

The Schlieffen Plan

KS3 History-Lesson 2 of 6

Enquiry: Did the Assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand lead to the outbreak of WWI?

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What was the Schlieffen Plan?

The Schlieffen Plan was created in 1905 by German General Schlieffen. It was a military plan which gave instructions to Germany's army on what steps to take in war. **The Schlieffen Plan** suggested invading France first as it had a smaller army but would be quick to **mobilise** and then turning back to fight Russia, who had a larger army but would be slower to mobilise.



Why was The Schlieffen Plan created?

Germany's greatest fear was a war on **two fronts**. Germany did not want to fight France and Russia at the same time. This possibility was likely since France and Russia were allies. A war on two fronts would mean Germany would have to split its army, making it weaker. **The Schlieffen Plan** was created to avoid this. **The Schlieffen Plan** proposed invading France first and defeating her quickly. This victory would then allow the German army to turn back to their eastern border and attack Russia.



How did the Schlieffen Plan make a war more likely?

The Schlieffen Plan relied on Germany attacking first and without warning. In order to surprise France, **the Schlieffen Plan** also required the German army to travel through Belgium. Belgium was not part of the alliance system, but was **guaranteed** by Britain to protect its **neutrality**. In this way **The Schlieffen Plan** could bring Britain into the war, if she chose to intervene (get involved). **The Schlieffen Plan** relied upon attacking France, Belgium and Russia. It risked a war with Britain too.



How did the Schlieffen Plan accelerate the July Crisis into war?

Germany hoped to knock out France before facing Russia and so put **The Schlieffen Plan** into action at the start of August 1914. The invasion of France through Belgium dragged Britain into the war. Now all the major European powers were at war.



Glossary

The Schlieffen Plan: The German military plan to attack France and then Russia.

Mobilise: To prepare an army for war, for example by moving soldiers from their barracks to the front line.

Guarantee: To support or make sure of.

Neutrality: When an individual or nation does not take a side and remains independent or outside of a conflict.

Fronts: Areas of fighting within a conflict, e.g The Western Front.

Encircled: When you are surrounded, usually by enemies.



Comprehension Questions

1. What name was given to the German army's plan of attack?
2. What is meant by the term 'mobilisation' in a military context?
3. Which European nation did the German army need to pass through, to avoid French defences?
4. How did the Schlieffen plan accelerate the start of WWI?
5. Why did the Schlieffen plan make the outbreak of war more likely even before July 1914?

Sentence starter: One way in which the Schlieffen plan made war more likely was...



Return to the Enquiry

1. Explain why the German army formed the Schlieffen plan to begin with, what military situation were they trying to avoid?

Sentence starters:	Key words
<i>Germany was encircled by France and Russia...</i>	-Fronts
	-Encircled
<i>Russia would take longer to mobilise than France...</i>	-Mobilise

