

## Schlieffen, Carnot, and the theory of the flank

by Andreas Ranke

**Editor's Note:** *In many recent speeches and writings, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. has addressed the issue of the kind of leadership the world requires today, with reference to the work of France's Lazare Carnot (1753-1823) and Germany's Gen. Alfred von Schlieffen (1833-1913), on how victory can be achieved by attacking the enemy on the flank, rather than in a frontal assault. By this means, a numerically inferior force can defeat a much more powerful adversary. It was the failure of Germany's Chief of the General Staff, Gen. Helmuth von Moltke (Moltke the younger), to fully grasp and audaciously implement the Schlieffen Plan in 1914, which led to the defeat of Germany in World War I.*

EIR asked Andreas Ranke, an expert in military history from our bureau in Wiesbaden, Germany, to give our readers a briefing on the history of these ideas. Ranke is the grandson of Gustav Heinemann, the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany. Here is his report.

If you want to know something about Schlieffen, you have to go to the basic question of what a flank is, because Schlieffen is one part of a chain of development within the theory of the flank.

The problem today, is that people see the "flank" merely in its military aspect; but this is not the true meaning at all. The basic question of the flank is, in a certain way, a philosophical question, or, if you want, a geometrical question. That is the reason LaRouche is so interested in it: He doesn't want to win the First World War! The question of the flank is a question of Leibniz's least-action principle; and, a military flank is a metaphor, a very interesting metaphor, which conveys the broader concept in a very overwhelming way, since a military flank is a question of life and death, and poses the fundamental questions in the most stark terms.

What does it mean to say that the question of the flank is a question of the least-action principle? Normally in war, of course, you have a frontal assault: one against one, two against two, four against four. That is the first way of making war, but it is not very efficient, especially if you are *less* strong than the enemy. If you make a frontal attack then, you will be lost.

The first thing in a flank, is to define what your enemy is thinking. What is his theoretical, historical background? Out of this, you make your plan.

For example, before Schlieffen devised his plan, he asked himself, as a preparatory exercise, what would France do? If I were the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, how would I attack Germany?

It is very important not to underestimate your enemy. Never think that the enemy is stupid: If you think your enemy is stupid, you've lost. Secondly, never repeat a flank! Don't think that the enemy can't read books; they've studied the same battles that you have, they've studied the same flanks, and they're very intelligent. So, if you try to copy what has been done in the past, you will lose.

### The battles of Leuktra and Cannae

Schlieffen, of course, studied military history, and two battles are particularly important: Cannae (216 B.C.) and Leuktra (Dec. 5, 1757).

Historically, the first important battle is Leuktra (371 B.C.), between Thebes and Sparta. The Theban military leader was Epaminondas, who developed the formation of the military triangle. At that time, the normal Greek tactic was to attack *en bloc*, in echelons. You marched in a strong bloc, with very strong infantry, and then tried to break through the enemy forces, like a ram. Epaminondas changed that, using a



Left to right: French “Organizer of Victory” Lazare Carnot; Prussian military reformer Gen. G.D. Scharnhorst; Germany’s Gen. Alfred von Schlieffen, the military strategist who further developed the theory of the flank. Said Schlieffen during the era of the British-French Entente, “The whole of Germany must throw itself on one enemy—the strongest, most powerful, most dangerous enemy: and that can only be the Anglo-French!”

triangular formation: In the front, facing the Spartans, the formation looked broad and imposing; but, toward the rear, it tapered to the point of a triangle. The weaker section was not able to take the offensive; its job was to resist attack. But the stronger section could sweep around, to the rear of the enemy. There, you have the first idea of flanking.

To us, it looks so simple. We think like a person in a helicopter: You see the armies marching toward each other, from the top. You’re astonished at the idea that with a simple triangle, you can win. But of course, at the time of the Battle of Leuktra, nobody could see how the enemy’s position looked from above! And nobody had ever done such a maneuver before. The terrain was dry; you had a lot of dust; you couldn’t see anything. And, you took a risk, because one side of your attacking front was very weak. You make a hypothesis about your enemy’s thinking; then, you make a higher hypothesis: what you do *against* this thinking. You think first of the mind of the enemy commander; then, you make your higher hypothesis, how to solve this problem—the hypothesis of the higher hypothesis. This is the basic idea of the flank.

That was the Battle of Leuktra: the one-sided geometrical flank.

Then, there was Cannae (216 B.C.) (**Figure 1**). If you remember, the Carthaginian commander, Hannibal, marched over the Alps and attacked the Romans from the rear. The Romans were very strong, at this time. They had built up, under two consuls, an army of nearly 90,000 men; Hannibal had only a maximum of 50,000 men, of which only 26,000

were Carthaginians—the rest were auxiliary troops. The Roman infantry was very well trained, very well armored, and very well led, from a tactical standpoint. They were a very good infantry; they marched *en bloc*, and had enormous thrust, to penetrate an enemy: They just overwhelmed them, with enormous power, like a bulldozer.

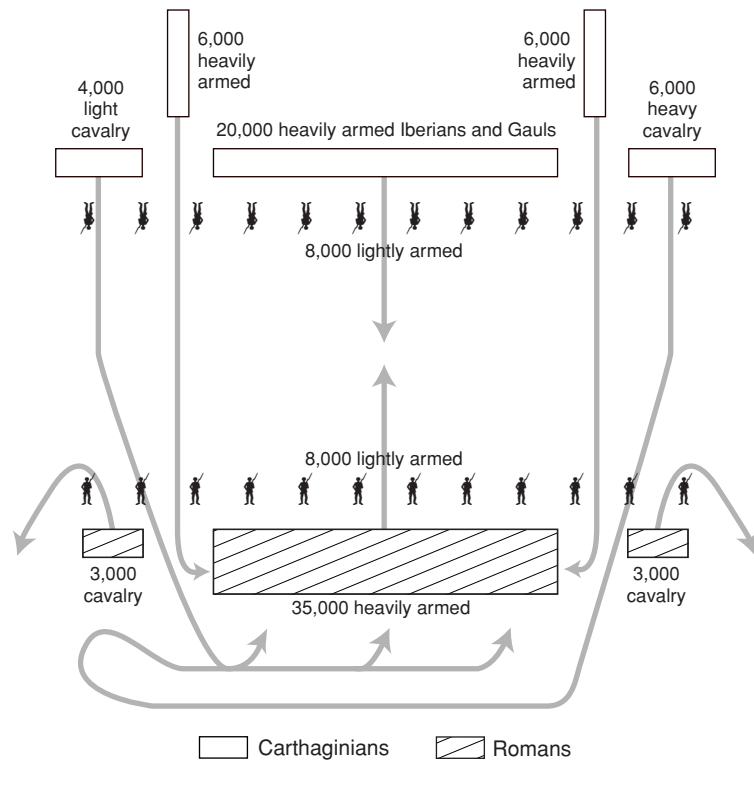
The differences between the two armies were that the Carthaginians had a 40,000-man infantry and a 10,000-man cavalry; the Romans had an 80,000-man infantry and a 6,000-man cavalry. So, the Carthaginians’ cavalry was stronger: That was very important for Hannibal’s thinking. He studied very intensively, how this Roman wall would attack. He knew beforehand, what the Romans would do. That is the most important thing: to know what the enemy commander is thinking. Because in a war, you always have a certain effect from the education and motivation of the soldiers, but the crucial thing is what the commander does—or does not do.

You have to imagine, in August 216 B.C., at Cannae, in southeastern Italy, you see this front marching toward you. At the center of the Carthaginian forces, is the light infantry; then, around them, the heavy infantry, the troops from Numidia, the Balearics, Spain. These troops were mercenaries; most of them didn’t speak the same language, while the Roman troops all spoke Latin. This was very important. The Carthaginian army was more of a colonial army.

So, on each flank of the Carthaginians, there were 5,000 cavalry. The Romans had a bloc of infantry, then 3,000 cavalry on each side.

FIGURE 1

**The Battle of Cannae, 216 B.C.**



So, what was Hannibal’s assumption? He knew that the Roman infantry was much stronger; and he knew that his cavalry was stronger. He had, of course, to use the cavalry in his first wave, to overwhelm the Roman cavalry. What he did, was to attack the Roman cavalry from the left side, crush it, then turn around to the other part of the Roman cavalry, and wipe it out.

Then, with his infantry, he went, first, toward them, then stopped, and then went backward. But not in one line: The central part went back faster than the outside parts, making a V-shape, or a half-circle. They went back, and back, and back. To the rear was the sea, so this posed a limit for them. Hannibal used this geography, which was also very important. So, the Roman bloc marched; the Carthaginians on the outside resisted more strongly, and those at the center resisted less, and fell back. The Romans, obviously, followed them. So what you had, then, was a complete encircling of the Romans! The Roman bloc went against the Carthaginian light infantry, while the heavy Carthaginian infantry was at their rear, as well as the Carthaginian cavalry. So, you had a double-flanking.

The result was that the Romans lost around 80,000 men, and the Carthaginians around 10,000. This was the heaviest military defeat the Roman Empire had ever suffered. And the

question was this double-flanking. Hannibal had studied very intensively how the Roman military leaders would act, and made a hypothesis about this. If, of course, the Romans had understood how Hannibal would have functioned, and had made a counter-plan, Hannibal’s super-plan would have failed immediately!

**Outflanking Cannae: the Battle of Leuthen**

Now, I come to another very important battle: the Battle of Leuthen (Figure 2). This was the overcoming of Cannae! Now, it gets very interesting. You see, everybody had studied Cannae. It was a tremendous success; geometrically, it was very understandable, very nice. You can easily draw it on a piece of paper, and it looks very good. Everybody studied it, everybody talked about “double-flanking.”

In 1757, Frederick the Great of Prussia was at war with the Austrians. He had 30,000 men; the Austrians had 60,000. Imagine the geographical situation: He was standing on a little hill; before him was a valley, then came another hill, on which the Austrians were standing. On the left side of the Austrians, there was another valley, and the two valleys were connected. There were hills all around. The Austrians knew that they were stronger than Frederick the Great. So, they studied their books, and said, “Great! We’ll repeat Cannae. We’ll make our line long, and we’ll

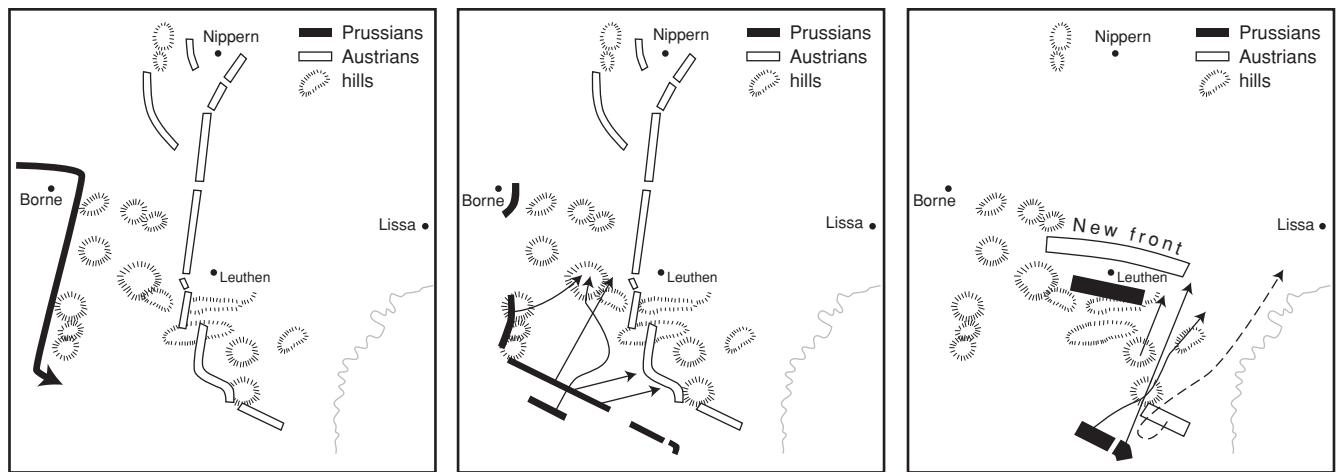
take the sides of the Prussians, and we’ll crush them.” Good, eh? A good idea! Frederick, of course, knew that. He knew that everybody had studied Cannae, that everybody had studied such a geometrical attack, and that it would be the best. If he were the Austrian commander, that is what he would do. Obviously!

So, what did he do? He marched frontally, toward the Austrians, in a very provocative way, playing loud music. The Austrians saw the line of Prussians marching toward them, so they waited. They stood there, and made their line longer, waiting for the Prussians to march across the valley, and come up the hill, and then, the Austrians would attack, and outflank them. Like Cannae.

The Prussians vanished into the valley, and what did they do? Frederick didn’t have much time—20 minutes, 50 minutes maybe. So, he changed the line: All the subordinate units turned around, and changed their direction. They started to run *south*, parallel to the Austrian line. The Austrians couldn’t see them, because they had vanished into the valley. That shows you how important it was that the lower-ranking officers were very well trained. It was a very difficult thing to do: to shift from a frontal attack, to a southward move. They ran through one valley, then they came to the other valley, at

FIGURE 2

**The Battle of Leuthen, Dec. 5, 1757**



Starting positions. Austrians in a line; Prussians advance frontally, then veer south, concealed from view by hills.

Prussians attack Austrians on the southern flank.

Both armies regroup. Austrians march against the Prussians, and as they do so, the Prussian cavalry attacks them on the flank.

*Writes General von Schlieffen, in Cannae, concerning Frederick the Great's victory in the Battle of Leuthen: "None more than Frederick the Great was so apt to fight a battle of extermination with a numerically inferior strength. He was, however, unable to attack at Leuthen, with his 'unequal force' of 35,000 men, however thin he might have made it, the wide front of Prince Charles of Lorraine with his 65,000 warriors. He would not have had any troops left for the surrounding of the overpowering superiority of the enemy. He directed the main attack against one flank. . . . He succeeded in deceiving the enemy, turning him and bringing up the Prussian army perpendicularly to the lengthened front against the hostile left flank. The [Austrians'] extreme left wing, thus placed in a precarious position, was broken. The Austrians turned their masses towards the threatened flank; however, they were unable to re-form, in their haste, their original long front in the new direction, but fell unintentionally into a formation 40 men deep, quite similar to the one assumed by Terentius Varro [at Cannae]. The position, in general, corresponded to that of Cannae. . . . The [Austrian] retreat, starting in confusion on the left flank toward Lissa, was changed into rout by pursuit."□*

a right angle to it; they ran around, then made a line again, and attacked the Austrians—who were preparing for a Cannae—from a flank.

They outflanked Cannae, if you will, using geography.

So, the principle of the flank is not a simple geometrical question, or a formal question. Frederick understood what the Austrians would do, and found exactly their weak point. His position, running through this valley, was, of course, very dangerous. If the Austrians had attacked at that moment, he would have been finished immediately! It was very, very dangerous. He took an enormous risk.

So, he smashed one wing of the Austrian Army.

Then, the Austrian Army turned around, and stood again, line against line. But the Austrians had already lost a lot. Frederick went back with his troops, but, in the rear, he introduced his cavalry—but so that they were invisible to the Austrians. The Austrians attacked the Prussians again; the Prussians fell back; then, the Prussian cavalry attacked the Austrians from the rear. That was a second flank.

Thus, you had in one battle, in five hours, two flanking operations, completely outflanking the concept of Cannae,

this nearly perfect idea. The offense had a perfect idea; but the problem was, that Frederick understood how they thought. So, it was not perfect at all, anymore! It was an *old* idea. You can't repeat a flank. A flank has something to do with surprise, and originality.

These are two battles that Schlieffen studied very intensively. They are the classic big battles; there are others, of course, but these are, in a way, the most famous. Even that idiot Napoleon used this principle at Austerlitz; even he was capable of crushing the allies in December 1805, when they tried a Cannae-like maneuver against him, and he attacked the center.

The principle is that there is no fixed rule; this is important to understand. It's free; it has to do with creativity, or it's like a poetic principle, if you will.

**The Schlieffen Plan**

Now, let's look more closely at what Schlieffen did.

Schlieffen became the Chief of the General Staff in Germany in 1891 (he lived until 1913). How did the situation in Germany look? France, England, and Russia had started to

develop an alliance against Germany. In 1892, there was a treaty between Russia and France; in 1904, there was a treaty between England and France; and so on. Germany was being encircled.

Before Schlieffen, the idea of the German military, in case of war, was to first attack Russia. This was under the older Moltke, and Waldersee. (There are two Moltkes. The older one, who died in 1891, was very capable, very intelligent; the younger one was his nephew.)

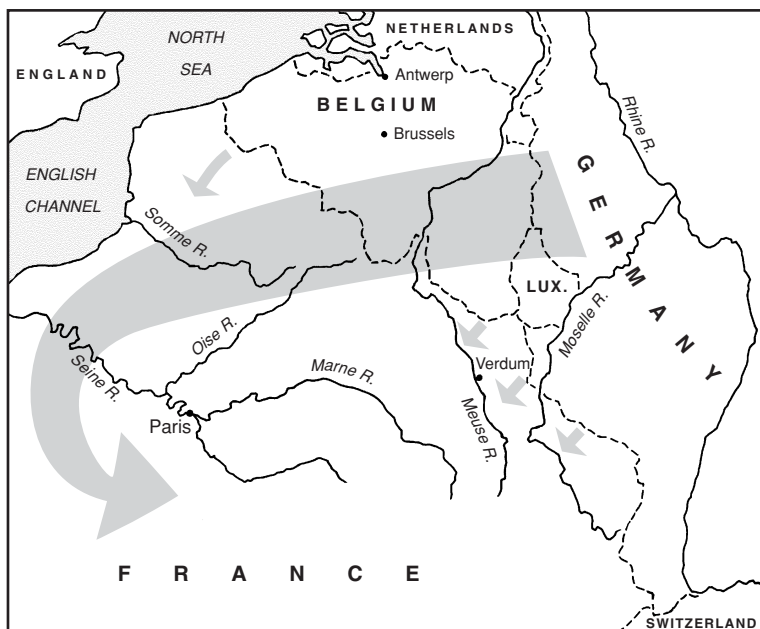
But Schlieffen changed this plan completely (Figure 3). Faced with a two-front war, what could Germany do? It was too weak to win both at the same time; that was obvious. So, he followed the least-action principle: I have to attack *one* first, then use everything I have to attack the other. France is the more important enemy, he reasoned; Russia is infrastructurally underdeveloped. So, I'll throw virtually everything against France. But, how will I do it? Because the French had built an enormous system of military fortresses, against Germany, of course, after 1870-71. Alsace, for example, has enormous fortresses. So it was obvious that it would not work to attack there. This would be a frontal attack: not very intelligent.

His idea was, "I have to outflank them." First, he would put practically all his troops in the west; second, he would split those troops into a very weak left wing, and a very strong right wing (as seen from Germany): Alsace very weak, and north of Alsace, as strong as possible. Then, to attack, through Belgium, the north of France, and then to circle around Paris, and to fall upon the rear of the French. His idea was a military equivalent of a revolving door: If you push one side, the other goes around. This, he developed from 1891 on, and it got stronger and stronger. The first plan was worked out in 1891, and there were still more troops in the south, in the Alsace region; but he developed more and more the idea of putting more troops in the north, for the flanking operation. The last official Schlieffen Plan was made in 1905 (he resigned in 1905). On Jan. 1, 1906, Moltke the younger became the Chief of the General Staff.

This last plan called for a very strong right wing, north of Alsace, going around Paris — much farther around Paris, than was later done, going nearly to the English Channel, so that the British could not enter. His idea was to do it very fast. He didn't plan to take Paris, really; it was more important to go around Paris.

The Schlieffen Plan described the *aim*. It was not a concrete description of what would happen each day. This is a difference between German and American military planning: In German it is called *Auftragstaktik*, which can be roughly translated as "mission tactics." In America, you have more

FIGURE 3  
The Schlieffen Plan, 1905



**German right wing:** 23 army corps, 12.5 reserve corps, 8 cavalry divisions  
**German left wing:** 3.5 army corps, 0.5 reserve corps, 3 cavalry division

the idea, "You go here, you go there, and you do this in five minutes," whereas in Germany, it was, "After a week you should be there; how you get there, is your business. That is what you're trained for." Schlieffen tried to train his officers in this way, to think for themselves. Because a battle always develops in a different way than you expect; that's obvious. Nothing is automatic.

In 1905, the military situation facing Germany was much better than it became later. Russia had been beaten in the Russo-Japanese War. They lost the naval Battle of Tsushima, then had an enormous military defeat at Mukden. So, for nearly ten years, the Russian Army was neutralized. But, because of the Russo-Japanese War, with the Japanese supported by the British, of course, the Russians turned around again, from Asia toward Europe. After that, French money poured into Russia, to build up railways, to make the military buildup proceed faster — to counter the Schlieffen Plan, if you will, although it was not completely known to the French. But Schlieffen wrote a lot about Cannae and things like this; in a way, it was obvious that something like this would come about. It was not a complete secret.

### Moltke's tragic failure

Then, along came Moltke the younger, that poor soul. The problem was that Kaiser Wilhelm thought Moltke was very

good, because he was weak, and therefore Kaiser Wilhelm could dominate him. He liked that. Moltke was influenced by the Theosophists. Schlieffen himself said, this person is a disaster, just what we *don't* need. Schlieffen was a very strong character, but Moltke, not at all. He was not a “warmonger” — not at all. Moltke was just the opposite of a warmonger: He was completely afraid. And he had good reason to be afraid! France, Russia, England all together — that was no joke! Austria-Hungary was not very strong. As for Italy, it was not clear on which side it would enter the war. So, Germany was more or less alone. And Moltke knew that.

These people were not so completely stupid as not to know what they were facing. They, of course, underestimated a lot of things. The Kaiser was in a way a special case, because he *was* really stupid. He was the best-loved grandchild of Queen Victoria. When Queen Victoria was dying, he spent two weeks at her bedside. He was the best friend of the Tsar of Russia, whom he called “Nickie.” He simply could not believe, since they were all members of one family, that they could make war against each other. Aristocratic thinking. In a way, he was naive. He was a childish character, a megalomaniac, a candidate for a mental hospital, perhaps — but he was not the person who created the First World War.

In 1905, it was clear that the possibility still existed for Germany to win a war. But Kaiser Wilhelm and these people said, “Oh, no. We won't make war. Not at all.” So, they waited. Yet, in 1905, it was obvious that the idea was already there, to make a war against Germany. Already in 1897, the British had started a big propaganda campaign against Germany. The German fleet was built up then, and there were articles in the British press saying that the German fleet should be “Copenhagened” (in 1807, the British destroyed the Danish fleet, in Copenhagen).

Germany became extremely isolated, especially after the death of President McKinley, when this idiot Teddy Roosevelt came to power. This was one of the biggest disasters of the 20th century, because the United States should have been the ally of Germany, but it was not.

Of course, the Kaiser did not understand America, because it was republican, and to him, everything that was republican was “leftist.” He was ignorant. But the real problem was that America, after 1901, under Teddy Roosevelt, began the policy of the “big stick,” and went with the British; the Russo-Japanese War turned Russian interests against Europe and the Balkans, i.e., against Austria-Hungary and Germany. Teddy Roosevelt was on the British side, and that was a big disaster. There was no idea of collaboration between the United States and Germany at this time, which was the real sin.

The United States was the only possible ally for Germany. What were the other states? Britain was an absolutely brutal empire. France was taken over by the worst Freemasons, *revanchistes*, warmongers, especially after 1900 — people like Théophile Delcassé, after the Dreyfus Affair. After Fashoda, in 1898, France turned totally, like a little dog, to the British

Empire. A little puppet. As for the Russians, Count Sergei Witte was thrown out in 1905, because there was a so-called revolution. Russia lost its war in 1905, so, the most corrupt Russian mafia turned toward France and England. The only country that was still allied with Germany was Austria-Hungary, but it was very weak. Not so weak as many people think, but it was weak, and it was very backward, in a way, in its structure. Then, the other flank that was introduced, was the Serbs, the Balkan wars, to blow up Austria-Hungary, and by this, to weaken Germany. Don't forget the assassination on June 28, 1914 of the Austrian Prince, Franz Ferdinand, who was killed by the Serbs, but on behalf of the Russians, French, and English. They wanted to have a war in 1914; this was clear. They thought the best possibility for war was 1914. For Germany, had there been war in 1905, they would have won. But in 1914, there was Moltke.

Moltke came into power on Jan. 1, 1906. He looked at the map, and saw what the military situation was. He saw an enormous buildup in France — the military expenditures in France were double, per capita, what they were in Germany. Germany had 70 million inhabitants, and did not have a stronger army than France, which had only 36 million inhabitants. Imagine that! (The German population today is 80 million, which includes 7 million foreigners, so in reality it is 73 million; the German population is now barely larger than it was in 1914, whereas the French population is much larger.) The French were putting virtually everything they had into a military buildup. They used all their capital to build up the railway system in Russia; that is the reason why, after the First World War, France went completely bankrupt! Because they lost all this money in Russia. France, in the First World War, lost everything. It lost 1.4 million people; lost all its money; lost the capability to think; lost everything that was Mediterranean; and became a completely Kantian state, an anarchistic state. France lost the First World War completely — and that was the British idea.

The British idea, is the idea of a Roman triumvirate: “I ally with everybody, but then I crush everybody.” Like what Caesar did, what Pompei did, Lepidus — the Roman triumvirate: You ally to destroy. The British were the best at this. The French were, of course, always idiots: The British always said to the French, “Now, you're finally a world power.” And then the French would always lose. Like today. Now, the British say to the French, “The Russians are destroyed now, so you're the dominant European continental power.” Of course, they lose! It's obvious. They always lose! They're there to lose.

So, Moltke saw this military situation: this enormous French military buildup, the Russian buildup, and the possibility of an intervention by the British. So, he got very scared. And what he did — and this is now the problem — is that he shifted a lot of troops from the north to the south, to Alsace. Because he was no longer sure where the crucial battle would be. Because he lost the initiative. This is very important.

The difference between Schlieffen and Moltke is that

Schlieffen wanted to *win* the war, whereas Moltke didn't want to *lose* the war. Psychologically, very important. Moltke was more defensive; he was very much afraid. He thought that under the Schlieffen Plan, the east would be nearly unprotected; the northern wing was much stronger; the southern wing was not strong enough — it was so risky. It was true! The Schlieffen Plan *was* risky! But it was the only possibility that existed. You have only one chance, and you have to take a risk. And that's where the real power of a commander, a military leader, comes in. That is what LaRouche really stresses. It's a question of being willing to take a risk, and of least action.

But, Moltke tried to make compromises everywhere. He tried to make a plan that would *always work*. And because it would "always work," it would work *never*. Because Germany was much too weak for that: to have sufficient troops everywhere. So, when the First World War broke out, the wing that was supposed to go around Paris was no longer strong enough; it could *not* go around Paris; it could only go *to* Paris. And then, in came the British intervention, under General French.

The problem in 1914, was that the Schlieffen Plan, under Moltke's direction, was much too weak, and came into a crisis. Not so much for objective reasons, but more subjective: The German commanders, especially Moltke, lost their nerve. They got scared, because they overestimated the strength of the English, and so the Battle of the Marne, in September 1914, led to a retreat of the German Army. This led directly to the trench warfare, which started at the end of 1914, and lasted nearly to the end of the war. The trench warfare was

nearly won by the Germans in 1917, because France collapsed in 1917, after the Battle of Verdun in 1916.

Germany finally lost the war as a result of the unfortunate intervention of the Americans, who declared war in April 1917, because of the so-called total submarine warfare. But one has to know that the British, especially in 1915, made an enormous propaganda assault against Germany, especially around the sinking of the *Lusitania*, in 1915. It has now come out that that so-called unarmed British ship was actually full of ammunition; it was an auxiliary cruiser, in reality. The British designed this ship in order to be sunk, to provoke an intervention by the Americans.

If the Americans had not intervened in 1917, there would at least have been an armistice, rather than a surrender, as happened in 1918-19. For American history, too, that was a disaster, because this meant a real turning point, a much stronger British influence over the Americans after 1917. The German language was forbidden in American schools, and there was an effort to exterminate any German influence.

It was a real tragedy, that the nations that should have been the real allies, on a philosophical basis, did not join together. It was not just the Americans' mistake; Kaiser Wilhelm and those around him underestimated the role of the United States, and were, of course, anti-republican. This led to the catastrophe of the First World War, and everything that came afterward.

### **Prussia's military tradition: 'Auftragstaktik'**

Schlieffen based himself upon the Prussian tradition of warfare, which is well expressed not only by Frederick the

## LaRouche on Moltke

*The following is from a speech given by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., to a Schiller Institute conference in Bad Schwalbach, Germany, on Dec. 15, 1997:*

This is a very interesting time, in which we have to look at such examples in Europe, as the difference in character, between the action of the French in defense against the invading forces, the action, which was led and organized by Lazare Carnot; in distinction to the folly of compromise, imposed by the German state upon an ineffective leader, young Moltke, at the beginning of World War I. Had young Moltke acted as von Schlieffen had specified, the war would have been over in weeks. There would have been a general peace throughout Europe, and the British Empire would have been defeated forever. . . .

We have many problems, today, in the world. There are many excuses for leaders to fail. Young Moltke had excuses for his failure. His excuse was the corruption around his own circles, through the Anthroposophs, and the Kaiser's circles. But, as a patriot, *he had no right to fail*.

You have no *right* to make excuses for betraying your nation. For *personal* reasons! Out of *personal* fear! Or, "I could *offend* so-and-so, by not losing the war, or not taking the irresponsible action, which would have lost the war."

Young Moltke was completely acquainted with the von Schlieffen Plan: He betrayed it. He didn't buck the Kaiser; didn't buck the Kaiser's circles: As a result, all Europe went to Hell.

And, therefore, even though young Moltke was not the author, he was not the complete architect of this failure, *he was in the position, where he should have acted—and, did not!* And all Europe, since then, and all civilization, has been paying the price, for the criminal negligence, and cowardice, and corruption of young Moltke.



Great, but even better by Gneisenau and Scharnhorst: the idea of *Auftragstaktik*, as opposed to *Befehlstaktik* (where more detailed orders are given). In the Schlieffen Plan, there were never precise dates and times; you were told to be at such-and-such a point by such-and-such a date. The commander gives the general goal; *how* you achieve it, is your responsibility, as an officer. It's a question for your own creativity.

Scharnhorst was born in 1755 and died in 1813; Gneisenau was born in 1760 and died in 1831. They played an enormous role, after the defeat of Prussia by Napoleon in 1806. Afterwards, there were military reforms in Prussia, organizing an army that was based in part on many ideas of the American revolutionary army. Gneisenau, in 1781-82, was in North America (not on the American side, however; he belonged to the auxiliary troops that the British hired or organized), and he saw this irregular warfare, people's warfare, in America, and drew many lessons from it. Gneisenau based himself on the Classical tradition of Friedrich Schiller, and many aspects of the American Revolution. This was shown by Nettelbeck, in Kolberg, a village in Prussia that was besieged by the French; there, Gneisenau created an alliance between the army and the citizens, to defend Kolberg—a republican military concept. Gneisenau was the first to use the media to create a mass-based understanding of why the state should be defended.

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau carried out a reform of the army, specifying that not only aristocrats should be allowed to be officers. They demanded a minimum education in geometry, mathematics, and history. The aristocrats in Prussia went to the King and complained, "Gneisenau is obviously against us, because he knows very well that we don't know anything about geometry and mathematics. It's anti-aristocratic to demand education!"

### **An American example: MacArthur**

There exists, of course, a very good American reference point for this concept of *Auftragstaktik*: Gen. Douglas MacArthur. He was the best representative of the American system of war, and *Auftragstaktik*, who has existed, to my mind, in the 20th century. He was even superior to the German generals, I must admit! On the other side, you had Nimitz and Leahy, with their island hopping: a frontal attack against the Japanese. Why? Nimitz thought about a flank: "We won't do what the Japanese expect. The Japanese are occupying the islands, so we'll make a frontal attack." But that was what the Japanese wanted! It started with Midway, Coral Sea, up to the Philippines, Guadalcanal, all this way. MacArthur said: No, we won't do this. We don't want to lose a lot of soldiers; we don't want to destroy everything; we'll make a flanking operation. We'll go around New Guinea, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and then attack central Japan. We'll leave the Japanese island fortresses alone. We won't do the island hopping.

You can see the big difference, when MacArthur was later the commander in occupied Japan: His policy was to make, out of the former enemy, a future ally. That's a very important thing. As LaRouche once said, if you have the enemy on the ground, don't kick him. Don't be brutal, don't be cruel; build these people up. Otherwise, you will create afterwards a new disaster. You can see this after World War I, at Versailles, when the French and the British (especially the French, Clemenceau) did everything they could to demolish Germany. Germany had to sign Paragraph 231, in which it was written that Germany was guilty for *everything*, for the whole First World War. Even General Foch said that that was not a peace treaty, but an armistice for the next 20 years.

MacArthur was far superior to people like Patton, Eisenhower, and the British, like Montgomery. That is why MacArthur was thrown out. He represented the real tradition of flanking, of *Auftragstaktik*.

### **The case of Lazare Carnot**

To get a deeper understanding of the theory of the flank, you have to look at Lazare Carnot, one of the greatest military-industrial geniuses who ever lived. What is so special about Carnot? He had been an officer in the royal French Army, and after the French Revolution, he started to play a big role, with the National Guard. In 1792, France was attacked by the so-called Allies—all the European kingdoms. France reacted with the *levée en masse*, but this was not really the important thing that Carnot did. The *levée en masse* was a mass mobilization, like a people's war: Everybody gets some kind of weapon, and attacks. It's total war, like in Germany, *Volksturm*. It doesn't work, of course; it's the "Chinese model," a "people's liberation army." What Carnot did that was important, was to make a real breakthrough in technology. He transformed Paris into an industrial and manufacturing center, for the most modern weapons, and for the most modern tactics. He introduced a new kind of republican officer; he gave this *levée en masse* a structure. He created a very well-trained army, on the highest technological level. To do this, he had only a half-year's time, because in the middle of 1793, he was already thrown out again! He had only half a year, and it worked.

After 1795, in the Directorate, Carnot, with General Hoche, made a plan to crush England. They tried several times to invade Ireland, to free Ireland, and then to attack Great Britain from Ireland. This was the opposite of the so-called Napoleonic Plan, of occupying England; it was a serious plan, and it was tried very seriously. General Hoche, who died in Germany in 1798, at the age of 29, was a military genius, as was Carnot. When Carnot decided to attack England, all his colleagues in the Directorate were against him. He understood very well that the real problem was England, and he wanted to free Ireland, and get rid of the British Empire. Carnot was, of course, stopped by Napoleon. But in 1814, he was made



commander of Liège, which was the only French fortress that never surrendered. Then, Carnot had to flee from France, and he died in 1823, in Magdeburg, Germany.

### Weaknesses of the Schlieffen Plan

Now, I come to the weak points of the Schlieffen Plan. This is important to understand the superiority of Carnot, and of LaRouche.

The problems of the plan, are the following:

1. Lack of use of the very strong German Navy. The German Navy, after 1905, was the second-strongest in the world. But Schlieffen didn't have a plan to use the German Navy against England, to block a landing by the British in France.

2. Carnot understood the question of military technology fully—in fact, he started from that. But Schlieffen, although of course he was not a Greenie, didn't see the real importance of it. He made a campaign for heavy artillery, and to make smaller units that are more maneuverable—not army corps, but divisions. But if you compare what he did, to what Carnot did, it was not enough. Consider how LaRouche would think, as a military commander: He would not just use the questions of military flanks, but would also use another dimension, the technological flank. That is Schlieffen's weak point, and the weakness of the German military after 1890, after Kaiser Wilhelm II got into power—the best-loved grandchild of Queen Victoria.

Even the older Moltke understood very well the need for the railway system. For example, there was a war between France and Germany in 1870-71, and Moltke insisted on the buildup of the railway system, to use it for the rapid movement of troops, to outflank the enemy.

Also, Carnot was a political person, which Schlieffen was not. Carnot was a devoted republican, and tried to build up a republican army—not a chauvinistic French army. And he supported Hoche, the most brilliant French general who ever existed, and who was Napoleon's big enemy. When Hoche died in 1798, Napoleon immediately called off the plan for invading England; he then tried this Egyptian operation (which is itself interesting, since it was somewhat based on ideas that Leibniz had in 1676, to outflank the Ottoman Empire and the British).

### A lesson from American history

In conclusion, I would like to say something positive about the United States, because it's very important in this context. Look at the American Civil War: Some of the generals were not bad; but it was really *industry* that won the war: the north American steel industry, the shipyards. It was they who won the war against the South and against the British Empire. It was an alliance, especially among immigrants—the German, Irish, Jewish, Italian immigrants—in America, which brought Lincoln into power, and was the heart of industry in the North. It was the little industrial worker who won the war against the British! Because the British, until 1863,

had a plan to attack the United States, in support of the Confederacy. But the Americans, in 1862-63, started an enormous buildup of the Navy; it was a defensive buildup—it could never have allowed for the occupation of Great Britain. It was not that strong, don't overestimate it. But they drew up a plan to destroy the British shipping routes and defend the American coast. And this program was huge: the *Monitor* program, the frigate program, the cruiser program. These were based on industry, and it was this, along with the U.S. alliance with the Russians, that deterred the British from intervening against the North. This is a very interesting example of flanking. And I have the greatest admiration for what the Americans did there.

## Schlieffen's view of the Battle of Cannae

*The following is the first chapter ("The Battle of Cannae") of General Fieldmarshal Count Alfred von Schlieffen's Cannae,<sup>1</sup> English translation published by the Command and General Staff Schoolpress, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1931.*

The army of Hannibal, fronting west, stood on 2 August, 216 B.C., in the Apulian plain to the left of Aufidus (Ofanto) in the vicinity of the village Cannae,<sup>2</sup> situated near the mouth of the river, and opposite the troops of Consul Terentius Varro. The latter, to whom had been transferred by the other Consul Aemilius Paulus the daily alternating commandship, had

55,000 heavily armed men,  
8,000 lightly armed men,  
6,000 mounted men,

on hand and, in the two fortified camps,

2,600 heavily armed men,  
7,400 lightly armed men.

10,000 men

at his further disposition, so that the total strength of the Roman army amounted to 79,000 men.

Hannibal had at his disposition only

1. First published in the VI and X annual volumes of the *Vierteljahrshifte für Truppenführung und Heereskunde* (1907-1913), E.S. Mittler and Son, Berlin.

2. Hans Delbrück, "Geschichte der Kriegskunst" ("History of the Art of War"), I.