry divisions on the 27th August. No effort was made by the 6th and 15th Russian cavalry divisions to pierce their enemy's screen of protecting troops or to keep in close contact with their enemy during their advance on Heinrichsdorf and Ruttkowitz. No scouts even were sent to

to the forest of Kosten on the main line of Germans' advance and only six miles in front of the I Corps.

Owing to the inactivity of the Russian Commander of the I Corps, the German I Corps Commander had ample time to make adequate arrangements for the converging attacks by his 1st and 2nd divisions against the centre and right of the Russian position.

At the end of the 26th August the Germans were by no means in a favourable position.

Their only immediate reserves available were one Landwehr division which had been in the train for seven days. Their I Reserve Corps on their left flank was still some distance from Allenstein. Their XX Corps was much exhausted after hard fighting throughout the day and was extended on a wide front.

On the 27th August was fought the battle of Uzdau on the Russian's left flank. Here the I German Corps was now complete with artillery and helped on its left flank by von Scholtz's XX Corps, and on its right by Muhlmann's detachment of Landwehr and Ersatz forces.

The position occupied by the I Russian Corps was strong, naturally, and had been strengthened during the past three days.

Throughout the position there was excellent field of fire and also of observation over the open country.

However, the morale of the Russian infantry now must have been so much lowered by want of food that they did not even wait for the German infantry attack, which was to follow the bombardment of their trenches. The whole position was vacated, the defence collapsed, and the troops became disorganised.

The cavalry divisions did not carry out their rôle of harassing and delaying their enemy's advance by action against their flank and rear. The 15th Russian cavalry division was inactive in the position across the frontier to which they had retired on the previous day. The 6th Russian cavalry division joined the confused mass of fugitives and hurried back to Soldau.

Samsonoff had not, owing to lack of intercommunication, grasped the correct state of affairs. He knew nothing of the movements of the First Russian Army along the Insterburg—Königsberg railway.

He now ordered his centre corps to advance in a south-westerly direction towards Gilgenburg and Lautenburg.

This order to advance was given at a time when withdrawal might have saved the destruction of the Second Russian Army.

Before the XV Russian Corps could carry out Samsonoff's order they were attacked by four German divisions. Only at one point was the XV Corps able to withstand these attacks. The XIII Russian Corps made little effort to cooperate with them. Their commander took no steps to find out what troops were on his front and flanks as his corps approached Hohenstein. His troops were so much exhausted by constant marching and fighting with very little food that they had lost morale. Their right flank was exposed, and they were heavily bombarded.

The result was that they straggled back to a position west of Nadrau and Waplitz, towards which places the XV Corps withdrew in disorder after dark. These tired troops continued to retire on the following day through the forest east of Grünfiess. When they tried to break through across the frontier they found the exits blocked by the I German Corps.

Von François, the Commander of the I German Corps had been given definite orders to advance on the 28th August in a north-easterly direction, in order to help the XX Corps on his left. He deliberately disobeyed and marched in an easterly direction and placed a long line of detachments to block the southern exits of the forest east of Grünfiess.

By this action he prevented the bulk of three corps from escaping.

Had the retreating Russians made determined efforts to push through the southern exits of the forest, this attenuated line might have been of little use. That this should have been done was shown by the determined action of two commanders who did successfully lead formed bodies of troops out of the forest and then were able to cross the frontier.

After the 30th August there was only one flickering hope of recovery in the Second Russian Army from eleven battalions and some artillery collected by the newly appointed Commander of their I Corps. With this force he advanced towards Neidenburg.

However, as soon as von François heard of a threatened attack he at once took the offensive, although his corps was strung out between Neidenburg and Willenburg.

The Russian Commander at Neidenburg realised his isolated position, and decided to withdraw on the 31st August.

Samsonoff was now in despair owing to the demoralization

and heavy losses in his XXIII, I and VI Corps after their retreats and owing to the annihilation of his two centre corps.

The Germans had in five days certainly gained a decisive victory. With a superiority of only twenty-three battalions they had enveloped both flanks of the Second Russian Army.

This defeat was due on the part of the Russians to many causes. There was a lack of enterprise on the part of the Russian cavalry in gaining information and in co-operating in battle. Detachments were made so that their main force at the battle of Tannenburg was outnumbered and enveloped. Samsonoff paid little attention to the enemy's communications, which he did not attempt to disturb.

There was a lack of inter-communication in the units of the Second Army and with Headquarters. The Higher Command of the N.W. Russian Front did not sufficiently control the operations of the two Russian Armies.

However, this battle demonstrated to the Germans the power of the Russians to assume the offensive, and forced them to provide against its renewal. This area was the starting point of many operations in which the Germans used their man-power in an advance on Warsaw.

Hindenburg now turned without a pause to the other half of his task. He advanced as rapidly as the damaged railways allowed against the army of the R. Niemen.

#### Battle of Masurian Lakes.

Hindenburg's aim was to drive the First Russian Army past Nordenburg, Angerburg and Goldap to Gumbinnen or Eydtkuhnen in order to intercept Rennenkampf's retreat. This manoeuvre failed in its main object because the First Russian Army was not cut off, but it succeeded partially because it caused Rennenkampf to retire rapidly and with great loss to his bases. Thus the Germans were able to occupy the main strategic centres in East Prussia.

After the battle of Tannenburg the Russians had an opportunity of taking the offensive with the First Army while the German forces were still scattered. Jilinsky, however, became apprehensive as to the fighting capacity of the First Army and ordered Rennenkampf to discontinue his advance.

Rennenkampf then occupied a defensive position on such an extended front between Labiau and Angerburg that active operations became impossible. His left flank could thus be turned by a force advancing from the west either through or south of the Masurian Lakes.

He kept no reserve in hand with which to deal with eventualities or to take the offensive. He made his original plan on the assumption that the Germans would make their main attack along their best line of supply, namely, from Königsberg. Therefore, he left on his northern flank between Labiau and the Königsberg—Kovno railway a quarter of his force. He distributed the remainder of his army along his forty miles of front to the Masurian Lakes.

Hindenburg brought four corps into line on a thirty-mile front between Wehlau and Angerburg.

On the 8th September the XVII German Corps attacked throughout the day against the Russians in the Lotzen Gap between Lakes Gablick and Goldappar. These attacks were unsuccessful, but the Germans, by taking the initiative, were forcing the Russians to conform to their plans.

The suitable time for Jilinsky's offensive operations had been allowed to slip away. His schemes evolved on the 4th September were theoretical and were not based on the fighting condition of his three armies nor on the possibilities of feeding the Second and Tenth Armies in the desert through which they would have to advance; nor did he give consideration as to the possible movements of the enemy.

On the 9th September the German's main attacks against Rennenkampf's extended positions failed. Owing, however, to their capture of the Russian position between Lakes Gablick and Babken, Rennenkampf decided to retire when he had made a counter attack on his southern flank.

On the following day the Russians began to evacuate their positions at Lyck when the Germans continued their attacks. By the 12th September the five northern Russian corps were fighting rearguard actions with four German corps, and were driven out of the Rominten Forest.

On the following day the Tenth Russian Army was between Augustow and Osowiec. The Second Russian Army was between Lomja and Przasnysz. On the 14th September as envelopment of the First Russian Army by the German forces was no longer possible, the pursuit was not pressed. On the following day East Prussia had been cleared of the Russians.

#### Conclusion.

The Germans did not succeed in repeating their overwhelming victory of Tannenburg owing to the following reasons. In the first place Ludendorff became apprehensive

as to the security of his enveloping force, and, therefore, he checked the advance of his I Corps in order that it might be ready to help the troops on its left flank in case of necessity.

In the second place Rennenkampf ordered a counter-attack on his left flank and this was successfully carried out. The Russians were thus able to escape from the combined pressure of the German's frontal and flank attacks. In their invasion of East Prussia, however, they lost three-hundred-and-ten-thousand men and six-hundred-and-fifty guns.

This disastrous result for the Russians was due to faulty leadership, to miscalculations as to time and space, and to lack of preparation and forethought. Our Regulations tell us that success will be attained by the Commander, who possesses a greater degree of that indomitable resolution and energy which enables the decision once made to be carried through. When the two Russian armies did advance for their enveloping attack to cut the Germans off from the Vistula, there was not adequate direction of the two armies. There was not the co-operation necessary to carry out this movement, which depends entirely on correct timing and on careful arrangements of entraining, detraining, marching and maintenance of supplies.

After the First Russian Army had been successful at Gumbinnen on the 20th August, there was no resolute leadership.

The result was that owing to the Russian Commander's lack of judgment and inaction the Germans were able to entrain and to concentrate a superior number of rifles and guns in front of the Second Army unknown either to the Army Commander or to the Commander-in-Chief.

In F.S.R. it is stated that "the essential characteristics of a commander are a strong and resolute will." The Russian Commander-in-Chief acquiesced in a proposal by Samsonoff for increasing on the 24th August the distance between the First and Second Armies at a time when it was essential for them to draw as close together as possible.

He had previously ordered Samsonoff to advance towards the enemy retreating before the First Army. By allowing the advance to be made towards Sensburg Samsonoff's army was moving in a westerly direction and not north-west to cut off the German retreat to the Vistula.

Jilinsky allowed Rennenkampf to advance slowly towards the fortress of Königsberg, although by the 23rd August he did know that the bulk of the German Army had left the Insterburg gap.

Jilinsky did not show "clear judgment and well-balanced sense of proportion" by insisting on sending forward his armies without the adequate means of subsistence. By the 24th August the Second Army's administrative services were disorganized, and men and animals were exhausted after eight days' continuous marching over sandy tracks.

F.S.R. also tell us that a commander must have a temperament which is neither unduly elated by success nor depressed by failure. After the disastrous battle at Tannenburg Samsonoff committed suicide; after the battle of the Masurian Lakes *Rennenkampf* broke off communication with his subordinates and with Jilinsky.

"The chief rôle of a commander is to make decisions."

This point is clearly brought out by the difference in the commands of von Prittwitz and Hindenburg.

Von Prittwitz was unable to adhere to his decision made on the 19th August. He allowed his I Corps Commander to attack and ordered the rest of the army to conform to his operations. The result was a lack of co-ordination throughout the day's fighting. Although the I Corps was successful, the rest of the Army failed.

On the 22nd August when Hindenburg became Commander-in-Chief throughout the operations leading to the defeat of the Second Army at Tannenburg, there were clear and definite decisions. "Prestige and moral effect are more than half the battle, and the influence of the leader is the chief among the moral factors which sway an army." F.S.R. vol. II.

In this campaign the influence of the Commander-in-Chief of the whole Russian Army was negligible. He was not in touch with the situation, and he exerted no personal influence, as he did not visit his troops.

He agreed to all that Jilinsky suggested, and he did not realise the conditions under which his troops were despatched or how they were maintained.

As he did not control operations he was unable to make decisions.

He believed in decentralization, but he carried this to the extremity of being out of personal touch with those under his command.

The following paragraph from F.S.R. is applicable in this case :—

"No superior commander is justified in shifting responsibility on to the shoulders of a subordinate on pretext of allowing full play to the latter's initiative. Delegation to a

subordinate of undue liberty of action is as fatal an error as undue centralisation of authority."

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## CHAPTER II.

## DIARY OF EVENTS.

1892.

In 1892 France and Russia had arranged a military convention for concerted action. These two nations realised that their main effort must be made against Germany.

1914.

31st July.

Russia ordered general mobilization.

1st August.

Germany declared war on Russia.

The French General Staff asked that the Russians should advance towards Posen.

Under the pressure of French insistence the Russian operations in East Prussia became improvisations. Their means of mobilization and concentration was so much slower than that of Germany, owing to the size of her country and her undeveloped railway system, that there was a danger of France being decisively dealt with before their offensive operations could begin to be effective.

In addition improvisations cause a loosening of all the links in the chain of organisation and command, leading to doubt, uncertainty and loss of morale.

There can be no strong actions without strong reasons for definite plans and orders. The basis of the failure of the Russian operations was that at Headquarters there were changing plans and shifting counsels.

10th August.

At Russian Headquarters orders were issued for their First and Second Armies to advance and turn both flanks of the German Eighth Army in the Masurian Lake area.

The First Army, under Rennenkampf, was to advance at first towards Insterburg, north of the Masurian Lakes, and to turn the left flank of the German Eighth Army and cut it off from Königsberg.

In the First Army were three Corps, one Rifle Brigade, five Cavalry Divisions and one Cavalry Brigade.

Its fighting value was 19,250 sabres, 74,000 rifles, 384 guns and 208 machine guns.

The Second Army, under Samsonoff, late Governor-General of Turkestan, was to advance south of the Masurian Lakes towards Rastenburg-Allenstein in order to destroy the German troops concentrating between the Vistula and the Lakes.

In the Second Army at the outset of the campaign, there were six Corps, one Rifle Brigade and three Cavalry Divisions. At a later date the II Corps was transferred to the First Russian Army.

Its fighting value was 10,500 sabres, 143,500 rifles, 348 guns and 384 machine guns.

In order to reach their allotted positions from concentration areas, the First Army had three marches of 15 miles each, the Second Army had two marches of 15 miles each. The First Army would then be on a front of approximately 40 miles, and the Second Army would be on a front of approximately 30 miles.

14th August.

General Max von Prittwitz, the Commander of the Eighth German Army, decided to attack the First Russian Army and to leave the XX Corps in front of the Second Russian Army, which he intended to attack later. The line of the Masurian Lakes was to be watched by one Landwehr Brigade.

The German forces in East Prussia were their Eighth Army, consisting of the I, XVII, XX and I Reserve Corps, Fortress troops and a Cavalry Division.

The Russians in this area of operations had a superiority of nineteen divisions and seven-and-a-half cavalry divisions.

17th August.

The centre of the First Russian Army crossed the frontier and came into touch with a part of the I German Corps at Stallupönen.

The attempt by the Russian 27th Division to make an out-flanking movement led to their flank and rear being in turn attacked. This caused the Russian 27th Division to withdraw with a loss of 3,000 prisoners.

The German Eighth Army withdrew after dark to Gumbinnen.

The Corps of the Second Russian Army reached positions on a front between Augustow and Novogeorgievsk.

**18th August.**

Russian infantry of their First Army advanced without opposition. Their cavalry had some fighting ten miles north of Gumbinnen.

I Corps Second Russian Army advanced eight miles north-west to Plonsk.

**19th August.**

The Advanced Guard of the XX Russian Corps encountered the Germans west of Stalluponen and drove them back towards Kannapinnen, when the Russians in turn were counter-attacked and suffered heavily.

The Russian Cavalry Corps operating on the northern flank of their First Army drove the 2nd Landwehr Brigade across the R. Inster at Kauschen.

Remmenkampf ordered a halt and rest for the First Army for the following day.

The Second Russian Army was on a front between Pukowina and Przasnysz.

The Germans opposing the First Russian Army were disposed between Angerburg and Kraupischken with their 1st and 2nd Divisions north-east of Gumbinnen. The remainder of the Eighth German Army was ordered to come into line south of the I Corps.

The I Corps Commander then issued orders for an attack by his northern division on reaching Sassuponen after a night march in an easterly and south-easterly direction.

**Battle of Gumbinnen: 20th August.**

The 1st German Cavalry Division drove a Russian cavalry brigade from its position at Spullen where it was watching the country on the northern flank of the XX Corps. The German cavalry division then attacked Russian transport five miles behind the right flank of the 28th Division.

The attack of the I German Corps developed by 8 a.m. against the front and flank of the 28th Russian Division, which retired in front of the 2nd German Division to the vicinity of Wittkampen.

The 35th and 36th Divisions of the XVII German Corps did not begin their attack against the III Russian Corps until mid-day.

The successive attacks of these two German divisions were

repulsed with loss by the 25th, 27th and 40th Russian Divisions.

Approximately seven miles south of the XVII German Corps the I Reserve German Corps was not in touch with the IV Russian Corps west of the R. Goldap until 4 p.m. The attacks of this German corps were repulsed.

The 3rd German Reserve Division was not engaged during the day. This division reached a position finally ten miles south-west of the southern flank of the I Reserve Corps.

Owing to lack of success by the centre and right flank of his army the German Commander-in-Chief issued orders for a general withdrawal to the R. Vistula. On reporting this decision to Supreme Command he and his Chief-of-Staff were superseded.

In this battle of Gumbinnen the Russian First Army gained a strategical success in spite of the German numerical superiority in rifles and guns.

The Second Russian Army on this day was between Jucha and Mlawa.

**21st August.**

The Russian II Corps was transferred to the First Russian Army.

On this day the Russian II Corps advanced from Bobr by Grajevo to face the eastern side of the lake district.

**22nd August.**

The Russian Second Army reached positions between Soldau, Neidenburg and Ortelsburg. The Russian 4th Cavalry Division was behind the right flank of the right wing of the Russian Second Army.

The left wing of this Army was covered by the 6th and 15th Cavalry Divisions. The numbers throughout this Army were much reduced by sickness, as the troops were short of food and were much exhausted after a weeks' marching across a desert area in very hot weather.

On this day Maj-General Ludendorff became Chief-of-the-Staff to General-Oberst von Hindenburg, who became Commander-in-Chief in East Prussia.

Ludendorff at once issued orders for a concentration of troops to attack the Second Russian Army.

The First Russian Army was to be contained by the 1st German Cavalry Division.

Von Scholtz's XX German Corps, with Landwehr, Ersatz and Landsturm troops taken from the fortresses of Graudenz and Thorn were to be the pivot on either side of which the available German corps would form up for action.

The XX Corps was to contain the Second Russian Army while troops were drawn off successively from in front of Rennenkampf's Army. The I German Corps was to be assembled on the right of the XX Corps and on its left the 3rd Reserve Division I Reserve Corps and XVII Corps were to operate.

The defence of the Lotzen area was left to its Landsturm garrison. Königsberg was protected by its mobile reserve posted on the R. Deime. The main German idea was a double envelopment on the principle carried out successfully at the battle of Cannae.

### 23rd August.

The First Russian Army started to advance again, reaching a line on the front from Pilleningken to Darkehinen.

This Army, however, had lost all touch with the Eighth German Army.

Their inaction facilitated Ludendorff's task of withdrawing the remaining four divisions from Rennenkampf's front.

On completion of this withdrawal the Germans would have the chance of being in superior numbers to the Second Russian Army in the immediate vicinity of Tannenburg. In the meantime the German XX Corps had to bear the weight of Samsonoff's attacks.

On the German side on this day their 3rd Reserve Division completed detrainment at Allenstein and their XVII Corps reached Friedland.

### Battle of Orlau-Frankenau: 24th August.

The Russian XV Corps ran into the German XX Corps holding a position from north-west of the Kommusin Forest to Mickalken. The 8th Russian Division suffered heavily during this encounter, as there was no co-operation on their right flank from the Russian XIII Corps.

Similarly on the left flank of the XV Corps the Russian XXIII Corps did not co-operate.

The Germans were, therefore, able to hold their ground throughout the day.

By the end of this day the Russian Second Army was on a front of sixty miles between Ribben and Waplitz.

### 25th August.

The 1st Division XIII Russian Corps advanced in a southerly direction towards Orlau, too late, however, to co-operate with the 8th Division XV Russian Corps against the XX German Corps which withdrew to the line Hohenstein—Gilgenburg. During this day the remainder of the German forces reached the following positions, namely:—the 1st Reserve Corps to Seeburg, the 6th Landwehr Brigade to Lautern, the XVII Corps to Bischofstein, the I Corps to the line Tuschau—Kielpin, and Muhlmann's Landwehr and Ersatz forces were in the vicinity of Lautenburg.

Von der Goltz's Landwehr Division was on its way from Schleswig-Holstein to Allenstein.

Orders were issued by the German Commander for the XVII corps, I Reserve Corps and 6th Landwehr Brigade to attack the VI Russian Corps and 4th Cavalry Division in the vicinity of Bischofsburg on the right flank of the Second Russian Army.

By the evening of this day the Second Russian Army was on a fifty-five mile front between Bischofsburg and Grallau. Samsonoff ordered three-and-a-half corps and two cavalry divisions to the line Allenstein—Osterode.

The VI Russian Corps and 4th Cavalry Division were isolated, as they were twenty-five miles north-east of Allenstein, on the northern flank of the Second Russian Army.

### Battle of Tannenburg: 26th August.

The VI Russian Corps and 4th Cavalry Division were routed by the XVII German Corps advancing from Lautern and Seeburg. This Russian force retired twenty-five miles from the battlefield to the vicinity of Olschienen and Wallen. In the centre of the Russian Second Army the XIII, XV Corps and the 2nd Division of the XXIII Corps continued to advance in a westerly direction on a front between Stabigotten and Neidenburg. The XIII and XV Corps made progress, but the 2nd Division on the southern flank, after capturing Thurau, was driven back, with loss. On the Russian's southern flank their I Corps holding a seven-mile front from Usdau south to the Soldau—Lautenburg railway, was attacked by the I German Corps from the vicinity of Hartowitz and by a brigade of the XX German Corps on their northern flank. The advanced Russian troops were driven in. German troops reached Grieben—Seeben—Grillau—Heinrichsdorf.

Intercommunication between the Russian Armies and Corps was casual and intermittent throughout the operations. Wireless messages were not sent in cipher.

The result of the days' fighting was that the northern flank of the German XX Corps was bent back. The German envelopment by their I Corps on the southern flank had not been successful, but on their northern flank the Russian right was in rapid retreat.

The German's general plan of envelopment had, therefore, only been partially successful.

#### **Battle of Usdau : 27th August.**

At this battle the German I Corps, now complete with artillery, after bombarding the Muhlenberg Hill on the northern flank of the Russian I Corps drove the Russians back in disorder to a position east of Soldau, covered by a rearguard of five regiments and five batteries at this place.

The German I Corps reached positions between Schonwiese and Heinrichsdorf before nightfall.

Further north the operations were not so favourable for the Germans.

The 3rd German Reserve Division west of the line Hohenstein—Paulgat was attacked by the Russian XV Corps.

In order to prevent the Russians from pressing through to Osterode the Germans brought up their 37th Division to the Drewenz from the XX Corps, which was advancing successfully. The Russian XIII Corps occupied Allenstein. The Russian XV Corps reached positions between Heidmuhl and Muhlen.

Further north the German left wing of four-and-a-half divisions pursued the VI Russian Corps as far as Ortelsburg.

This German pursuing force was, however, out of touch with the remainder of the Eighth German Army.

On this day the Russians had a definite opportunity of dislocating the German plans and in breaking through the German centre if their XV and XIII Corps had co-operated at the time when the German right wing was very much separated from their centre and their left wing was operating in the vicinity of Passenheim, twenty miles east of Allenstein.

On this day the First Russian Army continued its advance in a westerly direction on Königsberg on a front of thirty miles. Detachments from the Russian II Corps were left at Lotzen and Lyck.

Orders were given by Ludendorff for the envelopment of the two centre Russian corps.

Samsonoff gave orders for the troops on his southern flank to stand fast while his VI Corps took up a position in the vicinity of Passenheim, and his centre corps enveloped the Germans advancing against them.

#### **Battles of Hohenstein and Soldau : 28th August.**

The confused fighting without direction from Higher Command on this day round Hohenstein may be considered to be the turning point of this Tannenburg battle.

The Russian XIII Corps was to have co-operated with their XV Corps.

The Corps Commanders, however, were unaware of the situation on either flank. The Commander of the XIII Russian Corps early in his march in a westerly direction towards Hohenstein saw some of the German I Reserve Corps and imagined them to be the VI Russian Corps. Without taking any steps to verify this surmise he now advanced in a S.S.W. direction in order, as he supposed, to enable the VI Russian Corps to advance in its original westerly direction. The result was that the I Reserve German Corps was on the flank and rear of the XIII Corps by the evening of this day. Actually during the day only one brigade of the XIII Corps got into touch with the XV Corps when it became engaged with a Landwehr Division and with the German 37th Division, and was routed. Subsequently this brigade lost its way in the woods and scattered in panic. Four battalions of the XIII Russian Corps were forced to surrender west of Lake Wulping. The XV Russian Corps had to withstand the German's main attack with five divisions operating against their front and flanks between Sprechan and Ganshorn. This Corps was driven back in disorder south-west towards Nadrau and Waplitz. In view of the rout of the XIII Russian Corps the XV Russian Corps Commander decided to retreat.

Further south Soldau was occupied by 10 a.m. The German I Corps Commander then left a detachment of Ersatz and Landwehr forces at this place and advanced round Neidenburg by the south. At this place large Russian convoys were captured on the Willenburg—Chorzele road. Von François, the German I Corps Commander was then ordered to pursue the Russians towards Lahna in a northerly direction. Von François, however, disregarded these instructions

and continued his original advance toward Neidenburg and posted a number of detachments along the Neidenburg—Willenburg road. By this action he enveloped the southern wing of the Russian Second Army.

Had Von François carried out his instructions literally the Russian Second Army would have escaped.

For the envelopment of the Russian's northern flank German Supreme Command gave orders for their XVII Corps to advance on Malga and Kannwiesen, and to attack the flanks of any Russian forces retiring through the forests south of Passenheim. Their I Reserve Corps and XX Corps and their forces under von der Goltz, Morgen and Unger, were to continue offensive operations against the Russians' centre, now located between Thomsdorf and Wuttrienen, and to occupy the defiles E.S.E. of Hohenstein. Thus the German Supreme Command took the risk of disregarding the First Russian Army for another day, although two corps of the Russian Army did advance during this day for a distance of ten miles.

Actually all danger to the Germans from this quarter was removed by orders sent to Rennenkampf from the Russian Supreme Command to discontinue any further westerly movement.

#### 29th August.

The German forces were able to bring pressure to bear on the retiring XIII, XV and XXIII Russian Corps throughout the day.

The Corps Commander of XVII German Corps blocked the defiles between the lakes south-west of Passenheim and advanced his left flank to Malga.

On the Russian's southern flank the German I Corps Commander had blocked the exits of the Grünfleiss Forest about Muschaken and Saddek. When the exhausted XV and XXIII Russian Corps reached these places they surrendered, except 4,000 men who brought pressure to bear against the German detachments holding the exits from the forest at Rettkowen.

The First Russian Army Commander was still ignorant of the position of the Second Russian Army.

Samsonoff reported to Jilinsky his decision to retreat, but it was evident that Jilinsky was unaware of the desperate condition of the Second Russian Army or that it would require help in its withdrawal. Jilinsky only instructed Ren-

nenkampf to withdraw after making a demonstration in aid of the Second Russian Army. In order to carry out these instructions Rennenkampf's Cavalry Corps advanced to Wormditt and his II Corps reached Bischofstein, thirty miles north-west and north-east respectively of Allenstein.

These troops, however, never got into touch with the Second Russian Army.

#### 30th August.

The Russian I Corps and a part of their XXIII Corps resumed the offensive against the I German Corps from Mlawka on Neidenburg. To meet this crisis the Commander of the I German Corps made a frontal attack against the head of the advancing Russian force, while Muhlmann's force of Landwehr and Ersatz troops threatened the Russian's left flank from the vicinity of Soldau.

The Russian forces in the Neidenburg area were also attacked on the right flank via Sagsau, south-east of Neidenburg.

The Russian counter-attack was successful in that General Sirelius commanding it was able to occupy the town by 9 p.m. and to take up a defensive position covering Neidenburg from the North. In the Russian centre isolated batches assembled at Ostrolenka and Przasnysz. The XIII Russian Corps advanced in a northerly direction to Wallendorf, where they surrendered. Approximately only a thousand men of this corps escaped. On the Russian right flank their VI Corps was ordered to attack the Germans at Willenburg.

However, their two divisions only reached five and ten miles respectively north-east of this town by midnight, with their Fourth Cavalry Division twenty miles away on their northern flank.

Samsonoff, after wandering in the forest looking for a way out became overwhelmed by distress owing to the hopelessness of his situation and owing to the decisive defeat of his army, committed suicide near Pivnitz. General Postofsky was appointed to command the Second Russian Army.

During the day two determined Russian commanders formed up bodies of troops and broke through the line of detachments which the I German Corps Commander had placed to cover the frontier between Neidenburg and Willenburg.

One of the organized Russian columns under Stempel broke through the German cordon at Opalenitz and reached

Chorzela during the morning of this day. During the night the other column reached Przasnysz after surprising the German picquets at Puchallowen.

The First Russian Army during this day withdrew their III, IV and II Corps respectively to the vicinity of Friedland, Dietrichsdorf and Rastenburg.

### 31st August.

The crisis of the battle of Tannenburg was now over. There could be no concerted action between the dispersed Russian units in the woods. There was no higher leadership.

The Germans were able to round up the remnants of the Russian XIII, XV and XXIII Corps.

The VI Russian Corps withdrew into Poland and the I Russian Corps retired across the frontier. Both these corps lost at least half their effective strength.

On the First Russian Army front the III, IV and II Corps were further withdrawn to a line running north-west to the River Deime from Lakes Nordenburg and Mauer. The Commander of this army was instructed to interrupt the railway lines by which the Germans might operate against him from the south.

By the evening of this day the Russian losses were 125,000 men and 500 guns, immense numbers of animals and vehicles, and quantities of stores. This defeat was due to lack of control on the part of the Russian Higher Command in allowing their Second Army to advance away from their First Army. In addition there was no co-operation between the First and Second Russian Armies. The staff work of the Higher Command was ineffective in bringing their Second Army into contact with the German Eighth Army in an exhausted condition.

Throughout the advance and the battle, the administrative arrangements were inadequate for the maintenance of ammunition and supplies.

There was no organized system of uninterrupted and confidential inter-communication between Commanders and Higher Command. The Russian cavalry were unenterprising in gaining information and in taking any part in the battles.

### 1st September.

On the Russian side it was decided that their First Army should now stand on the line Wehlau—Deime—Lake Mauer,

and that the left flank should be secured by a part of the II Russian Corps in front of Lotzen in order to prevent the Germans from cutting their line of communication to Kovno.

The German plan was to disengage the forces engaged at Tannenburg and to advance as rapidly as the damaged railway would permit against the First Russian Army in order to intercept its retreat by moving towards Gumbinnen and Eydtkuhnen.

Hindenburg decided to operate with five divisions to turn the left flank of the First Russian Army moving via the Lotzen gap and south of the Masurian Lakes. Eight divisions were to operate frontally in an easterly direction via the Insterburg Gap. The Königsberg garrison was to contain the XX Russian Corps north of the Insterburg—Kovno railway. Two-and-a-half divisions were to be left to deal with the Second Russian Army.

The Landwehr and Ersatz troops, which had been engaged at Tannenburg, were formed into a corps under von der Goltz for the protection of the southern flank from the vicinity of Mlawa and Willenburg. The Russian forces included the II, III, IV, XX, XXII Corps and some reserve divisions.

### 2nd September.

Rennenkampf issued orders for the occupation of positions on a front of 55 miles between Labiau and Angerburg.

Four divisions were to be north of the Kovno—Königsberg railway and seven divisions south of the railway to Angerburg. Thus owing to the extent of the position to be occupied and the numbers available there could be no active defence.

### 4th September.

Von der Goltz, with two-and-a-half divisions attacked and occupied Mlawa.

Orders were issued from Russian Headquarters for the XXII Corps, the III Siberian Corps and I Turkestan Corps to become the Tenth Russian Army and to operate between their First and Second Armies.

### 6th September.

The I German Corps reached the vicinity of Nikolaiken, Turoschelm and Johannsburg.

**Masurian Lakes Battle : 7th September.**

The battle of the Masurian Lakes started. Hindenburg brought four corps into line on a thirty-mile front between Angerburg and Wehlau to oppose the seven Russian divisions holding a line of entrenched positions between the River Deime and Goldap.

The German's frontal attacks progressed slowly. Their southern XX Corps advanced against Angerburg, their central I Reserve Corps against Gerdauen and on the north their guard Reserve Corps approached Allenburg.

Further south the German's enveloping attacks progressed. The 3rd Reserve Division of von François' Corps occupied Bialla and their 2nd Division was able to reach a position north-east of Arys.

**Action at Arys : 8th September.**

A dawn attack by the 1st and 2nd German Divisions against the six battalions, two batteries and some Cossacks in Arys was completely successful, and 1,000 Russians were captured.

Von François then directed his main advance in a northerly direction against the southern flank of the main body of the Russian First Army engaged frontally with Hindenburg's Force. He sent one division and a cavalry brigade in an easterly direction on Lyck.

The German XVII Corps marched up to the line of the Lotzen Gap bridgehead. Their attacks throughout the day against the Russians between Lakes Gablick and Goldappar were unsuccessful, and their advance was arrested. German Supreme Headquarters, therefore, considered that it was essential for their I Corps to co-operate closely with their XVII Corps by advancing in a northerly instead of in a north-easterly direction. This movement was necessitated by the fact that they had no Reserves to push through at Lotzen where their advance had been held up.

Thus when the Russian's main body retreated from their present positions in front of Hindenburg, the Germans were not able to place any large bodies of troops astride their communications and lines or retreat, as had been originally planned.

**Actions at Lyck and Soltmahnen : 9th September.**

Hindenburg's frontal attacks against the Russian XX, III and IV Corps in their entrenched positions between Anger-

burg, Gerdauen and Wehlau made little impression. However, the pressure brought to bear by the German I and XVII Corps against the Russian's southern flank on the line Mauer—Goldappar, Soltmahnen and Gablick covering the defiles between the lakes in this area caused Rennenkampf to order a general withdrawal.

The main fighting in this southern area was at Lyck and Soltmahnen.

At Lyck there was an encounter attack. The advanced guard of the German 3rd Reserve Division ran into the Russian's positions six miles south-east of Lyck. The attack gradually developed on the whole six miles of front held by the twelve battalions, supported by nine batteries, of the Russian's XXII Corps between Thalussen and Bobern.

The Germans used up all their reserves in the course of the attacks throughout the day in their continuous offensive actions.

When the attacks were renewed at 3.30 a.m. the Russians retired in disorder, pursued by the divisional regiment of cavalry.

The action of the German Commander of the 3rd Reserve Division is an interesting example of a vigorous offensive resolutely carried out in accordance with the spirit of the orders of his Supreme Command. There would, however, have been a saving of casualties and a chance of a definite and decisive result during the hours of daylight had he acted more in accordance with the sound principles usually enunciated for encounter attacks. Instead of attacking the enemy as, and when, their positions were located until they were engaged on the whole six-and-a-half miles of front and all his twelve battalions were engaged on this extended front, he might have made a personal reconnaissance as soon as his advanced guard ran into the enemy. Then he might have realised that the Russians were in an unduly extended position, and by pressing forward with all available strength on the nearest line of advance to Lyck, covered by artillery from the vicinity of hills 180 and 165, conveniently situated to give cover and observation on his right flank, he might have caused the Russians early to vacate their whole line.

Success at the one part of the Russian's line, namely, at Bobern and Cziernan, would have led to success at all points, as, if pressed, the enemy's position would have become untenable, and the rest of their forces between Cziernan and Thalussen would have had to vacate their positions or they would have been cut off.

Actually the Russians had no reserves in hand with which to restore a situation if the Germans had broken through; though this fact would be unknown to the German Commander. However, had this commander acted on sound principles, he might have gained a more rapid and decisive result than was possible by the haphazard methods of attacking the enemy on a wide front with all his troops finally spread out in an attenuated line with no reserves in hand with which to complete or confirm a success.

The action at Soltmahnen was a triumph for the Germans of offensive action vigorously maintained. When von François attacked with his 1st and 2nd Divisions against the Russians successfully opposing the XVII German Corps between Lakes Goldappar and Babken, he completely surprised the Russian defenders.

After a short bombardment he sent in his two divisions to assault the positions held between Lakes Babken and Gablick.

The weight and direction of this surprise attack against the Russians' left flank and rear completely upset the defence, as there was no reserve with which to restore the situation. The Russians were routed and retired in disorder with a loss of 5,000 prisoners and 60 guns.

The German I and XVII Corps were now on the flank of the Main Russian Army in contact with Hindenburg's XX, XI, I Reserve and Guard Reserve Corps in the Insterburg Gap.

A decisive result with complete envelopment of the Russians' left flank now appeared to be possible, as Rennenkampf's defence was linear his general withdrawal from the Wehlau—Angerburg line had not yet begun, and he had no reserve.

Ludendorff, who was directing the movements of the right wing, which was to carry out this envelopment, became cautious, and ordered the I and XVII Corps now to advance in a northerly direction approximately fifteen miles north of Soltmahnen to the vicinity of Lissen and Benkheim, and their 1st and 8th Cavalry Divisions were to advance further north towards Gumbinnen.

The German operations now became a general pursuit, in which the Russian rearguard fought stubbornly. Their withdrawal was helped by a gallant and successful counter-attack carried out by the Russian 26th and 40th Divisions on the southern flank of the Russian main body on the ten-mile front between Angerburg and Nordenburg against the advanced troops of Hindenburg's XX and XI Corps. This

counter-attack imposed caution on the advancing German troops.

#### 10th September.

Rennenkampf ordered his XXII Corps to concentrate in the vicinity of Augustow and the III Siberian Corps to concentrate twenty-five miles south-west of this place, as he realised that the southern flank of his army was open to attack by the German XVII and I Corps. He further ordered the remainder of his army to continue the withdrawal to the line Kraupischen (twenty miles north-east of Insterburg)—Goldap (thirty miles south-east of Insterburg).

#### 11th September.

By mid-day the I German Corps reached the south-west corner of the Rominten Forest. The commander of this corps, who was still considering the possibilities of envelopment, prepared to advance in an easterly direction. Ludendorff, however, intervened and ordered him to advance in a northerly direction west of the forest to the vicinity of Gawaiten, in order to get into touch with the XI German Corps.

The XVII German Corps were ordered to Kleszowen (five miles south-west of Gawaiten). The 1st and 8th German Cavalry Divisions reached positions south of the forest in continuation of its eastern boundary at Mieruskien and Dubeningken. Their orders now were to continue the pursuit south of the forest on Mariampol. The 3rd Reserve Division advanced from Lyek in a northerly direction towards Maggrabowa with von der Goltz's force echeloned in its right rear in order to deal with any Russian troops advancing from the south-east.

The Russian Corps tramped wearily in an easterly direction without stopping throughout the day and night, and reached a general line from twenty miles north-east of Insterburg to twenty-five miles south-east of this place, where they were in contact with the Germans west of the Forest of Rominten.

The morale of the First Army Commander and his tired army was now so low that his powers of command and his men's fighting spirit was disappearing under the strain of continuous withdrawal. According to Jilinsky's report Rennenkampf "thought more about the safety of his staff than of directing the movements of his army."

**Action at the Forest of Rominten: 12th September.**

The action at the Forest of Rominten took place round Gawaiten, Tollmingkehmen and Oszeningken, west and north-west of this forest, between the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions of the I German Corps and the flank guards of the different Russian columns which were withdrawing in a southerly direction through Darkehmen and Stalluponen.

The 1st German Division I Corps operated round the northern outskirts of the Rominten Forest. The 2nd German Division advanced through the centre of the forest and drove out the Russian detachments sheltering there.

The 1st German Division came into action against the Russian columns of their IV Corps advancing in a south-easterly direction on Oszeningken. These columns were endeavouring to gain shelter and security in the Rominten Forest. At first only the rearguard of the 1st German Division was engaged, but later the bulk of the main body of this division had to turn back from their advance in an easterly direction in order to deal with the withdrawing Russians, who were defeated with a loss of a thousand men. The I German Corps at the end of this day were in position between Oszeningken and Pilluponen, north of the Rominten Forest, prepared for an advance on the following day on Wylkowyszki (40 miles west of Kovno). Envelopment of the First Russian Army by the German forces was now no longer possible; the Russians in this area had been checked and driven northwards, but they had not been cut off.

The two German cavalry divisions south of the Forest of Rominten were out of touch with the I German Corps and were not in a position to co-operate by cutting off the disorganized Russians withdrawing out of the Rominten Forest. They thus lost a great chance of carrying out the principles of cavalry action in the final phases of a battle.

**13th September.**

Early on this day the Russian First Army had reached positions with three of their corps on a fifteen-mile front between Wladyslawow and Greystoryszki, approximately forty-five miles west of Kovno, with two corps ten miles further east.

The I German Corps on this day was not able to do more than bring artillery fire on to the retreating Russians crossing their front.

The Tenth Russian Army was ordered to cover the approaches to Grodno and Bialystok.

The Second Russian Army was to operate in close touch with their Tenth Army and to withdraw to the R. Narew, and to maintain its freedom to manoeuvre as a reserve.

**14th September.**

The Russian First Army continued their retreat to positions thirty miles south-west of Kovno, between Szumsk and Mariampol. Only at Wylkowyszki, where the I German Corps deployed to attack, was the pursuit of the Russians pressed.

**15th September.**

By this date the German XI, XX and XVII Corps were in the vicinity of Stalluponen and Kibarty, I Reserve Corps was at Wladyslawow and north-east of this place; the main body of the I Corps and two cavalry divisions was at Wylkowyszki with advanced troops on a line ten miles further east between Mariampol and Pilwiszki; 3rd Reserve Division was at Suwalki; the Guard Reserve Corps was in reserve about Insterburg. The Königsberg force was in occupation of Tilsit. Von der Goltz's force was operating along the southern front from Marggrabowa to the R. Vistula.

Rennenkampf was ordered to make further withdrawals and to cover the R. Niemen on a fifty-mile front between Kovno and Merez. The German policy now was not to pursue the Russians any further.

In this battle of the Masurian Lakes the First Russian Army had lost 125,000 men and 150 guns.

The German gains in this battle, though considerably less than those at Tannenberg, were considerable. East Prussia was now cleared of the Russians, who had lost altogether in this invasion of German territory 310,000 men and 650 guns.

## CHAPTER III.

**Maintenance of the Object in War.\***

(a) The Russians did not maintain their first objective. They were not able to carry out an immediate offensive against Germany in accordance with their agreements.

Their chief enemy was Germany, and it was considered that Russia might carry out an immediate offensive in order to help their French allies.

The Germans planned to gain a decision over the French in the first few weeks of the War by concentrating against them seven-eighths of their army which was available on mobilization on the western front. The remainder of their army was to contain the Russians in East Prussia until this decision had been reached.

The Russians, therefore, had they maintained a vigorous offensive in the invasion of East Prussia, could have upset these plans and relieved the pressure on the French during the retreat through Belgium and Northern France to Paris and south of the Marne.

The Russian plans broke down owing to lack of preparation, to want of forethought in arranging for the supplies, and to incorrect timing of the marches for the Second Army, which was to prolong the advance on the south in order to destroy the German corps concentrating between the Vistula and the Lakes and to prevent the Germans from withdrawing to that river.

The advance into East Prussia began on the 13th August.

By the 29th August the battle of Tannenberg had been fought and the Second Russian Army had been severely defeated with very heavy loss. The only effect that the advance of the First Russian Army had was to cause the Germans to send 2 corps to their eastern front after the fall of Namur.

The Russians, on the other hand, owing to their defeat at Tannenberg and the subsequent withdrawal of their First Army, greatly raised the morale of the German nation. They lost in addition 310,000 men, 650 guns, and much material, although they had 5 more corps than the Germans in this area.

Had the Russians waited until they had got ready their

time-tables for concentration of the troops and their provision trains with necessary supplies, and had worked out the necessary time and space calculations to enable them to carry out a co-ordinated plan, had there been liaison between the First and Second Armies operating respectively north and south of the Masurian Lakes, had there been adequate direction and control of the movements of these armies, the Russians might have been able to maintain their objectives and to carry out their plans.

As it was, the tired, starved, over-marched Second Army was defeated at Tannenberg between the 26th and 28th August without any help being given by the First Army. After the First Army had been successful on the 20th August at the Gumbinnen battle, the commander did not maintain his objective by advancing resolutely against the retiring German forces.

(b) The First Army not only did not pursue after the Gumbinnen battle, although they had fresh troops consisting of 5½ cavalry and 1½ infantry divisions in the vicinity of the battlefield, but they remained inactive for two days.

Thus they lost touch with the Germans.

When the advance was continued they sent two corps towards the Königsberg fortress. The Germans were thus able to concentrate against the Second Russian Army, which, by the 24th August, was not in a fit fighting condition, being on a 60-mile front with their administrative services in such a state of disorganization that the men and animals were without supplies.

The Commander of the First and Second Russian Armies still further weakened their position by changing the direction of the Second Army to Allenstein-Sensburg. This widened the gap between the two armies and uncovered Samsonoff's northern flank, thus facilitating Ludendorff's task of dealing with the Russian forces in detail.

The maintenance of the objective was not the only principle which was violated by General Jilinsky in carrying out the operations in East Prussia.

(c) The German Commander-in-Chief in East Prussia did not maintain his objective on the 20th August at the battle of Gumbinnen. He had previously taken up a strong position on the River Angerapp, with his southern flank secured by the Lakes at Angerburg, to await the attack which seemed probable owing to the fact that the Russians were advancing in order to drive the Germans back and to create a diversion in favour of the French by defeating their field army.

\* Vide F.S.R. vol. II, sec. 7 (2).

However, on the 19th August Rennankampf decided to halt on the following day. Had the German Commander waited for the Russians to attack, the situation would have been favourable for him, and he would have been carrying out his original intention.

However, he allowed his judgment to be overruled by the Commander of the I Corps. This commander had good reasons for attacking, but they were not in accordance with the original plans and preparations of his commander-in-chief.

The result was that the two German Corps south of the railway, being ordered to attack with the I Corps, were not ready for offensive operations, as the ground in their front was not known, and one division from Angerburg did not take any part in the fighting on the 20th August.

There was, thus, complete lack of co-operation in the attack on the 20th. Von Prittwitz's three corps came into action successively at intervals of four hours, starting at 4 a.m.

Owing to miscalculations and lack of co-ordination, the operations on the whole front were not successful. Von Prittwitz, on realising the situation and his lack of success, again did not maintain his objective in considering how he could deal with the Russian field army.

He decided to retire behind the River Vistula in spite of the fact that he had a superiority in rifle strength and in artillery, that his I Corps had been successful, and that he had a fresh division which had not been engaged during the 20th August.

(d) When Hindenburg and Ludendorff assumed command of the German forces in East Prussia after the Gumbinnen battle, they definitely maintained their objective until in 5 days they had routed the Second Army at Tannenberg. First they disengaged troops in succession from their northern flank from the front of the First Army until the 1st Cavalry Division only remained facing the First Russian Army.

The German commanders then began their attacks, having brought to the battle area a superiority of 23 battalions, 82 field and 116 heavy guns.

On the 26th August the Russian VI Corps was defeated on the north flank of Samsonoff's army in the vicinity of Bischofsburg and Rothfliess. This corps then withdrew by the evening of the following day to the vicinity of Wallen and Olschienen, distances of 25 and 21 miles respectively from the battlefield.

The XVII German Corps was thus able to close the northern exits of the Grunfliess Forest, and the I Reserve Corps was able to advance towards the Russians main position at Allenstein.

At the same time, the objective of the Germans was maintained by attacking the southern flank of the Russian positions north-west of Soldau by the I Corps and by a brigade of the Vistula Garrison troops on the 26th August.

On this day they drove in the Russian advanced troops at Seeben and Grieben and occupied Heinrichsdorf in spite of meeting superior numbers of Russians at this latter place.

On the following day the artillery bombardment of the key to the Russian position—the hill of Muhlenberg—on their northern flank was sufficient to make the whole Russian I Corps retire in disorder. On the following day the German I Corps advanced towards Soldau against their rear guards, which withdrew.

The German I Corps Commander then maintained his objective by blocking their line of retreat in marching towards Neidenburg and Willenburg.

Had he advanced in accordance with his orders towards Lahna, the result would not have been so decisive as it was. He was in close touch with the Russians. He saw that they were starved, dispirited, and badly led. He determined to turn his success at Usdau and Soldau into a complete victory for his corps and for the Eighth German Army.

By holding a series of position south of the Grunfleiss Forest, he was able to prevent the bulk of the Second Army from escaping south when their centre, consisting of the XIII and XV Corps and 2nd Division, was pressed back in this direction.

On the 27th, in order to maintain the pressure on the Russians, the XX German Corps was ordered to attack in an easterly direction from the vicinity of Reichenau, in order to prevent the Russians from reinforcing their flanks and thus extricating their army from the inevitable result of the action of the XVII and I German corps against their northern and southern flanks respectively.

The Russian XV Corps advanced in a westerly direction, so that these two corps met between Hohenstein and Muhlen. After heavy fighting the Russians were able to gain ground, but the German Commander, by this delay to their advance, had gained the time necessary for him to maintain his objective. The 2nd Russian Division on the southern flank

of the XV Corps was driven back to Neidenburg, thus uncovering the left flank of the XV Corps at Muhlen.

On the 28th the German Commander continued his offensive operations against the Russian centre. His orders were for 3 corps and a Landwehr division to attack and envelop their XIII and XV Corps as the corps on both their flanks had been driven back and were out of supporting distance.

The First Russian Army gave no indication of co-operating in this serious situation for the Second Army. By the night of the 28th August the Russian centre had been driven back in confusion and after great losses.

On the following day the XIII Corps tried to escape south through the forest via Kaltenborn, the XV Corps via Kommusin, and the XXIII Corps via Grunfleiss and through Neidenburg. Only small columns got through the detachments of the I German Corps on the Neidenburg-Willenburg road.

The result of the fighting was that the XIII and XV Corps were practically annihilated, and that the other units in the Second Army had lost so heavily that they equalled approximately the strength of two divisions and one brigade.

#### Surprise.

(a) Owing to their lack of strategical and tactical reconnaissance, the Russians were surprised in every phase of the battle of Tannenberg.

Samsonoff at first thought that he had only weak forces against him, and then that he had fugitives from those who had been fighting at Gumbinnen. He did not realise that he had, by the 26th August, in his front 4 corps, as well as 2 divisions and garrison troops from the Vistula, and that he was, in consequence, outnumbered in rifles as well as in field and heavy guns.

The Germans, therefore, were strong enough after driving back his flank corps to envelop and crush his centre.

(b) On the 19th August the Russian cavalry Corps, operating on the northern flank of the First Army, failed to carry out their proper rôle. They did not attempt to operate against the left flank and rear of the I German Corps north of the Insterburg-Kovno railway; they did not seize the crossings over the River Inster, and they did not even keep touch with the 2nd Landwehr Brigade that retreated in front of them.

The result was that, on the 20th when the northern division of the XX Corps advanced, they were completely

surprised by the presence of German troops on their front. Expecting to be warned of the presence of the enemy on their front and flank, this 28th Russian Division had taken no steps for local security. They were then held up frontally by the Germans in a prepared position, and they were surprised and charged by German cavalry from Antbrakuponen on their exposed right flank.

Owing to these surprises, the 28th Division lost some 3,000 casualties, and their advance was delayed owing to the confusion into which they were thrown.

(c) In the battle of the Masurian Lakes on the 9th September, the Russian's troops, holding positions between Lakes Gablick and Babken, were completely surprised by the attacks of the 1st and 2nd German Divisions at 3.30 a.m. The German I Corps was then able, after a short artillery bombardment, to strike at the rear of these Russian troops, who were routed with a loss of 5,000 prisoners and 60 guns.

(d) By the 8th September Rennenkampf was holding positions from the River Deime to Goldap. As he had sent forward no reconnoitring detachments in front of his position, he was not able to know where to expect the enemy on his 45-mile front.

The result was that, on the 9th September, when the Germans attacked on their northern front in the vicinity of Insterburg, the Russians were surprised. Owing to Rennenkampf's ignorance of the actual situation on his front and on his southern flank to the east of the Lakes where his troops had suffered a heavy defeat, there was a hurried and confused withdrawal during the night of the 9th-10th September and throughout the 10th.

So great was the moral effect of this pressure on the Russians that they continued a steady withdrawal throughout the following days and nights although they were not pressed by the Germans.

On the morning of the 12th the Russian troops of the IV Corps were trying to escape southwards through the Forest of Rominten after their 60 hours' march. They unexpectedly struck the rearguard of the 1st German Division, and were driven back owing to their surprise in this encounter attack.

Throughout the day the Russians were ignorant of the presence of Germans in this forest, so that they presented an easy mark to the German artillery concealed in it, as did the bodies of troops and transport columns that were unable to enter and were forced to withdraw north across the open ground.

In fact, throughout this battle of the Masurian Lakes so often were the infantry surprised that the Russian Commander-in-Chief had to send instructions to his army commanders to use his cavalry on his front and flank to prevent surprise.

#### Security.

(a) The method by which von François, commanding the I Corps, secured his front of 42 miles from Pilkallen to Goldap was on sound lines. He had seven detachments strong enough to carry out local offensive operations, with a cavalry division on his more vulnerable northern flank. All approaches by which the Russians might reach his positions were patrolled by motor detachments.

(b) During the 19th August, the 28th and 29th Russian Divisions were in contact with the I German Corps and their corps cavalry. During that night these two divisions did not co-operate and secure their front with a definite line of outposts on a prepared and well-reconnoitred position. They maintained only alarm posts on their front.

The 29th Division remained in close contact with the right flank of the I Corps about Springen, while the 28th Division withdrew about a couple of miles back to the vicinity of Uszballen and Brakuponen.

Thus there was no concerted plan of action in case of attack, and the northern flank of the 29th Division was uncovered.

Further, the 28th Division did not occupy an important and dominating height on the northern flank at Mallwischen. From this position the Germans had excellent observation for their artillery fire.

On the early morning of the 20th August the 2nd German Division adequately supported by artillery, was able to drive back the 28th Russian Division with heavy loss.

(c) On the 24th August, when the XV Russian Corps attacked the XX German Corps between Orlau and Michalken on a 7-mile front, if their 2nd Division of the XXIII Corps had attacked at the same time on the southern flank of the Germans at Michalken, a decisive result might have been possible. As it was, there was no reconnaissance on the front of the 8th and 9th Divisions to locate the extent of their enemy's position and where its flanks rested.

Thus the 2nd Division was not in a position to make a simultaneous attack on the southern flank of the XX Corps when the 8th and 9th Divisions attacked frontally.

These divisions, owing to lack of reconnaissance, were not in possession of the necessary information which would enable them to make a successful attack. They lost heavily in their attempts to dislodge the Germans, and the 2nd Division did not take any part in the day's fighting, although they were at Lippau, only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Michalken.

(d) On the 26th August the VI Corps did not make its position secure, as there was no reconnaissance. This corps was separated from Samsonoff's army in order to protect its northern flank in the vicinity of Bischofsburg. Every care should have been taken to watch and secure the front and flanks to find out the direction in which the German XVII Corps and I Reserve Corps were advancing.

The VI Corps faced north-east and their cavalry marched towards Rastenburg, whereas the Germans advanced in a south-easterly direction from Lautern and Seeburg.

Thus touch with the Germans was never obtained, as no reconnaissance at all was carried out in a north-westerly direction.

The result was that the 4th Russian Division suffered heavily from the frontal attacks of the 36th German Division and the 6th Landwehr Brigade and from the attack at the same time on its southern flank by the 35th German Division.

The 16th Russian Division marched and counter-marched throughout the day, covering 19 miles and meeting the Germans in the evening 5 miles from their original starting-point. The result of their encounter attack was indecisive.

(e) By the 24th August the I Russian Corps was in position covering Soldau and Usdau. They had 2 cavalry divisions available for reconnaissance, yet they were in complete ignorance of the fact that the I German Corps detrained 10 miles north-west of the centre of their position.

The 6th and 15th Cavalry Divisions were only employed in protecting the left flank. Therefore, the Russian Commander had no knowledge as to the strength and direction of the main line of the Germans' attack. He knew only of the presence 10 miles from his southern flank of the Vistula Garrison. Then he decided to attack the Vistula Garrison troops with a detachment from his northern flank at a time when this flank was on the point of being attacked by the XX German Corps.

The position he occupied was insecure, as there was a gap of 10 miles between his right flank and the left of the 2nd Russian Division, north-west of Neidenburg.

Owing to lack of security and reconnaissance, the detachment ordered by the I Russian Corps Commander to advance towards the Germans at Lautenburg ran unexpectedly into the Germans half-way to this place, and was checked. It had not been preceded by the cavalry.

Only 1 cavalry division co-operated in this action. The other division remained inactive throughout the day, and in the evening withdrew six miles south.

(f) Lack of reconnaissance on the 27th August was the cause of the annihilation of the left flank regiment of the 2nd Russian Division during their action in the vicinity of Lippau. This division was to have co-operated with the XV Russian Corps on this day by advancing in a north-westerly direction and attacking the southern flank of the 41st German Division.

Owing to lack of reconnaissance, they were surprised by a counter-attack and driven back by Germans advancing from the north-west on to their front and right flank as they were issuing from Thurau.

(g) Samsonoff, in making plans for his Second Army before the Tannenburg battle, was ignorant of the situation in front of the First Russian Army. He based his plans on supposition, as his flank troops and cavalry brought him no definite information.

His main supposition was that the First Army was in close touch with the Germans who had been defeated at Gumbinnen. The result was that, on the 27th, when large forces were seen to be approaching Allenstein from the north, it was thought that they were Russian troops.

No reconnaissance was sent out in this direction to find out what these troops were.

On the 28th, when the XII Corps moved away from Allenstein to join the XV Corps about Grieslienen, 4 battalions were captured by superior numbers of Germans near Lake Wulping.

#### Mobility.

(a) The basis of the Russians' plan was to use as fully as possible the mobility of the Second Army. The Russians decided to try to induce the Germans to advance as far east as possible against their First Army, which was to start towards Insterburg as early as possible.

Then the Second Army was to deliver a decisive blow against the southern flank of the Eighth German Army and

cut them off from the Vistula. Actually, on the 20th August, when the Gumbinnen battle was being fought, the northern flank of the Second Army, which was on a 55-mile front, was 80 miles south of Gumbinnen.

The whole Russian plan broke down as the Second Army was not adequately supplied, their administrative arrangements being incomplete, and consequently they could not carry out the movements which had been expected from them by the Higher Command.

(b) The mobility of the 2nd Division, I German Corps, was exemplified on the 19th and 20th August. This division started at 9 p.m. on the 19th from the vicinity of Blecken and marched north-west by the rough tracks of the forest of Tzullkiner throughout the night.

At 7 a.m. they attacked and drove back the Russians from Uszballen, and were ready to start exactly at the time fixed for the attack in the afternoon of the 20th and to advance and drive back the 28th Russian Division over 8 miles to the vicinity of Wittkampen and Kalbassen.

(c) It should be noted that von Francois's 1st and 2nd divisions averaged 19 miles a day on the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th September to attempt to carry out the turning movement against Rennenkampf's left flank at Widminnen and Kouglinnen on the early morning of the 9th September.

#### Offensive Action.

(a) The plan, which the Russians made, was for an offensive campaign. This was justifiable, as they had superior numbers in the area of operations. They could have available 106 more battalions and 156 more squadrons than the Germans. But to carry out offensive operations adequately it is necessary to make careful arrangements for co-operation, for concentration of superior numbers at the decisive point and for supplying the daily need of the troops. Otherwise, the offensive cannot be maintained.

In this case at the battle of Tannenburg the Germans concentrated superior numbers of infantry and guns against the Russians. The Russians employed during the fighting 132 battalions and 620 guns, whereas the Germans were able to bring 155 battalions and 818 guns into action.

Throughout the battle there was no co-operation between the First and Second Armies, separated by the obstacle of the Masurian Lakes, covering a distance of 50 miles from north to south. The Second Army had been overmarched

and underfed during the advance to the battlefield of Tannenburg, so that they were exhausted by the 26th August.

The result was that by the 30th August offensive operations had not only broken down, but the Second Army had been routed, with a loss of 125,000 prisoners and 500 guns.

Throughout this battle the continued pressure by the Germans against the VI Russian Corps on the north, against the Russians' I Corps and 2nd Division on the south and against their XIII and XV Corps in the centre, enabled them to gain a complete victory.

(b) Ludendorff's plan for the defeat of the First Russian Army after the Tannenburg battle was to carry out a vigorous offensive by means of an enveloping attack against the Russians' southern flank while pressure was maintained against the Russians' front between Labiau and Angerburg.

In order to make a victory complete every available man should be allotted to that part of the position where a decision is sought. In this case decisive results would be obtained not by the frontal attacks, but by the turning movement in conjunction with it. Therefore, it might have been expected that Ludendorff would have made his force to carry out the enveloping attack as strong as possible, and would have placed there the larger proportion of his troops.

Instead he had eight divisions for his frontal attack and five divisions for the turning operation.

The result was that, though Ludendorff's offensive operations were successful in clearing East Prussia of the Russians, yet he did not gain a decisive result in the complete defeat of the First Russian Army. During these operations a successful counter-offensive, carried out under Rennenkampf's orders by the 40th and 26th Russian Divisions against the German troops on a ten-mile front north of Lake Mauer, weakened Ludendorff's determination.

He did not resolutely continue the turning movement against the extremity of the southern flank of the First Russian Army, so as to overlap it and cut its communications. He sent his I Corps in a north-easterly direction, so that their further attacks were in an easterly and frontal direction on the 10th September.

He took counsel of his fears. He seems to have become nervous about the gap between the flanks of his two forces. Instead of pursuing a vigorous offensive on the front and flank of the retreating and demoralized Russian army, he lost the possible chance of carrying out his original plans

for envelopment by sending von François's troops to support the right flank of the troops attacking frontally.

Had he continued with his original offensive plan, the gap would have been closed by the converging advance of two wings.

These cautious orders, curtailing his offensive, were given after the operations by von François on the 9th September had been completely successful in destroying the Russian left flank.

It is thus seen how demoralizing even a local offensive may be for a commander. The Russians, owing to the rapidity of their retreat by the 12th September, had eluded the envelopment which Ludendorff had arranged.

(c) On the 17th August the offensive action of four battalions and five batteries at Stallupönen against the northern flank and rear of the 27th Division of the III Russian Corps had a marked effect, as it caused the withdrawal of the whole division back across the frontier.

The Commander of the I German Corps always maintained an offensive spirit. His action on the 30th August was typical. His corps was preparing to be withdrawn to Insterburg so as to oppose Rennenkampf when he received an aeroplane message that columns were advancing to attack from the direction of Mława and Stupsk.

At once he issued orders to hold a defensive position near Berghof in which the Russians could be checked while he attacked the flanks of the advancing columns via Saberau and Sagsau.

On the following day the Russians withdrew without accomplishing anything.

### Economy of Force.

(a) During the Tannenburg battle there was considerable dissipation of force owing to lack of control by Jilinsky, the Russian Commander of the First and Second Armies.

These two armies should have combined in one movement against the front and flank of the German Eighth Army. Samsonoff and Rennenkampf, the two army commanders, were both ignorant of the situation on the front of the other's army.

It was not until the evening of the 27th August, when the flanks of the Second Army had been severely dealt with by the Germans, that Rennenkampf was ordered to expedite his advance for closer co-operation with the Second Army.

On the 28th Samsonoff was not in communication with his commander, so that then there was no means of knowing how and where to assist him.

(b) An instance of a useless dissipation of force is seen in General Gourko's cavalry raid carried out from midnight, 29th-30th August, until 6 p.m. on the 31st August. His division covered about 80 miles, and gained no information as to the enemy's movements or as to the situation on the front of the Second Army.

He managed to have the railway line outside Allenstein blown up. This could have only a very temporary effect on the course of operations, whereas this long ride rendered his division temporarily ineffective owing to the exhaustion of men and horses.

#### Co-operation.

(a) The complete collapse of the I Russian Corps on the 27th August was due to the effective co-operation between the German artillery and infantry. This corps held a naturally strong position on a front of seven miles north-west of Soldau up to Usdau.

The German artillery made excellent shooting on to the Muhlen Hill just north of Usdau. This caused the Russians to vacate this important position. Then, further south, owing to the artillery fire, they left their trenches. They were followed up by the infantry via Usdau, Grallau and Heinrichdorf, until, on the following day, only five regiments and five artillery batteries remained of this I Russian Corps to make a short stand north-west of Soldau.

It may also be noted that two cavalry divisions, 7 and 12 miles respectively from Soldau, did not co-operate with the Russian corps in trying to create a diversion by operating against the flanks of the attacking infantry.

(b) There was lack of co-operation in the operations carried out by the VI Russian Corps on the 26th August. The result was the rout of the Russian right flank.

This corps had been specially sent to the vicinity of Bischofsburg and Rothfleiss to protect the right flank of the Second Russian Army.

Early on the 26th August the two divisions of this corps carried out different rôles. The Commander of the 4th Russian Division, with two brigades, marched 4 miles north of Rothfleiss and occupied a position preparatory to attacking Germans whom he imagined were retreating across his front from the First Russian Army.

At the time when the Commander of the 4th Russian Division was heavily engaged with the enemy, the 16th Russian Division was marching in a south-westerly direction to its destination at Allenstein, 20 miles from the position of the rest of the corps.

The unsupported 4th Division was now attacked from the north, north-west and west by the two divisions and Landwehr Brigade of the XVII German Corps. They were unable to maintain their position, and fell back on Bischofsburg when the 16th Russian Division was carrying out their orders for a counter-march in a northerly direction to help them.

The 16th Division was checked by German troops near Ramsau, and thus did not co-operate or even get in touch with the 4th Division, which suffered considerably during its withdrawal.

On the following day these two divisions withdrew independently to places west of Friedrichsfelde, having both covered over 20 miles. Here the VI Russian Corps was not in a position to co-operate either with the northern or southern flank corps of either the First or the Second Armies.

(c) In the fighting carried out by the XV Russian Corps on the 24th August between Orlau and Michalken, the 2nd Russian Division at Lippau did not co-operate either with the 6th Division or with the I Russian Corps near Usdau, although both appealed for help. This was due to ignorance of the situation on their front and flanks.

The XV Russian Corps first asked the 2nd Division to co-operate by attacking the western flank of the XX German Corps. Just as the 2nd Russian Division was approaching Michalken to carry out this attack, they had an urgent call for help from the I Russian Corps, so they turned to the west.

Owing to this confusion of orders and to this counter-marching, there was a panic in their ranks, and they did not co-operate with either of the corps on their flanks.

On the following day the XIII Russian Corps Commander intended to co-operate with the 8th Russian Division by sending the 1st Russian Division through Lindenwalde to attack the left flank of the XX German Corps. They arrived too late, however, as the Germans had withdrawn from in front of the XV Russian Corps before their arrival.

(d) There was a complete lack of co-operation on the 20th August by the cavalry corps and by Oranofski's independent brigade on the northern flank of the First Russian Army.

Thus the 1st German Cavalry Division was unopposed in

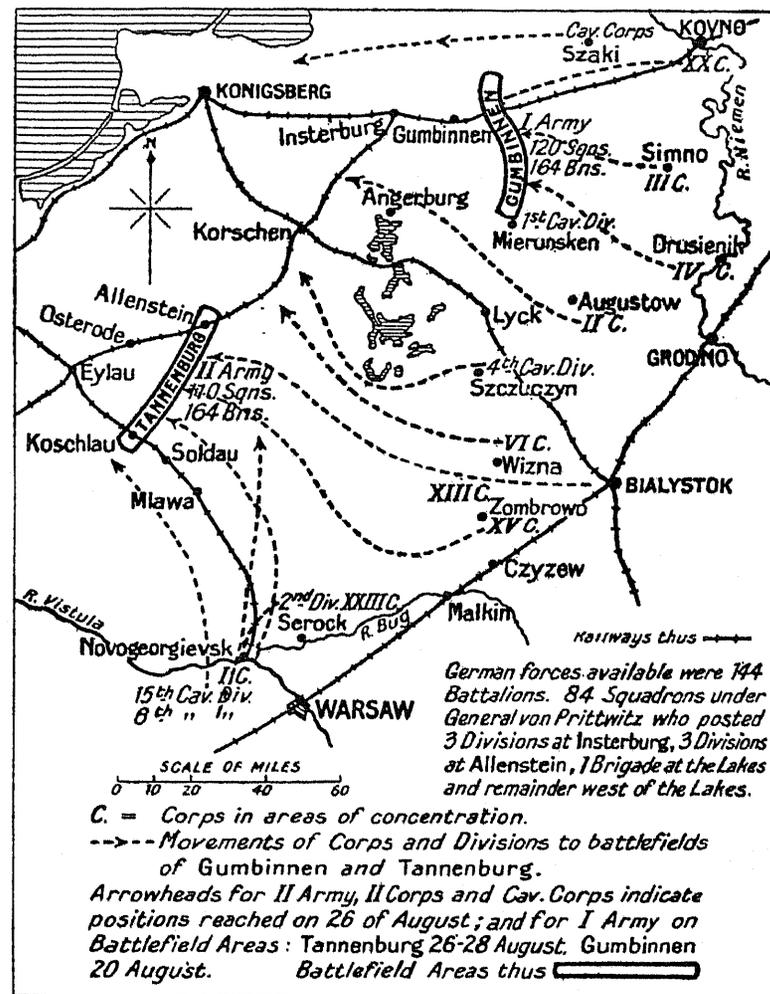
its advance round the flank of the 20th Division to Schwirgallen, 5 miles in the rear of their action with the 2nd German Division, who were pressing back the northern flank of this Russian division.

Had the Russian cavalry acted properly, they could, with their superiority of numbers over the immediately opposing cavalry, have operated against the flank of the German 2nd Division, and they could have prevented the Schwirgallen raid, which added to the rout of their 28th Division.

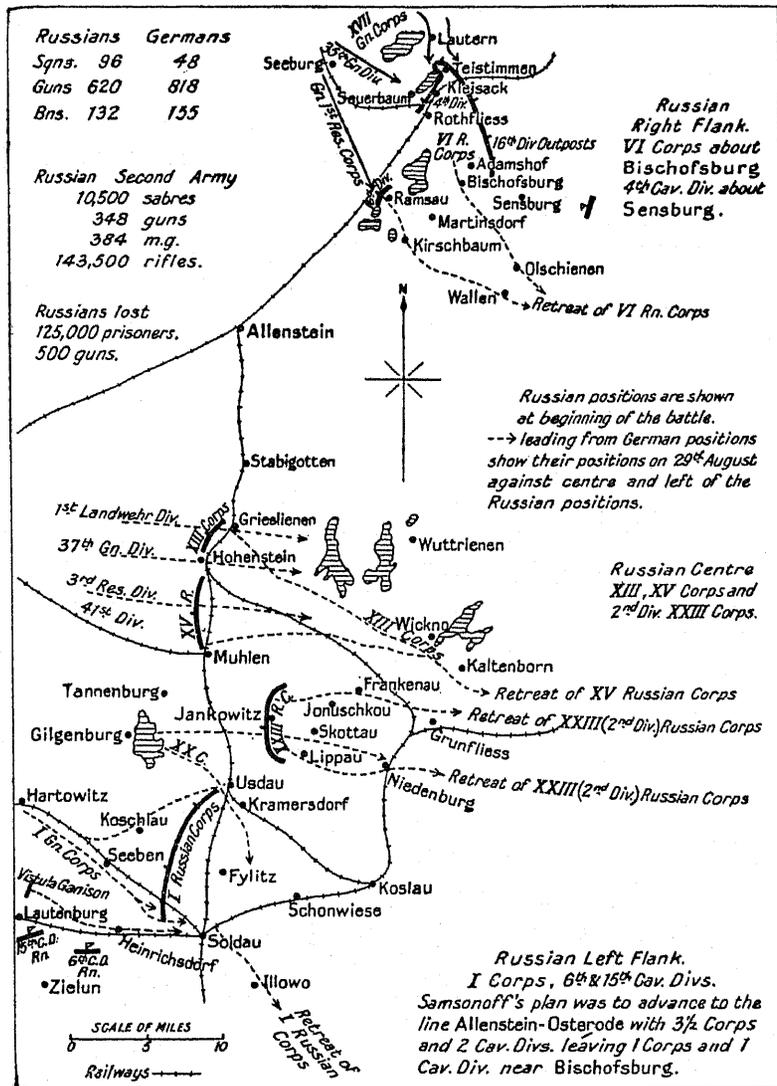
In conclusion it must be noted that though the Germans were inferior in the whole eastern theatre of operations in East Prussia, yet they managed to co-operate on the battlefields with superior numbers. They had been able within thirty days to destroy one Russian Army and to defeat and demoralize another; and also to gain strategic freedom in East Prussia.

Out of the total forces engaged on both sides in East Prussia up to the conclusion of the Masurian Lakes battle, the Russians had employed altogether 186 more battalions, 104 more squadrons and 262 more guns than the Germans; and yet at the end of a month's fighting were back in the positions behind their frontier from which they had started, after having lost at least 122,000 prisoners and 650 guns.

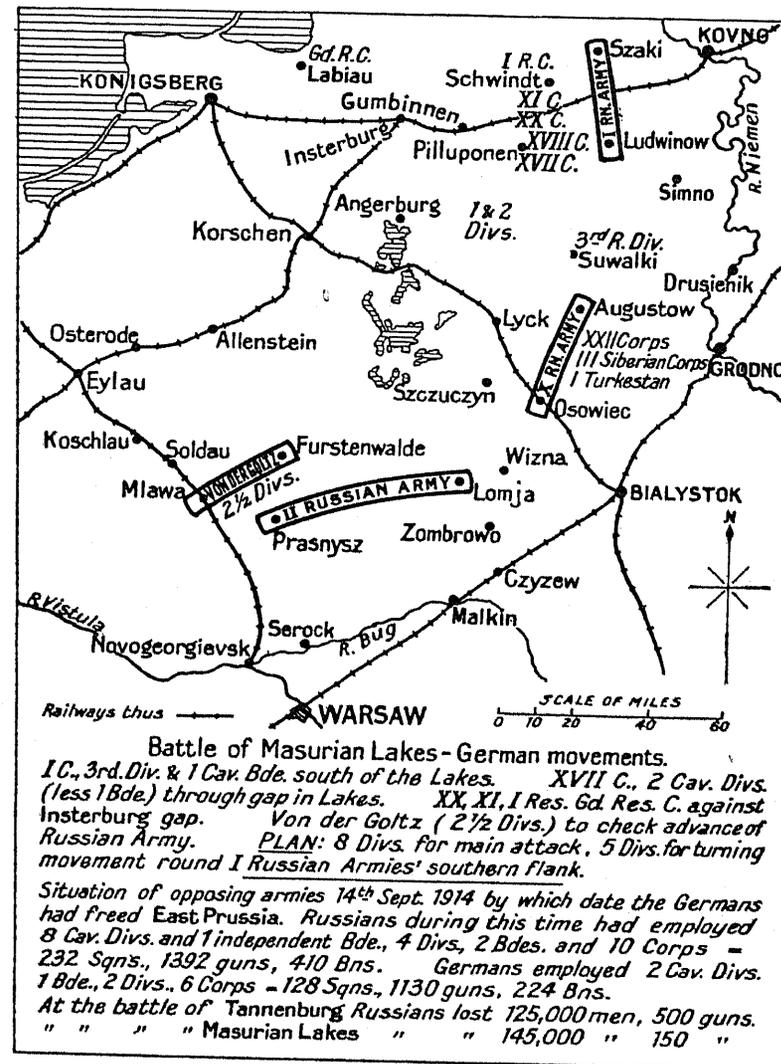
MAP 1. General Map of East Prussia.



MAP 2. Battle of Tannenberg.



MAP 3. Battle of the Masurian Lakes.



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