

# DRIVE MAY BE ON THE MARNE

Idea Gains Ground That That  
Front May be Chosen by  
Germans

## REASON FOR CHOICE

Hindenburg Realizes That He  
Must Attack in Immediate  
Future

(By WALTER DURANTY.)

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With the French Armies, July 9.  
—The idea that the German attack  
may come on the Marne front seems  
to be gaining ground. A French  
officer with whom I talked to-day  
advanced it spontaneously as the ex-  
planation of the delay—otherwise  
inexplicable in view of the fact that  
time is so precious for Germany—  
in the coming offensive. He said:  
"I thought it possible the 'Spanish  
grippe' had affected the exhausted  
troops holding the firing line under  
difficult conditions. I cannot, how-  
ever, believe it has caused such  
serious ravages among the well-fed,  
healthy men of the storm divisions  
as to interfere definitely with Hin-  
denburg's plans. Surely it is more  
reasonable to suppose that the en-  
emy is still busy preparing the  
ground gained in the recent advance  
—between the Aisne and the Marne  
for instance—where light railroads  
must be constructed, telephone wires  
installed, roads improved, and a  
vast quantity of stores and muni-  
tions massed. By working at night-  
fall or under cover of the woods,  
which are very dense in the whole  
region, the enemy might hope to  
avoid allied air observation and  
launch a surprise blow in a sector  
apparently calm."

### More Difficult For Allies.

A study of the map justified the  
officer's words and helps to streng-  
then his theory. Not only is the  
country north of the Marne partic-  
ularly well screened from observa-  
tion, but it is clear that the trans-  
portation thither of allied reserves  
would be less easy than to such  
fronts as Arras-Amiens or Com-  
piègne-Château Thierry. Besides,  
despite the talk about the grippe  
and the Germans having to wait for  
the return of their March wounded  
to refill the ranks, the fact still re-  
mains that the enemy possesses a  
strategic superiority of effectives.

Unpleasant facts do not cease to  
exist because one refuses to face  
them. Hindenburg still has enough  
divisions available to strike out on  
the central battle area that runs  
from the sea to the Marne, while  
maintaining there a sufficient force  
to render it unwise for the allies to  
move away troops. He might decide  
that an extension of the battlefront  
would not, therefore, be to his dis-  
advantage, and the line of the Marne  
is the sector where, initially, a suc-  
cessful extension might profit him  
most.

### Must Attack Soon.

True, he knows that every mo-  
ment improves the tactical fighting  
qualities of the American army, and  
therefore he must attack very soon;  
but at the present moment the num-  
ber of American divisions capable of  
taking part in the battle to-day—  
where the utmost technical skill is  
required of everybody, from Com-  
mander to private, where physical  
superiority counts for little, since  
real hand-to-hand fighting is noth-  
ing more than an occasional rare in-  
cident—is not yet great enough to  
redress the total balance in the al-  
lied favor.

For us Americans to imagine that  
because a million of our men are  
in France the allies have no further  
cause for anxiety is to court a grave  
disillusion in the near future. That  
Foch is competent to handle the sit-  
uation, or that the French, Ameri-  
can and British forces at his dis-  
posal are sufficient to repel the men-  
ace, no one in the French army  
doubts; but it would be worse than  
foolish to indulge in an unthinking  
optimism, whose inevitable reaction  
would be depression and doubt in  
the leaders, at the very moment  
when Germany is on the verge of her  
final gigantic effort, beside which all  
previous struggles of this tremend-  
ous war may pale into insignificance.