

# IN THE WAR ROOM

Characters: Kaiser Wilhelm (or William) II of Germany  
Count Alfred Graf von Schlieffen, Chief of Staff



*The scene opens with Schlieffen and the Kaiser sitting at a table.*

- Kaiser: Count Schlieffen, do you see this map! If we end up going to war, we are going to see some big trouble!
- Count: Why do you say that Herr Kaiser?
- Kaiser: How are we supposed to fight the British and French to the west AND fight the Russians in the east at the same time? It cannot work; we would have to split our forces in half! How can we win on either front with only half our forces?
- Count: You give me too little credit, sir! I have a plan that will go down in history as the most brilliant military strategy ever!
- Kaiser: You do? Do tell, Count Schlieffen!
- Count: I think what you do not realize, sir, is that the Russians need at least six weeks to mobilize. Russia is a huge country with no decent rail lines, so it will take at least that long for them to get supplies and troops to the eastern front.
- Kaiser: Ahhh, I see. So we can take advantage of the fact that the Russians are not prepared to go to war?
- Count: Exactly. I am certain that in the six weeks it takes the Russians to prepare to fight, we can quickly defeat the French and get them out of the war.
- Kaiser: But how will we do that? France is expecting us to attack any day. They are terrified!
- Count: Yes, sir. But where do they expect us to attack?
- Kaiser: They would most certainly expect us to attack on their east, where our countries border one another. I suspect they are sending troops there as we speak.
- Count: Exactly. So as their armies wait at the French-German border, we can come at them from the French-Belgium border in a surprise attack.
- Kaiser: You mean we'll attack them by going through Belgium? But Belgium is not involved in any of our problems. They are a neutral country, and we agreed to respect that in the London Treaty of 1839!

Count: We did, but is it more important to take our enemy by surprise or honor a mere piece of paper? If we don't take this opportunity, we shall surely lose our advantage!

Kaiser: I suppose you're right. But what about the Brits?

Count: The Brits are not ready for war right now either. All they care about is protecting their precious trade and colonies. They are not a fighting force; they will have to become one, which will take time.

Kaiser: I think I see where you're going with this. By the time the Brits mobilize, the French will be out of the way, and we can focus on them next?

Count: Yes and no. I think once we take France out of the war, the Brits and Russians will have no will to fight. Their alliance will crumble and we will be the most powerful nation in Europe.

Kaiser: And what if you're wrong?

Count: If worse comes to worse and the Russians do insist on fighting, we'll be ready. My plan is that it will only take 42 days for France to surrender. Then, on to the east! We'll have Paris for lunch and St. Petersburg for dinner!

Kaiser: That sounds brilliant, but I'm still worried about the Brits. What if they should try to defend France?

Count: Sir, the Brits are so concerned with their own affairs, they won't even see this coming. By the time they do, it will be over for the French. With them out of the way, the Brits will be easily defeated.

Kaiser: Brilliant indeed! What could possibly go wrong?

<u>STRENGTHS of Schlieffen's Plan</u>	<u>WEAKNESSES of Schlieffen's Plan</u>

# BABES ON BAYONETS

After the German army passed through Belgium in 1914, this drawing appeared in Life magazine:



1. Who do the figures in the drawing represent?
2. Why are the smaller figures on the bayonet?
3. What do you think was the cartoonist's purpose for drawing the cartoon? What does the artist want you to feel?

As it turns out, the biggest weakness of the Schlieffen Plan was that it underestimated how angry the British and Russians would be about Germany invading a neutral country. On the same day that Germany attacked Belgium, Great Britain declared war on Germany. The Russians, much to Germany's surprise, were able to mobilize much quicker than the six-week estimate.

4. Explain how and why the Schlieffen Plan backfired.