

EDITORIAL

April 1997

THE HANNIBAL PRINCIPLE Superior Strategy Can Defeat the British

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

Mr. LaRouche addressed an audience of some 40 exiled leaders from Africa's Great Lakes Region at a conference in Walluf, Germany on April 26-27, 1997. See EIR, May 23, 1997 for the report, and the full presentations from that [conference](#). During the discussion period, Mr. LaRouche presented "The Hannibal Principle," explaining how a small force, of superior intellectual and moral qualities, can defeat an enemy which is stronger in sheer military power. Subheads have been added to the edited transcript which follows.

The point to be made is elementary and crucial.

Outside Arbela, on the plains of Gaugamela, a relatively small force, commanded by Alexander the Great,

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in *EIR*, Vol. 24, No. 24, June 6, 1997, pp. 27-29.

advised by his friends and counselors from the deceased Plato's School of Athens, destroyed the Persian forces and the Persian Empire, destroyed the power of Babylon, essentially forever, as an empire. A student of this event, Hannibal, was outside Rome, faced by superior Roman forces. In his forces—which included a lot of what are called auxiliaries, which are about the fighting quality of diplomats—he had a Carthaginian infantry, heavy infantry, which was capable; he had a Carthaginian cavalry, which was capable; he had a secondary cavalry, which was not perfect but was capable; and, a number of auxiliaries.

But, he was near the lake. He was outnumbered, and we say, for the weapons of the time, outgunned by the Roman forces. Under these conditions, he placed his heavy infantry in the front lines to hold the assault of the Roman forces. And he launched a double envelop-



National Archaeological Museum, Naples

A Roman mosaic depicting Alexander the Great defeating the Persian king Darius III on the plains of Gaugamela in 333 B.C.

ing attack by cavalry forces, including his heavy cavalry and light cavalry, against the flanks of the Roman forces. The light cavalry served as a diversionary force, while the heavy cavalry did the job. The Roman forces, which were too closely packed together, stumbled over each other's feet, and the entire Roman force was slaughtered, eliminated, annihilated.

We have similar cases of that. There was a case in the Civil War in the United States, in which General Grant acted in the place of the Carthaginian infantry, marching down to Virginia, and General Sherman marched through, with flanking operations, a vastly superior Confederate force—destroyed Atlanta, and came up on the rear of the Confederate forces, with the result of the defeat of the Confederacy. One of the most brilliant operations in history.

During the course of the time that the British were planning World War I, that is, under the Prince of Wales who later became King Edward VII, because of their objection to the Land-Bridge program at that time, as had been proposed by the Americans, Henry Carey and so forth, the British organized war. They secured France in 1898 as an ally in the Entente Bestiale, sometimes known as the Entente Cordiale, and they suckered Russia, which had been an ally or friend of Germany and the United States, along with Belgium, as partners in an East-West assault on Germany, which was planned over years.

In response to this, the German General Staff, under Graf Alfred von Schlieffen, devised a plan, called the Schlieffen Plan, which was, again, to hold a position in what was then Alsace-Lorraine, which is the heavy infantry position, and engage in a massive enveloping attack on the northern flank of the British and French forces.

Had the attack been carried out as specified by von Schlieffen, within a matter of several weeks of the war, the British Expeditionary Force would have been annihilated, and the French would have been defeated, and the Russians would have gone home. Because the railroad system of Germany would have carried the troops from the Western front—certain skills have been learned, military skills have been—to the Eastern Front, and the Russians would have said, "Peace, no war in Europe."

During World War II, General MacArthur, with very limited forces, launched, from a vulnerable place in Australia, a counteroffensive against the Japanese Empire, in which he was supported by President Roos-

velt, but with limited means, and supported by one section of the Navy, though the other section of the Navy opposed him.

And, there were two American wars fought in the Pacific. There was General MacArthur's war, which was to bypass as many Japanese forces as possible, with heavy battles in the Solomon Islands and in New Guinea, particularly where the Australians were playing a key role. But then, bypassing the Japanese islands, leaving them isolated, useless for military purposes. And, by the time that MacArthur had reached a position outside the main islands of Japan, Japan was defeated.

There was another war, which was run by some of MacArthur's political adversaries in the U.S. Navy, which used Marines who died on islands totally unnecessarily, in battles which should never have been engaged, let alone fought. They were unnecessary battles. And then, to cap it off, at the end, after the Japanese had been defeated, stupid President Truman, an evil little man, dropped two unnecessary atomic bombs on a Japan which had already been defeated, and then claimed he'd saved a million lives. Typical of that type of politician. You may have met one or two in your life.

The Flanking Principle in General

Now, the principle I wish to emphasize, is not military principle, but a principle of conflict, which is applicable to our situation in a general way, applicable to the global situation, not only to the situation of Africa.

What is engaged in the flanking principle? What is engaged in the art of warfare of the MacArthurs, the Shermans, the von Schlieffens, or the case of Alexander the Great? What's the principle?

It's to accomplish something with the greatest economy of force, with the greatest economy of effort, with the least bloodshed, in the most decisive way, in the shortest possible time. Not to annihilate the enemy, not to kill, but to destroy the adversary's ability to continue organized warfare, which is called victory. That is, you annihilate the capability of the enemy to continue war, with the least possible killing.

What is really engaged, is this. For those of you who have had some military experience, particularly in training and watching how training works: The essential part of military training is entirely in the mind. You might say it's to train the soldiers not to step over each other's feet as they march. It's a matter of learning to work together. And, the point where the training is suc-

cessful, is not only when certain skills have been learned, but when each member of the unit has a greatly increased confidence in their individual ability, because they now know they are part of a cooperating unit, which has certain collective skills.

And you'll see a difference between the morale of the soldiers sometimes before they're demobilized, as against after they're demobilized. A demobilized soldier will generally be a much more fearful person, a less courageous person, than a soldier just before demobilization.

How, the commander has these troops to deal with. Now, presuming the case that the troops were equally trained and equally well-equipped, then the decisive thing, would be the mind of the commander, the ability of the commander to conduct a flanking operation, and to execute it in a way which Clausewitz in his posthumously published memoirs describes as *Entschlossenheit*. The quality of decision.

The Essence of Warfare

What I want to focus on, is that quality of decision, with one qualification first. That what I've described, is that the essence of warfare is not killing. The essence of warfare lies in the nature of man. Some people kill as beasts, and they call themselves soldiers. They're not soldiers. They're a disgrace to humanity, a disgrace to the profession.

Man is a creature of ideas. Human conflict must be ultimately resolved in the mind, in the powers of the mind to understand the cause of the problem—the same way man masters nature, increases man's power in the universe

The great military commander of the type that does the great flanking operation, such as Alexander the Great, or Hannibal, or Sherman, or designed by von Schlieffen, or MacArthur in World War II, actually has a superior mind to his opponent. And that's the secret of the great commander, all other things being equal.

It's the same thing in all politics. We say, "We have a great enemy. Yes, the British Empire. The British Empire controls this, the British Empire controls that." *Like the Persian host before Alexander*. A great power—"Oh, you can't fight them! They will always win. You will see: the IMF will remain eternally powerful. The World Bank—oh, it's awesome! The British Empire: terrible, frightening, you mustn't fight it."

Well, these observations are not the observations of

a useful commander in warfare, saying, you know, "Let's surrender now. The enemy's frightening."

Well, yes, the enemy is powerful. What's the enemy's strength? The enemy's strength is largely his control of his troops. Number one, the morale of his troops. The morale of his troops depends upon the troops' confidence in the monetary and financial system, and the political strength of populations, and commitment of populations to support the governments which support these policies.

Therefore, use the military analogy to say how would you command a fight to destroy the British Empire and its allies? You would think like a commander in warfare: Define the position, the moment, and the place and the time, that the enemy's strength has been converted into his weakness, like the Roman soldiers at Cannae, too closely packed together; where their great strength was converted into their weakness, and exploited.

What's the enemy's great weakness? The collapse and weakening of his financial and monetary system when the confidence of his supporting forces and auxiliaries in him is at a minimum. And that's the moment to strike.

Now, in the meantime, we're in a negotiating position. I'm not saying the situation of Africa is hopeless until that moment of decision comes. But I'm saying that the battle can not be decisively won, until that moment of decision comes, what the qualities are we must demand of potential leaders and the flanking attack is executed. There are other possibilities, in the meantime, to enhance the position. It's like a maneuvering for position. Yes, a certain maneuvering for position can be done.

The British Empire Can Be Defeated

But, what's the crucial issue here? The crucial issue—my problem—is, there is not a government on this planet today, which has the *Entschlossenheit* to make the decision needed to defeat the enemy, at the moment the enemy can be defeated. That's the problem. That's where the passion comes in.

The problem is, with a commander, that when a commander sees a flank, and he thinks about deploying his forces on a flank, and he thinks about deploying his forces on a flank, the commander is putting his entire command and its organized fighting capability at risk, in jeopardy. Therefore, he must judge the situation cor-

rectly; and once he has judged the situation correctly, he must act with absolute resolution, unflinchingly, and must make sure that all the troops in his command do the same. Otherwise, he loses the war.

I can guarantee you, that we are approaching a situation on this planet, where the enemy, the British Empire and all that it represents, can be administered a decisive defeat. The thing that makes that defeat of the enemy unlikely, is the fact that there's no commander of forces in the field who has the intellect and will to make the commitment of forces which *can* defeat the enemy, at the time the opportunity occurs.

And, our job, my concern, my great concern, is precisely that. I know how to defeat the enemy; but, I know the commanders in charge today, won't defeat him—can't. They lack the nerve. They lack the intellect. They don't believe in themselves. They're wishy-washy. "Oh, we've got to talk to more people, we don't have enough people on our side. We don't have enough troops. We don't have enough this."

You're not going to get any more troops; you're not going to get any more support. This is what you've got. You're going to fight the war to lose or win *now!* *You must act!* And act with decision, not like young Moltke in World War I, not vacillating while adjusting a little bit here, a little bit there, and so forth.

This is not a battle of blood, though there's a lot of blood spilled. This is a battle of nerve, political nerve, to decide to change the world monetary system into a just one. It can be done. We can win. But the principle is not the principle of blood and fists and stones and bullets, even though there are often blood and stones and bombs and lasers and bullets involved. The principle is a higher one, more in accord with the nature of man, as a creature of ideas.

That's the point on which we must concentrate, to understand this in that way. And we can win. And we can know what the qualities are we must demand of potential leaders in acting. Our problem is to take people who are in governments, who are potentially capable of commitment, who are in a position of power to act, and to cause them to come to the state of mind and certainty, that they will act. And that's the point.

It's much easier to be the President of the United States; then I could solve the problems of the world. I'm not. I don't have the power. Therefore, we have to find a way to cause the more positive elements in power in the world, to make the commitment intellectually and to find the passion to make the decision at the moment of opportunity. And, that's the lesson of Cannae.