

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL  
ON THE  
FIRST WORLD WAR**



**THE GERMAN FIRST ARMY IN THE MARNE CAMPAIGN**

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In the last days of August, 1914, the German right wing and center were pursuing the French and British armies into France after the initial series of battles at the frontiers. On the west flank was the German First Army, commanded by General Von Kluck. An excellent soldier, he was imbued with faith in the von Schlieffen plan, and on his shoulders rested the tremendous responsibility of leading the right wing in the wide sweep across France. His decision might spell success or failure for the Germans.

Next to von Kluck's First Army, toward the east, was the Second Army under General von Bülow. A feeling of antagonism, originating in differences in their backgrounds and training, separated the two men. It had been increased when, during the early part of the march across Belgium, von Kluck had been placed under the orders of von Bülow.

**EVENTS OF 28 AUGUST**

On the morning of 28 August, 1914, the First Army was located as shown on Map 1. It was composed of the II, III, IV, IX, and IV Reserve Corps and a cavalry corps. Touch had been lost with the British, who were retreating rapidly and were believed to be demoralized. Recent indications were that third-rate French troops were being brought up on the west flank of the First Army.

On 28 August the First Army continued its advance to the southwest, meeting comparatively little resistance. Its right wing was attacked by two French reserve divisions, inferior troops, which had been moved north from Paris by rail. These troops were defeated and scattered. Hostile detrainments were observed during the day in the region of Amiens. At the end of the day the gap between the First and Second Armies had increased to 14 miles.

The First Army received, on 28 August, a directive from German GHQ, extracts from which are as follows:

“All the active French corps have already been engaged and have suffered considerable losses; the majority of the French reserve divisions have also been engaged and are badly shaken. We are as yet unable to determine the remaining capacity of resistance of the Franco-British Armies.

“The Belgian Army is in process of dissolution; it can no longer consider taking the offensive in the open field. At Antwerp there may be approximately 100,000 Belgian troops, both field and garrison. They are badly shaken and have little capacity for offensive action. (These were being contained by German forces).

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“The French, or at least their north and center groups, are in full retreat in a westerly or southwesterly direction, hence on Paris. It is quite possible that in the course of this retreat they will again offer stubborn resistance. All the information from France confirms our assumption that the French Army is fighting to gain time and that its aim is to hold the largest possible part of the German forces on the French front in order to facilitate a Russian offensive.

“The enemy groups of the north and center, after the loss of the Meuse line (Fig. 51, McEntee), may offer new resistance behind the Aisne, the extreme left being perhaps pushed as far as St. Quentin—La Fère—Laon and the right wing west of the Argonne. . . . . The next line of resistance probably would be the Marne, the left wing resting on Paris. It is also possible that forces are being concentrated on the lower Seine.

“We must reckon with the French Army being brought back to original strength and receiving new units. Although for the moment it has at its disposal, in addition to the small strength represented by its depots, only the class of 1914, it must yet be assumed that it will have recourse to the next class of recruits and will bring to the front all available units in North Africa as well as marines. The French government will probably soon order the formation of bands of franc-tireurs (guerillas).

“England too is actively striving to form a new army from volunteers and territorial troops. However, it is hardly conceivable that this army will be fit for use within four to six months.

“Our task, therefore, is by quickly advancing the German Army upon Paris to give the French Army no respite, to prevent the formation of new units, and to deprive the country of the greatest possible means of combat.

“His Majesty orders that the German Army advance in the direction of Paris.

“The First Army will advance west of the Oise toward the lower Seine. It must be ready to go to the aid of the Second Army. It is also charged with protecting the flank of the German forces. It will prevent the formation of new enemy units in its zone of action. “The Second Army will cross the line La Fère-Laon and advance on Paris. . . . . “The Third Army. . . . .

“All the armies shall act in mutual understanding and support each other in the struggle in the different zones. If the

enemy offers strong resistance on the Aisne and later on the Marne, it may become necessary to have the armies wheel from the southwesterly into the southerly direction.

“It is urgently desirable that the armies move forward rapidly so as to leave the French no time in which to reform and organize a new resistance.”

The Second Army had originally planned to close up on 28 August preparatory to forcing a crossing of the Oise (Map 1). However, von Bülow gained the impression in the morning that the Oise was not strongly held by the enemy, and he, therefore, ordered his left wing to advance without delay across that river (on 28 August). The right wing was advancing toward St. Quentin.

### EVENTS OF 29 AUGUST

The First Army continued its advance to the southwest in order to disperse the hostile forces reported concentrating south of the Somme and east of Amiens. It defeated these enemy forces in a series of engagements. Among the defeated troops was the French VII Corps, which previously had been in Alsace near the Swiss frontier. The Second Army reported that it was heavily engaged on 29 August with superior hostile forces in the region between St. Quentin and Vervins. It urgently requested assistance from the First Army. The commander of the Second Army planned to resume the attack on 30 August. He requested that the IX Corps be placed at his disposal. He planned to have one division of this corps attack eastward from St. Quentin and to retain the other in army reserve. General von Kluck, however, decided to continue advancing to the southwest in order to complete the defeat of the hostile French forces gathering on his flank. He, therefore, refused the request of the Second Army, limiting his aid to that army to placing the 17th Division of the IX Corps at Bülow's disposal. The 17th Division was behind the left wing of the First Army, having been delayed before the French fortress of Maubeuge.

### EVENTS OF 30 AUGUST

#### Information received early 30 August.

General von Kluck, early on 30 August, was informed that his II Corps had won a complete victory over the French VII Corps, and that other French formations had been routed (Map 2). The enemy forces which had attempted to concentrate on his flank apparently had been dispersed and were in flight. General von Kluck saw no

advantage in pursuing these forces to the southwest and at 9:30 A.M. issued orders for the echelonment of his army toward the left so as to permit a continuation of his movement toward the south. This order was intended to pave the way for possible cooperation with the German Second Army. At this time General von Kluck was undecided as to the direction of further advance.

However, at 11:00 A.M. the following information from the Second Army was transmitted to the First Army through the IX Corps:

“The Second Army was attacked yesterday by at least ten French divisions on a front extending from west of Vervins to the region of La Fère. The struggle was bitter, but the enemy offensive failed. From papers captured with the chief of staff of the French III Corps it was learned that the French had intended to attack St. Quentin while the German First Army was to be contained frontally by the British and French. General von Bülow regrets that the First Army did not turn facing the Oise in accordance with his expressed request. The enemy seems to be retiring.”

#### **Decision of von Kluck, 11:30 A.M., 30 August.**

The issue was now squarely up to von Kluck. By the terms of its mission as set forth by the GHQ directive quoted above, the First Army had four tasks to perform: (1) advance to the lower Seine; (2) be ready to go to the aid of the Second Army; (3) protect the flank of the German forces; and (4) prevent the formation of new enemy units. The fourth item had been achieved; there seemed to be no further danger from the west, so that item three did not require the attention of his whole army at this time. The decision lay with the first two, which at this stage of events were mutually opposing. In order to aid the Second Army, a march to the southeast was required (Map 2), while an advance “west of the Oise toward the lower Seine” required a direction of march southwest. Considering all the facts in his possession and the terms of the GHQ directive, von Kluck decided, at about 11:30 A.M., to change direction of march on the next day, 31 August, and move to aid the Second Army. He issued orders at once for preliminary movements on 30 August which would facilitate the wheel to the southeast. He sent a liaison officer to inform von Bülow of his plans. He did not notify GHQ at this time.

#### **Further events, 30 August.**

In the afternoon, the retirement of the enemy on the right flank of the army was confirmed. At 5:55 P.M. the following radio from the Second Army was received:

“Enemy beaten in a decisive manner. Large contingents are retreating upon La Fère.”

At 6:35 P.M. a second radio was received from von Bülow. It read:

“With view to thorough exploitation of the success, it is urgently desirable that the First Army turn around Chauny as pivot, facing La Fère—Laon.....”

Later in the evening von Kluck learned that the Second Army would rest on 31 August and would not pursue.

### **Decision of von Kluck at 9:30 P.M., 30 August.**

The receipt of this news made von Kluck adhere to his decision of the morning. It appeared desirable to exploit the success of the Second Army by attempting the strategic encirclement of the enemy's main body. At 9:30 P.M. he issued orders for the First Army to move to the southeast, cut off the retreat of the enemy opposed to the Second Army, and thus exploit von Bülow's success. A portion of the First Army continued on the duty of protecting the right flank of the armies. A message notifying GHQ of this decision was written in the clear at 10:30 P.M., encoded at 12:45 A.M., and dispatched at 2:54 A.M.

### **Discussion.**

Before discussing von Kluck's justification for his decision, it would be well to examine the doctrine on initiative and abandonment of mission, as taught in our Army. This doctrine is substantially as follows:

A commander should carry out his assigned mission (in other words, carry out his orders) unless there is a change in the situation which he feels is unknown to higher authority. He should then inform higher authority of the new situation and request instructions. If it is not possible to inform higher authority of the new situation, for lack of time or other causes, the commander should then act as he believes higher authority would wish him to act if it were acquainted with the changed situation. The action taken should be reported as soon as possible.

As noted previously, von Kluck had more than one assigned mission, but the principle stated in the quoted doctrine can still be applied. Having more than one mission, which one was primary, and which one did GHQ intend that he carry out under the conditions then existing?

It is believed that von Kluck in making this decision (to march to the southeast) did act in accordance with the terms of his mission.

As stated in the previous discussion of his decision on the morning of 30 August, he had the choice of two things—continue to the lower Seine or aid the Second Army. That GHQ gave more weight to the latter is clear from a close reading of the directive. Strong renewed French resistance was foreseen, and it was stated that in such a case “it may become necessary to have the armies wheel from the southwesterly to the southerly direction.” In that same paragraph it was reiterated that “all the armies shall act in mutual understanding and support each other in the struggle in the different zones.” Whether von Kluck’s decision was the best possible decision is another question, but his action was authorized by the terms of his mission.

There is one point, however, on which von Kluck rates severe criticism. His decision was a grave one and might seriously affect the entire course of the campaign. He had determined upon his course of action by 11:30 A.M., yet did not attempt to notify GHQ until 10:30 P.M. It would seem that, with some eleven hours available, von Kluck should have asked the approval of GHQ or, at least, have notified higher authority of his intentions.

### **EVENTS OF 31 AUGUST AND 1 SEPTEMBER**

On 31 August and 1 September the German First Army pursued to the southeast, but failed to strike the flank of the French who were retreating before the Second Army. Von Kluck, on the afternoon of 1 September, sent a radio to GHQ, giving his situation and stating that on 2 September he would dispose the First Army between the Oise and the Ourcq Rivers, prepared for employment to the south or southwest. He thus indicated to GHQ that he needed further instructions, there being a certain conflict between the directive of 27 August, which was still officially in effect, and later orders which approved von Kluck’s decision of 30 August and prescribed that the First and Second Armies veer to the left and cooperate with the Third Army, on the left of the Second. This message of von Kluck, by implication, asked GHQ whether he should continue moving south or turn and resume his march toward the lower Seine. A few hours later, having learned that the British Army was in his immediate vicinity, von Kluck decided to attack this enemy, and reported his intentions to GHQ, stating that after throwing back the British, the First Army would be prepared for further employment. Thus again von Kluck asked for instructions.

### **EVENTS OF 2 SEPTEMBER**

Efforts of the First Army to strike the British failed on 2 September, the latter force retiring south of the Marne (Map 3). There appeared

to be no strong forces threatening the right flank of the First Army, although the strength and composition of the Paris garrison was not known. The commander of the IX Corps, General von Quast, learning that strong French forces were retreating with their west flank directed generally toward Château-Thierry, decided on his own initiative to march toward that city to intercept them. His initiative was later approved by General von Kluck, as it appeared that there still was some chance of intercepting the French retreating before the Second Army. At 8:00 P.M. a detailed report was sent to GHQ, showing that two corps were being used for protection against a threat from the direction of Paris as the rest of the army was approaching the Marne. The report to GHQ concluded as follows:

“Attempt of First Army to cross the Marne on 3 September would be rather risky.”

At 9:45 P.M. orders for the operations of 3 September were issued. The IX Corps was to continue its efforts to strike the flank of the French retreating before the Second Army. The III Corps was to march toward Château-Thierry. The rest of the army was to advance, but liaison officers were informed that a crossing of the Marne was not expected.

The Second Army, which had resumed its advance on 1 September, planned to continue the pursuit on 3 September; its commander believed that the French on its front were disintegrating.

### **EVENTS OF 3 AND 4 SEPTEMBER**

#### **Events of the morning of 3 September.**

During the night 2-3 September the following radio arrived from GHQ:

“The plan of the High Command is to drive the French back from Paris in a southeasterly direction. The First Army will follow the Second in echelon and henceforth will be responsible for protecting the right flank of the forces.”

Another radio from GHQ read:

“It is desired that the army cavalry appear before Paris and destroy all railways leading to the capital.”

No answer had been received to the First Army's two messages asking for instructions. These messages had been delayed 31 and 36 hours, respectively, in transmission. Communication between the First Army and GHQ was difficult, as radio messages had to be relayed.

During the period 31 August to 2 September, General von Kluck had done his best to subordinate his strategical conceptions to those of

GHQ. He had made frequent reports of his situation, and when uncertain as to what von Moltke desired him to do, he had requested, in good time, that further instructions be sent him. The radio quoted above placed von Kluck in an unpleasant dilemma. He was directed to "follow the Second Army in echelon," when in reality he was echeloned in front of, and not behind, the Second Army, the latter having rested 31 August.

A more disturbing factor was the first sentence of the radio, "The plan of the High Command is to drive the French back from Paris in a southeasterly direction." Von Kluck felt that only the First Army was so located as to be able to drive the French to the southeast, since the Second Army could exercise only frontal pressure and was not in close touch with the French on its front. He felt that the French would escape unless the First Army could strike their flank on 3 September.

On the morning of 3 September, von Kluck was informed that on the evening before the IX Corps had seized the bridges over the Marne at and near Château-Thierry and was going to push on across the Marne and attack. The French Fifth Army was crossing the Marne.

#### **Decision of von Kluck at 1:00 P.M., 3 September.**

The decision facing von Kluck was difficult. Should he abandon the mission of protecting the right flank, which had been definitely assigned him by GHQ, in order to contribute to the general plan of the High Command as he saw it? Or should he stop the movement of the IX Corps and stand fast for two days, so as to be in the position relative to the other armies that evidently was contemplated in the GHQ radio? Von Kluck felt that the latter course was out of the question; that the success for which GHQ hoped could not be achieved if the First Army stood still. As a result of the operations of the IX Corps, he was confirmed in his belief that there was still some chance for the First Army to intercept the enemy retreating before the Second Army. He had no information indicating the presence of any formidable hostile forces in and around Paris. The British he considered of no great consequence. Therefore, at 1:00 P.M., 3 September, von Kluck decided to exploit the unexpected success of the IX Corps and cross the Marne with three corps, using two corps for protection against a threat from Paris. In the afternoon, and again in the evening, von Kluck reported his intentions to GHQ, stating that signs of disintegration had been observed in certain enemy units.



## Discussion.

There is no question but that this decision was contrary to the terms of von Kluck's mission. He had been specifically directed to follow the Second Army in echelon and to protect the right flank of the armies, and by his decision he pushed the First Army forward, echeloned it in advance of the Second Army, and left only part of his force to accomplish the mission of protecting the right flank of the German armies, a mission which GHQ had apparently assigned to the entire army.

The question as to whether or not von Kluck's initiative was justified in this case is difficult to answer. The basic idea of GHQ appeared to be to drive the French away from Paris in a southeasterly direction. Only the First Army was so located as to be able to do this, and GHQ did not appear, from the wording of its order, to realize the true situation, namely, that the First Army was echeloned about one day's march in front of the Second. Most authorities agree that, with the information which he actually possessed, von Kluck was justified in considering that his action, while it violated the letter of his orders, nevertheless carried out their spirit.

It should be noted that von Kluck's neglect to reconnoiter adequately in the direction of Paris is another question. This fault caused him to underestimate the French forces there and gave him an erroneous view of the situation. GHQ also was at fault in failing to pass on to von Kluck the knowledge on which its decision was based.

## Events of the afternoon of 3 September.

The IX Corps, on the afternoon of 3 September, progressed a few miles south of the Marne. The III and IV Corps reached the river. Only hostile rear guards had been encountered. In the evening the following radio was received from the Second Army:

“The army has pursued the enemy today up to and beyond the Marne. Enemy also pouring back south of the river in complete disorder. Marne bridges in part destroyed.”

The intention of the Second Army was to pursue south of the Marne. Nothing further had been received from GHQ.

General von Kluck, at 9:45 P.M., decided to continue the advance south of the Marne with the bulk of his army in order to drive the French southeastward. Two corps were to be left north of the Marne to furnish protection from the direction of Paris. Any British encountered were also to be driven back. GHQ, at 10:30 P.M., was notified that the First Army's leading units had crossed the Marne and would continue the movement to the south on 4 September.

## Discussion.

It is believed that von Kluck's continuation of the pursuit south of the Marne with part of his army on 4 September was a justifiable exercise of initiative, in view of the situation as known to von Kluck and for the reasons given in the previous discussion. No major change had occurred, and there still seemed to be a possibility of a far-reaching success. Note, however, that as the First Army continued to march to the southeast, the protection which it provided against a threat from Paris became less and less.

## Events of 4 September.

The First Army's pursuit on 4 September brought little result. The French were able to retreat to the south, not the southeast. Only the IX Corps had encounters with the enemy. This unit had severe fighting near Montmirail, the enemy putting up stubborn resistance. The corps commander did not have the impression of being confronted with a fleeing enemy. There were no indications of a precipitate retreat, such as rifles thrown away and abandoned cannon and vehicles. The enemy, who continued his retreat during the day, seemed definitely to have escaped. His exact location was not known.

The First Army commander began to doubt the reports of complete victories achieved by other armies and to have misgivings concerning future operations. On the morning of 4 September, he sent the following radio to GHQ:

“First Army requests information regarding the situation of other armies whose announcements of decisive victories have been followed on numerous occasions by requests for support. With the continual heavy fighting in the course of the marches imposed upon it, the First Army has reached the limit of its endurance. It was only in this manner that it succeeded in opening the passage of the Marne for the other armies and in compelling the enemy to continue his retreat. In this connection the IX Corps has given a splendid account of itself by the boldness of its operations. We now hope to be able to exploit the success. Instructions of the High Command directing the First Army to follow the Second Army in echelon could not be followed in these conditions. The plan of throwing the enemy back toward the southeast and cutting him off from Paris can be executed only in case the First Army moves forward. The necessity of covering the right flank weakens the army's offensive force. It is

highly urgent that the right wing be reinforced soon by other units. In view of the incessant changes in the situation, the First Army will not be in a position to make important decisions unless it is permanently kept informed regarding the situation of the other armies which seem to be farther in rear. Liaison with the Second Army regularly maintained."

#### **ision on evening of 4 September.**

The First Army, on the evening of 4 September, had received no further word from GHQ. In spite of the doubts which he had expressed, the First Army commander believed he could still continue his forward movement for at least one more day. Orders, therefore, were issued for a continuation of the advance on 5 September. The IX Corps was to advance into the region of Esternay, thus hemming in the right wing of the Second Army and forcing it to advance in the direction of Sézanne. Almost the entire First Army (including the II Corps) was to participate in this advance, only the IV Reserve Corps being left north of the Marne for protection against the possible threat from Paris. The IV Reserve Corps was weak, containing only 16 infantry and 4 artillery battalions. The following report was sent to GHQ:

"Left wing of First Army has thrown the French back upon Montmirail. English in the region of Coulommiers seem to be retreating toward the south and southwest. The army will move forward on the 5th. Enemy will be attacked wherever encountered."

#### **Discussion.**

The justification for von Kluck's initiative becomes less and less as he moves further to the south without achieving his expected encirclement of the enemy.

It is believed that von Kluck's decision to continue the pursuit south of the Marne on 5 September with the bulk of his army, leaving only one extremely weak corps north of the Marne for protection against a threat from the direction of Paris, was not a justifiable exercise of initiative. His efforts to regain contact with the enemy during the preceding two days had not met with much success, and the IX Corps, the only unit which really had contact with hostile rear guards, reported that the enemy was not disorganized. The enemy forces had not been intercepted. The French seemed definitely to have escaped envelopment, and on 4 September had retreated to the south,

not the southeast. Chances for achieving any great success on 5 September or of driving the French to the southeast by continuing the pursuit thus seemed slight. On previous days the echelonment of von Kluck's army and the location of his corps had provided protection from the direction of Paris. However, on 5 September the flank and rear of the German armies could in nowise be considered adequately protected, since only one corps was assigned to this duty and this corps was really little more than a division. Thus von Kluck's decision on the evening of 4 September disregarded his assigned mission to a much greater extent than on previous days, and at a time when the conditions which had justified a departure from the terms of a given mission no longer applied.

## EVENTS OF 5 SEPTEMBER

### Events of morning of 5 September.

At 7:00 A.M., about the time the First Army was beginning its march, a radiogram from GHQ, sent on the previous evening, reached von Kluck. It stated:

“The First Army and Second Armies will remain facing the eastern front of Paris, First Army between the Oise and the Marne, holding the bridges over the Marne to the west of Château-Thierry; Second Army between the Marne and Seine, holding the passages over the Seine east of Nogent. Third Army direction of march: Troyes and east thereof.”

Von Kluck was puzzled by this order. To him it meant that the great enveloping movement through Belgium—the 1914 version of the Schlieffen plan—had failed to gain decisive success, and that the idea of throwing the French back to the southeast had been abandoned. However, he was uncertain as to what was the actual plan of GHQ. Likewise the expression “remain between the Oise and Marne” was peculiar. He felt that surely GHQ knew the situation of the First Army, in view of his reports. Obviously GHQ felt that the German right wing was too weak to march past Paris. Was a special danger threatening from that direction? Von Kluck had no information to indicate new displacements of French forces, and did not consider that there was any special threat from Paris. He felt that any investment of Paris could wait. His view was that the more pressure exerted all along the front, the less chance there was of the French being able to displace troops from other parts of the front toward Paris. He therefore considered it advisable to continue to the Seine and not to invest Paris until later. His reasoning was that once the

enemy had been thrown back behind the Seine, the French forces which had appeared on the right flank of the First Army, to the north of Paris, also would be obliged to fall back. He sent the following radio to GHQ:

“In accordance with previous instructions of the High Command, the army is marching toward the Seine. Two corps astride the Marne are covering toward Paris. At Coulommiers, combat contact with approximately three British divisions; at Montmirail, with west wing of French. The latter resisting vigorously with rear guards. Would suffer severely if pursuit continued to Seine. As yet they have only been thrust back frontally and are nowise out of the picture. If the prescribed investment of Paris takes place, the enemy will have all freedom of action towards Troyes. At Paris important forces probably only in process of concentration. Fractions of their field forces can be shifted there, but that will take some time yet. I consider that to let go of an army which is still in good fighting condition and to displace the First and Second Armies at this time is ill advised. I propose that the pursuit be continued to the Seine and that the investment of Paris be postponed until later.”

Von Kluck made no effort to halt his army on the morning of 5 September, but in accordance with his own views, as given above, continued the pursuit to the south during the remainder of the day. However, tentative plans for a withdrawal north of the Marne were considered. Only slight contact was gained with enemy rear guards, with which a few shots were exchanged.

### **Discussion.**

Von Kluck's decision at 7:00 A.M. 5 September, was in complete disregard of his mission. For the third time, GHQ had restated the First Army's mission clearly and unmistakably. There was only one course of action open now—obey those orders exactly.

The initiative of continuing the march to the south was not justified. Von Kluck had no prospects of more than a minor success, had no information which GHQ presumably lacked, and, in fact, was quite in the dark as to the general situation. The previous plan of driving the French to the southeast had been abandoned. GHQ desired that the First and Second Armies face Paris. In the absence of definite information, von Kluck had no right to assume, as he did, that merely a routine investment of a fortress was intended, some-

thing that could be done at any time. A definite threat from Paris to the flank of the German armies, which von Kluck was charged with protecting, was more than possible in view of the new dispositions ordered. Von Kluck should have taken immediate steps, therefore, to initiate compliance with GHQ's order. At least, the march of the II and IV Corps should have been stopped.

Consideration of the actions of von Kluck during this period has been based on the doctrine of our own Army with regard to initiative. To render fair judgement, it should be noted that the doctrine of the German Army gave more independence to army commanders than does our own. With the decisions as close as they were during the period 2 September to 5 September, a doctrine permitting more independence of action makes von Kluck's decision appear in a better light.

In discussing this period, most authorities point out the difficulties of von Kluck's position and reserve most of their criticism for the German GHQ. Von Moltke's failure to keep in touch with his front-line armies was the basic reason for von Kluck's faulty decisions. If, for instance, von Moltke had explained the reason for his concern over the strength of the French at Paris, von Kluck would have had more complete and accurate information on which to base his decisions, and he probably would not have gone contrary to his orders.

There appears to be no excuse for GHQ's entire dependence upon radio, which in 1914 was very unreliable, when a few staff officers in cars could have furnished up-to-date information regularly. Joffre's splendid control of his armies during the same period stands out in contrast.

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