

Chapter VIII: *Surprise*

Surprise is a master key to victory.

SURPRISE is usually decisive; therefore, much may be sacrificed to achieve it. It should be striven for by all units, regardless of size, and in all engagements, regardless of importance. When the squad opens fire it should do so suddenly and simultaneously. When an army attacks it should strike from an unexpected direction, at an unexpected time, with unexpected violence.

When the enemy confidently expects a certain course of action his dispositions are made with the view of meeting that action. If, however, an unexpected plan be adopted the hostile dispositions and arrangements must be hastily improvised, and are therefore less effective. Concealment of the point of attack permits the offense to mass superior forces against a critical point before its action can be countered by a hostile concentration. Similarly, concealment of the time of attack prevents the defense from initiating appropriate counter-measures and, at the same time, adds tremendously to that moral effect which is the soul of offensive action.

Surprises gained by large forces in the World War are well known. For example, on July 18, 1918, the French and Americans surprised the Germans. On May 27, 1918, the Germans won an easy victory by surprising the French on the Chemin des Dames. The British and French surprised the Germans on August 8, 1918—"the black day of the German Army."

In all these cases the precautions taken to insure secrecy were extreme and so were many of the chances. On the 8th of August, for instance, all the infantry of the French 42d Division formed for an attack in a block some 400 yards deep by 1,200 yards wide. If the Germans had suspected this, few of their shells would have

missed. The formation was not discovered, however, and at the prescribed hour of attack the French infantry moved forward in mass. It completely escaped the enemy's counter-preparations and barrages, smashed through his lines, advanced miles into his territory, and captured 2,500 prisoners. True, this division took a chance, but it got away with it and made one of the most successful French attacks of the war.

The French spring offensive of 1917 failed chiefly because it lacked surprise. Many earlier Allied offensives failed for the same reason; they had been too well advertised by days of artillery preparation.

Surprise is by no means a monopoly of the larger units. It applies to the squad as well as the army, and for both it is almost invariably decisive. Indeed, it is not too much to say that without surprise of some kind an operation will fail, or at best achieve but a limited success.

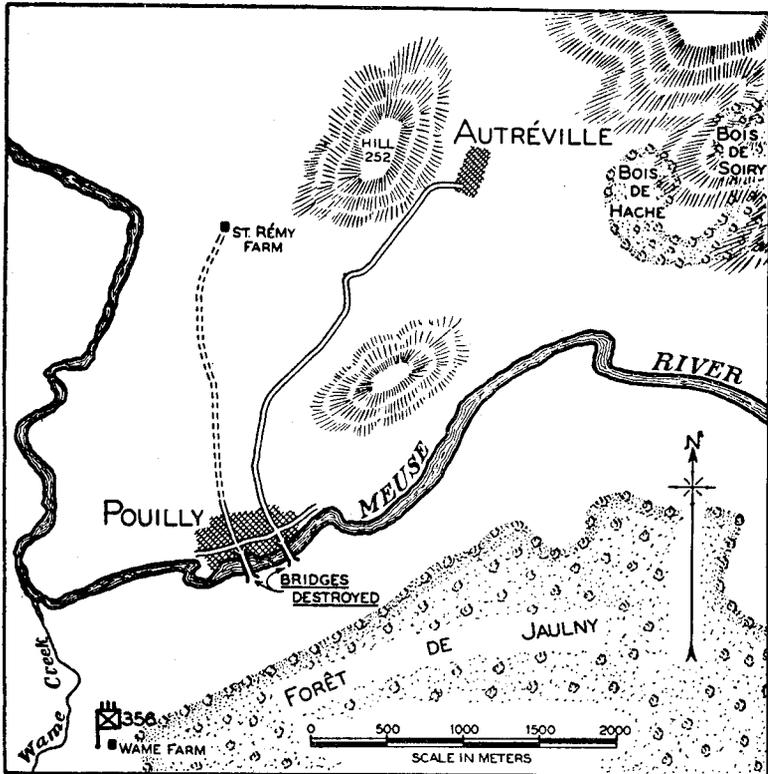
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EXAMPLE 1. On November 7, 1918, the U. S. 356th Infantry reached the Meuse River, whose far bank was held in strength by the Germans. Colonel R. H. Allen, the regimental commander, had orders to prepare a plan for effecting the crossing.

Colonel Allen, in consultation with engineers, selected a point for crossing. His plan was based primarily on surprise. Six captured German pontoons (borrowed without leave from the 2d Division) were to be used. The crossing was to be made at night just west of the mouth of Wame Creek. A covering detachment of twenty-five men would go over first and fan out across the neck of the river bend to stop hostile patrols.

Immediately after this the 1st Battalion would cross and push forward in silence, with rifles unloaded. They would pass to the north of Pouilly, cut the wire lines leading to the town, and then seize the heights east of it. Later this battalion would continue to the high ground on the edge of the Bois de Soiry.

The 3d Battalion would follow the 1st, pass around Pouilly and move to the Bois de Hache. As it passed Pouilly it would drop off one company to overcome organized resistance in the town.



Example 1

The artillery prepared concentrations on a time schedule carefully calculated to keep ahead of the infantry. Fire would be opened only on receipt of orders or on rocket signal from the regimental C.P. at Wame Farm. If fire had not been opened by the time the 1st Battalion reached the Pouilly—St. Rémy Farm Road, the artillery would open up on signal from this battalion.

Similar arrangements were made for machine-gun support—the machine guns to remain silent until the artillery opened.

A demonstration was planned at Pouilly. The river was shallow here and the enemy obviously expected an attack, for a previous attempt had been made to build rafts near this town and effect a crossing. The Germans had noted the preparations and had heard pounding. At the slightest movement in this vicinity they opened fire. Full advantage was taken of this. Lumber for rafts was piled near the Forêt de Jaulny and imperfectly camouflaged. Each night men were detailed to hammer on boards in a quarry near Pouilly.

For the main crossing, boats were to be lashed together in threes thus making two rafts of the six pontoons. These rafts were to be pulled back and forth across the river by ropes manned by shore parties of the 314th Engineers. Hay and boards were placed in the metal boats to deaden the sound of hobnailed shoes. No commands were to be given. Absolute silence was to be enforced. Signals across the river were arranged by the engineers. A light telephone wire was attached to each end of the rafts. A vigorous jerk on the wire was the signal for the raft to be pulled across. The pontoons were to be hauled to Wame Creek and floated down to the Meuse.

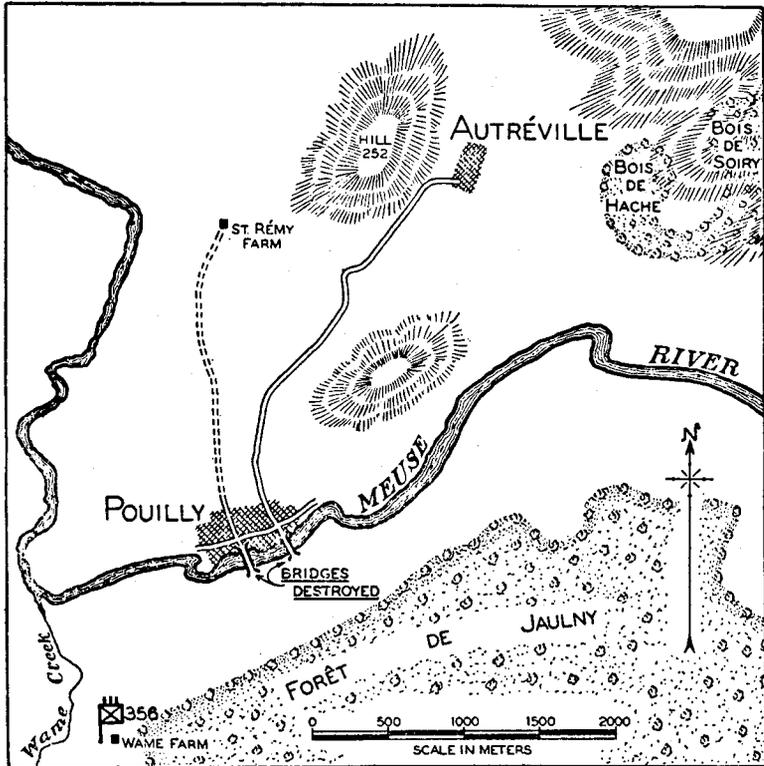
Battalion and company commanders were given the detailed plan on November 9, but no one else was told of the scheme until shortly before its execution.

Certain changes were ordered by the division but, as a result of protest by Colonel Allen, these were reduced to a minimum. For instance, the division ordered an artillery preparation but the regimental commander felt that this would eliminate the element of surprise. He protested and the original plan for artillery support was allowed to stand.

The crossing was ordered to be carried out on the night of the 10th. The demonstration staged at Pouilly succeeded beyond expectation. Practically all of the hostile artillery in the vicinity

placed its fire on this area and kept it there during the entire operation.

At the real crossing, the first troops were ferried over at about



Example 1

8:20 p.m. Soon after this some German artillery came down nearby, whereupon Colonel Allen ordered the signal rocket fired and the American artillery and machine guns opened. In a few minutes the enemy shifted his artillery fire to the Pouilly area and from that time on not another shell fell near the ferry.

The crossing continued, generally according to plan, and was

entirely successful. Many prisoners were taken in Pouilly and Autréville. At the last place an entire machine-gun company was captured as it was falling in to move on Pouilly.

The 1st Battalion, moving through darkness and fog, advanced to its objective by compass bearing. This battalion and the 3d, which followed it, suffered few casualties. The enemy was taken completely by surprise.

The experience of the 2d Battalion of this regiment was different. It had been ordered to move to a foot-bridge where the 2d Division was crossing. It reached the designated bridge at 9:00 p.m., but had to wait until 1:00 a.m. before it could cross. The enemy discovered the movement. His artillery came down with deadly accuracy on the crossing and on the 2d Battalion. Most of the officers of this battalion, including the battalion commander, were killed or wounded, and 232 men out of the 600 who began the operation shared the same fate.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Arthur S. Champeny.

DISCUSSION. Colonel Allen's plan was based on surprise, and surprise succeeded as it almost always does.

The Germans expected a crossing at Pouilly and the regimental commander took great pains to encourage them in that belief. For several days he fostered this idea. The building of rafts nearby, the imperfect camouflage of lumber, the previous threat of a crossing, the nightly pounding on boards near Pouilly, all confirmed the Germans in their belief. Further, since secrecy was the basis of the operation, the colonel strongly opposed the division's desire for an artillery preparation prior to the crossing. His views prevailed.

The sum total of all these precautions resulted in the 1st and 3d Battalions attacking in an unexpected manner from an unexpected place. The Germans were not even sure that a crossing had been made. That the surprise was complete is clearly shown by the fact that practically no artillery fire fell at the point of the

actual crossing, whereas the Pouilly area was pounded unmercifully during the entire operation.

The disastrous effect of the lack of surprise upon casualty lists is forcefully illustrated by the experience of the 2d Battalion, which lost nearly one-half its men in crossing the same stream.

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EXAMPLE 2. Late on July 17, 1918, the 1st Battalion of the U. S. 39th Infantry made a trying march to the front. By the time the battalion reached the front line, which ran along the Faverolles—Troësnes Road, the men were tired out.

Late that night an attack order came in. The regiment had been ordered to take the Boisson de Cresnes and the colonel had decided to do this by attacking with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, the 1st on the left. The 1st Battalion staff hastily examined maps. Diagonally across the battalion front flowed the Savières. Beyond the stream rose the densely wooded ridge of the Boisson de Cresnes, which was believed to be strongly held by the enemy.

The 1st Battalion did not make any reconnaissance of the ground to the front. On the map the Savières appeared too insignificant to occasion any difficulty in crossing. The battalion attack order was issued, therefore, without reconnaissance. Companies A and B were placed in assault, and C and D in support. Company C of the 11th Machine-Gun Battalion was directed to follow the right support company. The Faverolles—Troësnes Road was designated as the line of departure.

The American attack was scheduled to jump off at 5:30 a.m., while the French, in adjacent zones, were to attack at 4:30 a.m., an hour earlier. The idea was to pinch out the formidable Boisson de Cresnes by a simultaneous advance on each side of it. The Americans would then drive forward and mop up the wood.

At 4:30 a.m. the French attacked. Coincident with this, Ger-

man artillery and trench mortars placed heavy concentrations on the American front line. At 5:15 a.m. the 1st Battalion was informed that the American hour of attack had been postponed to 8:00 a.m.

At this hour the battalion moved forward. The German bombardment had ceased. Not a sound was heard as the men moved across the long, wheat-covered field that sloped down toward the Savières. Finally, the assault companies broke through a fringe of trees and scrambled down a bluff to the river.

Then it was discovered that the Savières, which had appeared so insignificant on the map, was swollen by heavy rains to twice its normal width and depth. The banks on each side had become deep and difficult swamps.

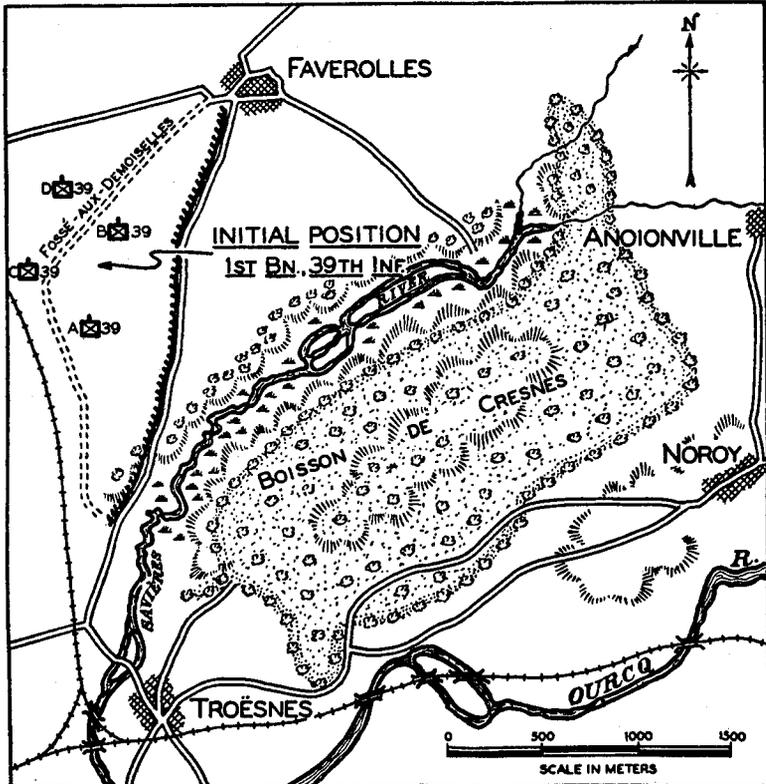
Companies A and B, continuing the advance, became intermingled and forthwith fell into the greatest confusion, not 200 yards from the hostile position. The floundering, the splashing, and the shouting made enough noise to alarm every German in the Marne salient, but strangely enough drew no fire.

Finally, a few patrols, armed with automatic rifles, succeeded in crossing the swollen stream. One of these killed or drove off the crew of an enemy machine gun that was just about to go into action. The noise of this sudden burst of fire spurred the other men to greater effort and the crossing was at last completed.

Once over, the battalion promptly reformed and pushed on into the Boisson de Cresnes. It advanced rapidly, meeting surprisingly little resistance. A captured German sergeant explained the lack of opposition by saying that the Germans had not expected anyone to be daring enough or foolhardy enough to attempt an attack over the flooded and swampy Savières in broad daylight. Therefore the Germans had massed their machine guns and organized the terrain on the northern and southern approaches to the woods where the ground was firm and the cover suitable for an attack.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Walter B. Smith, who was Scout Officer of the 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The Germans had made a painstaking, logical estimate of the situation. They had placed their strongest defense where an attack seemed most probable. Opposite the 1st



Example 2

Battalion of the 39th, where an attack appeared incredible, they had only a handful of troops.

Thus, when the Americans blundered into the illogical solution, the Germans were caught completely off guard. After floundering through a marsh where a few well-placed machine guns could have stopped a regiment, the battalion captured a

strong position—a position so formidable that it was almost undefended.

This battalion was unquestionably lucky. The failure to reconnoiter and to ascertain the true condition of the Savières should, by all odds, have resulted in a bloody repulse. Instead, it resulted in a brilliant success. Why? Because the attacking troops, by stumbling into the unexpected and the improbable, achieved the decisive element of surprise.

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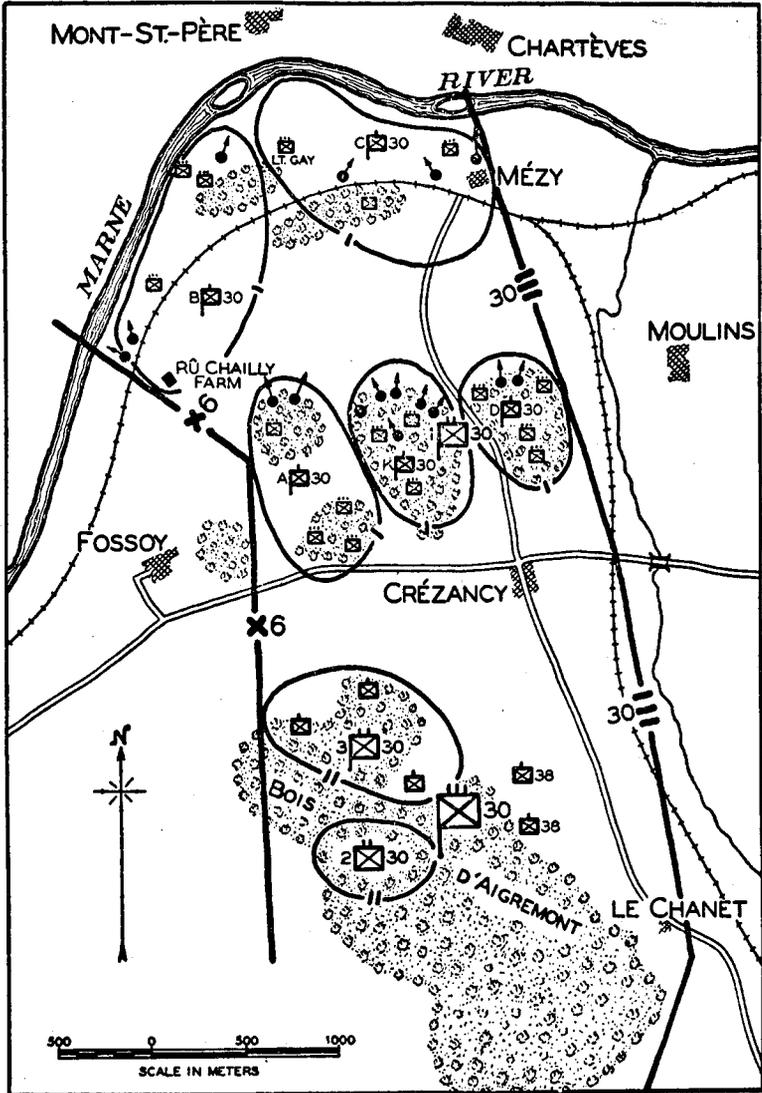
EXAMPLE 3. On July 14, 1918, the 4th Platoon of Company A, U. S. 30th Infantry, held a small wood northeast of Fossoy. Farther forward, scattered platoons of the 30th formed an outpost along the Marne.

About midnight July 14-15, the Germans north of the Marne opened a terrific artillery bombardment, but the 4th Platoon escaped without casualties. At dawn the bombardment ceased but rifle and machine-gun fire could still be heard. Fog and smoke obscured the view of the river. Men coming back from other organizations said that the Germans had crossed the Marne.

Some time later the platoon leader saw German infantry moving toward his position in an approach-march formation. They were near the railroad. The platoon leader did not open fire. The German infantrymen and machine gunners came on at a slow walk and as steadily as though on parade. An officer walked at their head swinging a walking stick.

The American platoon leader waited "until the Germans came as close as the British did at Bunker Hill, perhaps 30 yards." He then gave the order to fire, and the men opened up all along the line at point-blank range. To use his own words, "The automatic-rifle squads made their Chauchats rattle like machine guns."

The Germans fired only a few shots. Two Germans, who were trying to get a light machine gun into action, were very conspicuous. They were literally riddled with bullets. Nearly every man



Example 3

in the platoon claimed to have killed them. The enemy took what cover they could find and later withdrew to the Marne.

The American platoon leader stated that approximately forty Germans were killed (as determined by a count made later) and an undetermined number wounded.

From a statement by Lieutenant William C. Ryan, who commanded the 4th Platoon of Company A, 30th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. Surprise can be obtained in the defense as well as in the attack. The surprise effect was gained in this action by withholding fire until the enemy was within thirty yards of the position, then opening suddenly and simultaneously.

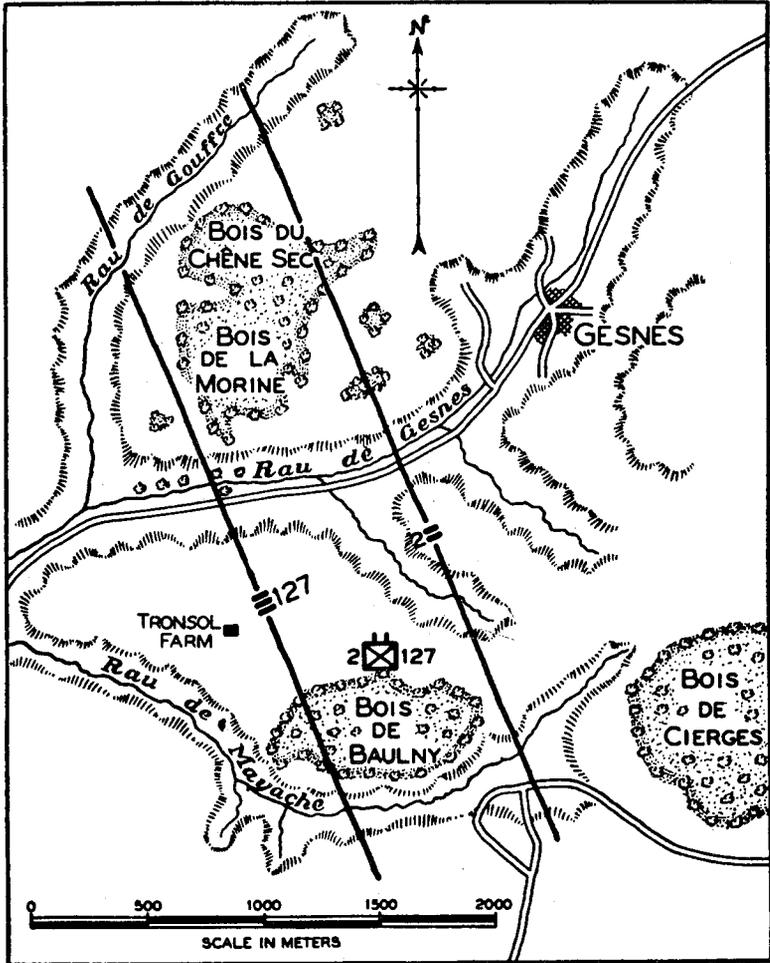
Had Lieutenant Ryan opened fire when he first saw the Germans he might have stopped them farther from his position, but he would undoubtedly have failed to crush the attack so decisively. The strength of the assaulting Germans cannot be stated definitely, but presumably they were a depleted battalion of the 398th Infantry.

Lieutenant Kurt Hesse, adjutant of the German 5th Grenadiers, tells of a similar experience in his description of the fighting along the Marne on this day. His unit, committed against troops of the U. S. 3d Division (apparently the 38th Infantry), was similarly surprised by fire at point-blank range. He says:

I have never seen so many dead. I have never seen such a frightful spectacle of war. On the other bank the Americans, in close combat, had destroyed two of our companies. Lying down in the wheat, they had allowed our troops to approach and then annihilated them at a range of 30 to 50 yards. "The Americans kill everyone," was the cry of fear on July 15—a cry that caused our men to tremble for a long time.

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EXAMPLE 4. The 2d Battalion of the U. S. 127th Infantry (32d Division) relieved other troops in the Bois de Baulny on the night of October 3-4, 1918. On the morning of the 4th it took part in a general attack as an assault battalion. Its first objective was the Bois de la Morine and the Bois du Chêne Sec.



Example 4

Although supported by artillery and machine guns, the attack soon broke down under heavy and accurate German machine-gun fire. Several attempts to resume the attack with the aid of further artillery preparation, got nowhere. The battalion suffered fairly heavy losses.

During the night, orders were received to resume the attack at 6:00 a.m. A heavy fog covered the ground the next morning when the battalion jumped off. When the attack reached the Gesnes stream it encountered machine-gun fire, but this was high and ineffective. The battalion reached a point 100 yards from the Bois de la Morine with only a few casualties. From this point it launched a frontal attack in combination with a flanking attack by two platoons from the east. This attack carried the position along the forward edge of the wood and the battalion pushed on to the north edge of the Bois du Chêne Sec, where it halted and reorganized. About 100 prisoners were taken.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Ralph W. Dusenbury, who commanded the 2d Battalion, 127th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. Here we see a battalion carry out a successful attack against a position it had failed to take the previous day. On October 5 it was much weaker numerically than on the 4th, and yet it succeeded without great difficulty. The fog made the difference. The Germans could not tell where or when the attack was coming. Thus the movement on the second day contained the element of surprise.

When enemy fire renders terrain impassable by day, that same terrain may frequently be negotiated under cover of darkness, fog, or some artificial screening agent. Leaders must, therefore, be prepared to take prompt advantage of unusual weather conditions that offer sudden and golden opportunities. Thus, may they achieve surprise.

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CONCLUSION. Though all leaders recognize the decisive effect of surprise, it does not follow that all leaders are able to

achieve it. Too often are routine methods adopted with the idea that surprise will result. Too often are schemes, that have gained surprise several times in the past, relied upon to gain that same surprise again. Frequently they end in failure. For instance, prior to July 15, 1918, the Germans made several successful attacks, gaining surprise each time. But on July 15 the same methods failed. This time the French adopted effective counter-measures against tactics that had become stereotyped. The German tactics were the same that had succeeded before, but they had now lost all the decisive qualities of the unexpected. Failure resulted.

The importance of varying methods cannot be overemphasized. Often the good, standard solution, particularly if it be the obvious one, will not be as effective as some other solution that has many apparent disadvantages, but has the transcending quality of the unexpected.

Tactical surprise is usually the reward of the daring, the imaginative, and the ingenious. It will rarely be gained by recourse to the obvious.

Chapter IX: *Decisions*

A leader must meet battle situations with timely and unequivocal decisions.

DECISIONS IN WAR are difficult. More often than not they must be made in obscure and uncertain situations. Frequently the time at which a decision should be made presents a greater problem than the decision itself.

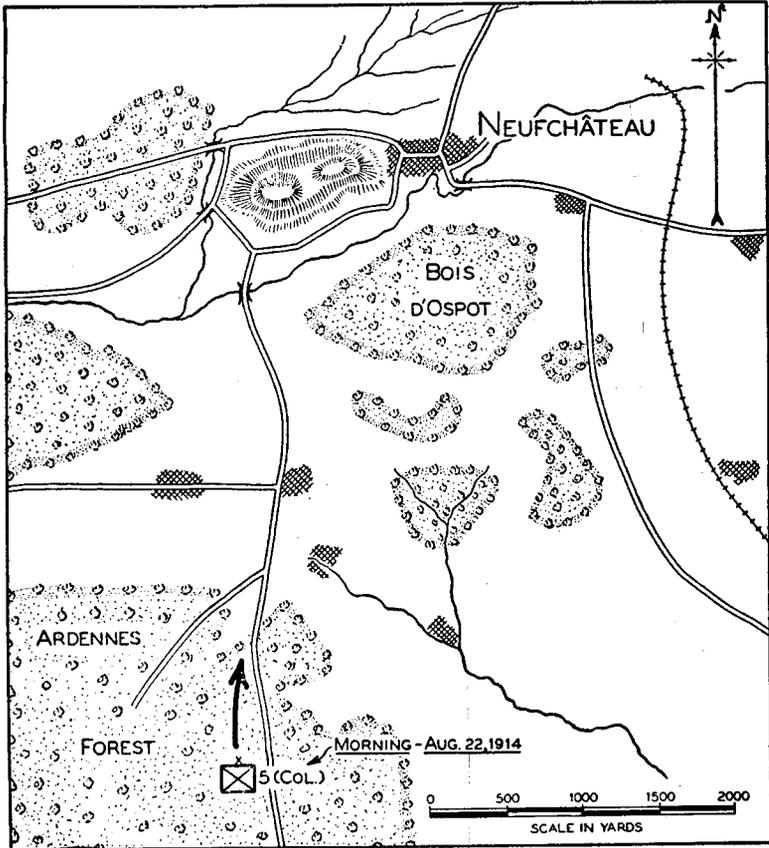
Solving map problems, particularly those which depict detailed and definite situations, is only slight preparation for the mental ordeals of war. The map problem has an important place in military instruction, but by itself it is inadequate. Academic knowledge and a stored-up accumulation of facts are not enough on the battlefield. The leader must know when to act as well as what to do in certain well-defined situations, but above all he must be willing to accept responsibility for positive action in blind situations. To develop these qualities to the full, map problems should be supplemented by exercises with troops in conditions more closely approximating those of actual combat.

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EXAMPLE 1. On the morning of August 22, 1914, the French 5th Colonial Brigade, with a battalion of field artillery attached, marched north through the Ardennes Forest with the destination of Neufchâteau. Other French columns marched north on both flanks. Although these columns were only a few miles apart, the heavy woods virtually precluded intercommunication.

The advance guard of the 5th Brigade consisted of a regiment of infantry, less one battalion. Orders directed that the enemy be attacked if met. Although hostile cavalry patrols had been encountered, no strong enemy force was believed near.

Shortly before noon the brigade neared Neufchâteau. Billet-



Example 1

ing parties moved ahead of the main body to enter the town.

Suddenly the advance party darted up the hill west of Neufchâteau and began firing to the north and northwest. The point was heard firing near Neufchâteau. A company of the support, which was then nearing the bridge west of the Bois d'Ospot, turned to the right and moved rapidly into the wood. The rest of the support moved up the hill west of Neufchâteau. At this

time the head of the main body was near the north edge of the forest marked Ardennes on the sketch.

It was now discovered that the first firing had been directed at a long train of vehicles moving west on the road from Neufchâteau and on a squadron of hostile cavalry halted in close formation near the tail of the train. An enemy force, strength undetermined, was now seen approaching Neufchâteau from the east. The reserve of the advance guard immediately attacked to the northeast into the Bois d'Ospot.

The brigade commander promptly directed his main body to assemble near the north edge of the forest and ordered his artillery into positions from which it could assist the advance guard, cover the deployment of the main body and support the attack. This decision was made a few minutes after contact had been gained and before any but the vaguest information had been received.

The support of the advance guard, on the hill west of Neufchâteau, was now attacked in force from the east, the northeast, the north and the west.

The German attack that came from the east struck the Bois d'Ospot and, after a brief but bloody fight, drove the reserve of the French advance guard to the southwest.

Even before all his main body cleared the forest, the brigade commander issued an attack order. He had four battalions. Three would attack the Bois d'Ospot from the south and southeast. Their attack would be supported by artillery. The fourth battalion would remain in brigade reserve.

Just as these units moved out it became evident that the situation on the left was desperate. The force on the hill west of Neufchâteau was fighting for its life. It was being enveloped from two sides. The brigade commander therefore diverted one battalion to meet this menace to his left and continued his planned attack with the other two.

The main attack encountered strong German forces moving

from the east and the French enveloping movement was itself enveloped. The attack stopped. The two assault battalions now found themselves in a serious situation. Much stronger forces were holding them in front and striking them in flank. The Germans were employing a great deal of artillery. To prevent the threatened envelopment of his right, the French brigade commander committed his reserve. At about 5:00 p.m. he established a position on the line of villages south and southwest of the Bois d'Ospot and passed to the defensive. The German attack was stopped.

From "Neufchâteau," by Colonel A. Grasset, French Army.

DISCUSSION. During the period considered, the decisions of the French advance-guard and brigade commanders met the actual situations. Indeed, they are much like approved solutions to a map problem in spite of the fact that they were based on little information.

What happened was this: The French brigade stumbled into the bulk of the German XVIII Reserve Corps which was marching across its front from east to west. Thereafter events moved rapidly.

The action taken by the advance guard was on the initiative of its commander. The brigade commander acted with equal celerity: although the situation was vague, he immediately assembled his main body and issued a hasty order prescribing a coordinated attack. He put in all his artillery. He gave weight to his main effort. Just as this attack moved out, it became evident that the advance guard would be routed or captured before the blow at the enemy right could take effect. The brigadier therefore took the necessary action to cover the left flank, even at the expense of weakening his main effort. When the main attack was enveloped, the brigade reserve—which the commander had hoped to employ for the decisive blow—was used to protect the right flank. The brigade then passed to the defensive and held.

The brigade commander did not wait for the ideal situation to develop. Instead, he met the recurring crises of the action as they arose. Even when the situation developed unfavorably and entirely at variance with what he had expected, his prompt and intelligent decisions were equal to the occasion. As a result his brigade fought the bulk of a corps to a standstill!

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EXAMPLE 2. On the morning of July 15, 1918, the 1st Battalion of the U. S. 30th Infantry held the forward area in the 30th Infantry sector south of the Marne. Companies B and C, as outpost, were disposed by platoons close to the river bank. The remainder of the battalion, with Company K and some machine guns attached, held positions in the woods north of the Fossoy—Crézancy Road.

A German bombardment began about midnight. Neither the battalion commander nor the regimental commander received any definite information for several hours. (A more detailed account of this action is given in Examples 2-A, 2-B, and 2-C of Chapter II.)

About 5:00 a.m. the battalion commander made the following report to the regimental commander:

The losses of the battalion have been very great.

Companies B and C (the outpost) are a total loss and survivors of these companies are stragglers.

Communication within the battalion is impossible.

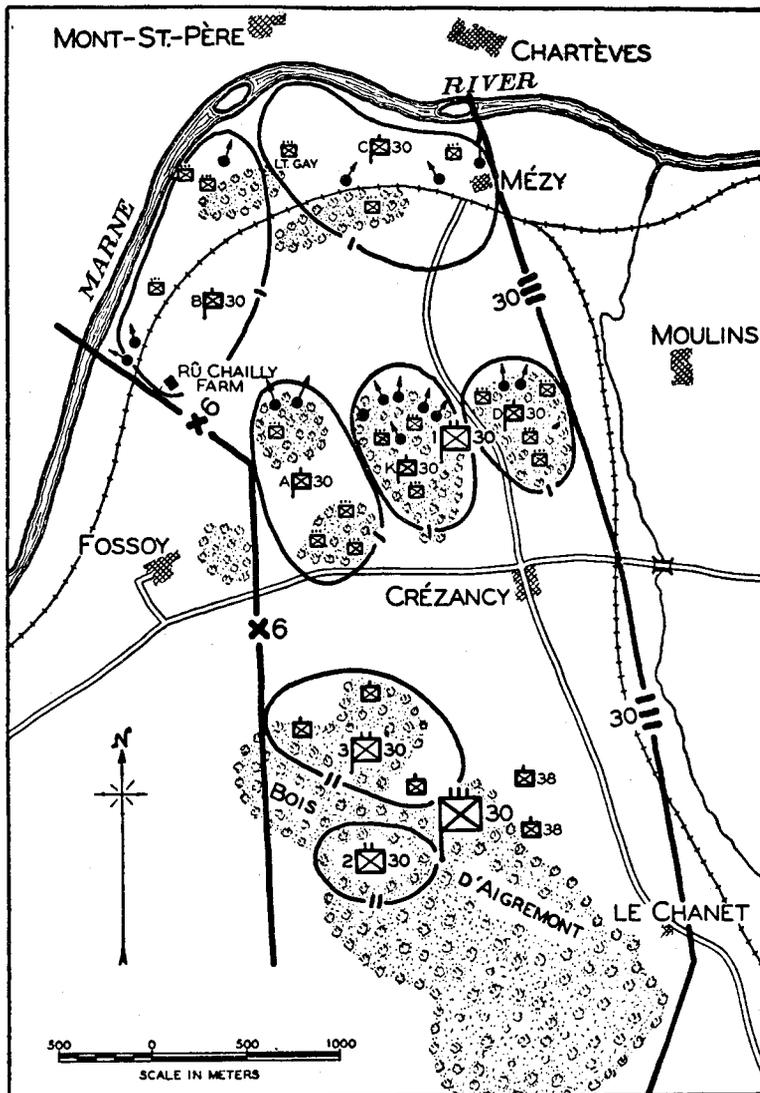
Germans have crossed the river and are now on the south side of the Marne.

The enemy's rolling barrage has passed Companies A, K, and D, but the enemy does not appear to be following the barrage.

He then recommended that the artillery fire its SOS barrage (prepared concentrations within the American position to the south of the railroad line).

From the personal experience monograph of Major Fred L. Walker, who commanded the 1st Battalion of the 30th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The regimental commander had to make a de-



Example 2

cision here. Should he ask for this SOS barrage which could be put down in a matter of minutes, or should he wait just a little longer before doing anything?

If he decided not to call for the SOS, he might miss the chance of bringing effective fire on the enemy and breaking up the attack. On the other hand, if he did have it fired, the barrage might be in the wrong place; it might hit American troops, or it might waste ammunition by falling behind the Germans.

This was far from an ideal situation, but none-the-less it was a situation that had to be met. To the regimental commander it seemed clear that the Germans were somewhere south of the Marne. He accepted the report that Companies B and C were a loss. He noted the report of the battalion commander that the German barrage had passed but that Germans were not following. Presumably they must be somewhere near the railroad. He asked for the barrage. It was fired. Although it did inflict casualties on at least two platoons of American troops who were still holding out on the river bank, it is reported to have played an important part in stopping the German attack.

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EXAMPLE 3. The 70th Infantry, part of the French Fifth Army, had marched north to meet the German enveloping movement through Belgium. On the afternoon of August 20, 1914, it halted a few miles south of the Sambre.

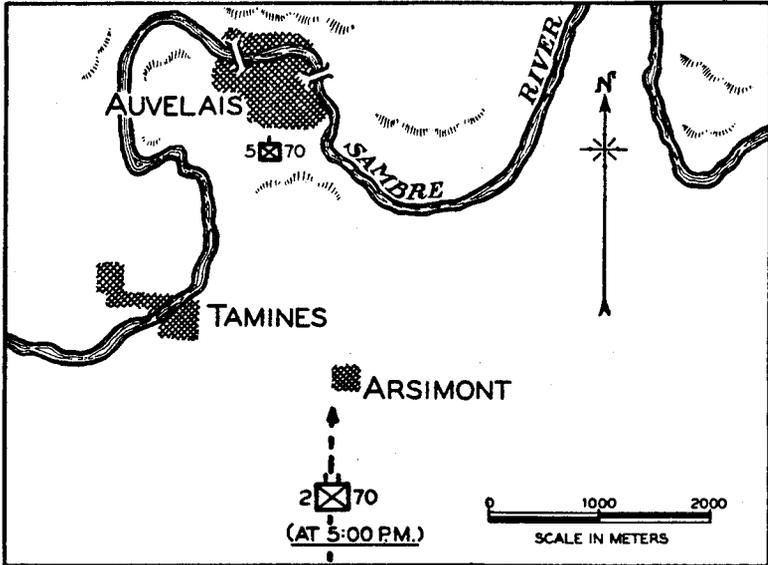
About 5:00 p.m. the 2d Battalion was ordered to move two or three miles forward to Arsimont "to hold the bridges at Auvelais and Tamines." The battalion marched at once. En route the battalion commander designated the 5th Company "to guard the bridge at the village of Auvelais."

The 5th Company arrived at Auvelais about 8:00 p.m. It was dark. The company commander had the following surprises:

(1) Auvelais was not the village he expected, but a sprawling town of some 10,000 inhabitants. His company, figuratively speaking, was lost in it.

(2) There was not one bridge to guard, but eight, and these were scattered along some three miles in a bend of the Sambre.

(3) The town extended to the north bank of the Sambre in a populous suburb. The company had been formally forbidden to cross the river. All of Auvelais was extremely low and com-



Example 3

pletely commanded by high ground on the north bank where good cover abounded.

At 10:00 p.m. the captain of the 5th Company received a curt message: "You can expect to be attacked early tomorrow morning."

He got his battalion commander on the telephone and explained the situation.

"The main bridge and the bend of the river at Auvelais are down in a hole. My company will be shot here like rats in a trap. I request authority to move to the north bank and organize the defense there."

"No, the order is strict not to go north of the Sambre."

"Well, then, I request authority to organize the defense on the higher ground just south of Auvelais."

"No, the order is to guard the bridges, not to abandon them."

The company commander was promised one more rifle company, and with that he had to be content.

From an article by Captain Pots, French Army, in "La Revue d'Infanterie," December, 1929.

DISCUSSION. Before seeing a German, this company commander had several unpleasant surprises. The situation differed completely from what he had expected. Never in all his training had he been placed in anything even remotely resembling this situation and told to solve it.

Everything appeared illogical. The terrain was unfavorable and his force was too small. Even the two solutions that did occur to him were rejected by the battalion commander, for both violated rigid injunctions laid down by the army commander.

There was no use fighting the problem; it had to be solved. Therefore he did what he could. He held the bulk of his force in reserve at the principal bridge and posted small guards at the other seven.

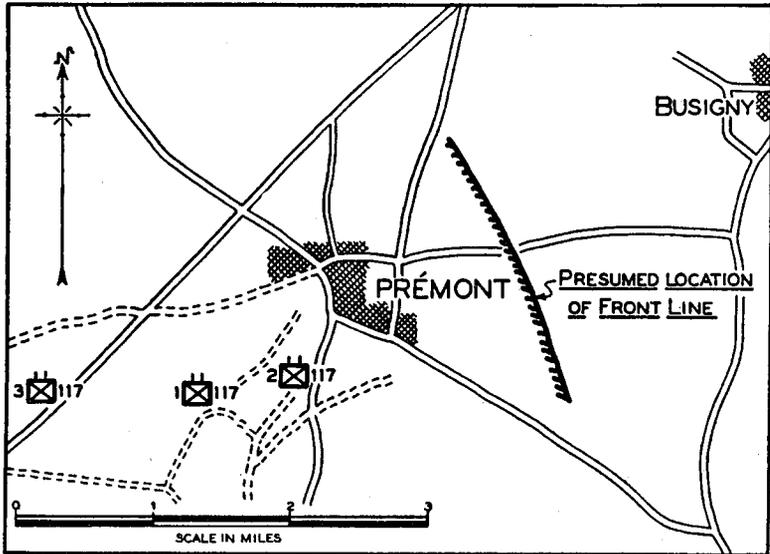
Skirmishing began at 8:00 a.m. the next morning and gradually developed into an attack. The French held the town until about 3:30 p.m.

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EXAMPLE 4. On the night of October 8-9, 1918, the U. S. 117th Infantry held a position near Prémont, with its three battalions disposed in depth and generally facing east. Late in the afternoon of the 8th it had been passed through by fresh troops who were reported to have advanced the line somewhat to the east.

Early on the morning of October 9 the regiment received an order directing it to attack in the direction of Busigny at 5:30

a.m. There had been no warning order and there was no time for the regiment to issue a written attack order. To launch the attack at the scheduled hour, the regiment decided to jump off in the formation in which it stood—the 2d Battalion in assault,



Example 4

the 1st in support, and the 3d in reserve. The order would have to be telephoned.

And then the trouble began. The line from the regiment to the 2d Battalion had gone out. However, the 2d Battalion was still connected with the 1st, so it was arranged that the 1st Battalion should relay the order to the 2d. But before the order to the 1st Battalion was completed that wire also failed. The hour of attack, the general plan, the general direction of attack, the objective and the boundaries (in part only) had been transmitted before the line went dead. This message was received at 3:40 a.m.—one hour and fifty minutes before H hour.

While checking map coordinates, the 1st Battalion found that

an error had been made in defining boundaries. The line of departure was indefinite; it was believed to be some three miles away but its exact location was unknown. Information of the enemy was lacking and no information was at hand as to the proposed activities of reserves and adjacent troops. The hour was growing late. It was obvious that much time would be lost in relaying the order to the 2d Battalion. It narrowed down to the question of whether or not the 2d Battalion would arrive in time.

The following steps were taken in the 1st Battalion:

At the first word that an advance was to be made, company commanders were ordered to report in person at battalion headquarters. The sergeant-major attended to this while the message from regiment was still coming in.

At the same time the adjutant notified the 2d Battalion by telephone that it was instructed to attack and that details would be sent as soon as received. At this point wire connection with the regiment went out.

The battalion intelligence officer and his detachment were immediately sent out to locate the line of departure, obtain as much information as possible and send back guides along the route of approach. This officer, who had heard the telephone conversation, had his detachment ready and moved out at once.

It was apparent that the 2d Battalion, although closer to the front, might be late. Since the 1st Battalion had been able to start its preparations earlier, it was decided that it would also march to the front and, if it arrived before the 2d Battalion, take over the assault rôle. In other words, both battalions started forward, the one arriving first to be in assault, the other in support.

Both battalions arrived at the same time; each one had two companies available and two far to the rear. Consequently the attack was made with battalions abreast, each battalion initially employing one company in assault and one in support. The barrage which had started was overtaken. The rear companies finally got up and the attack drove forward successfully.

As the result of a lucky guess, the attack seems to have been made in the proper zone.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Charles W. Dyer, Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The situation confronting the 1st Battalion was abnormal and illogical. The troops should have been warned earlier. Orders should have been received sooner. At the very least the battalion should have been given the location of its line of departure and told what its boundaries were. The communications do not appear to have been well handled. Obviously there are many things to criticize.

By the terms of the order the 1st Battalion was in support. If the attack failed to jump off in time, it would not bear the onus. But this battalion does not appear to have spent any time dallying with the consoling thought that it was not responsible. The essential feature of the plan was that a battalion of the 117th Infantry attack at 5:30 a.m. from some ill-defined location. Since it looked as if the 2d Battalion might not be able to reach the jump-off line in time, the commander of the 1st Battalion decided to be prepared to pinch-hit for it if necessary. What matter if it were the 1st Battalion or the 2d? Either one was capable of launching an attack.

Therefore, acting in harmony with the general plan, the 1st Battalion disregarded the attack order, agreed on a solution with the 2d Battalion, and started on its way. A decision was taken that met the situation. Perhaps there are things in this decision that could be criticized. If events had gone seriously wrong the 1st Battalion commander might have been in a tough spot. If we sit down in the peace and quiet of a map-problem room and meditate for an hour or two, we may reach a better solution. This battalion commander had to make a decision quickly. He did, and as a result the 117th Infantry attacked with the right number of troops at approximately the right place and time.

EXAMPLE 5. On April 7, 1916, during the Verdun offensive, the 1st Battalion of the German 22d Infantry attacked a French strong point on a hill southeast of Haucourt.

The 1st Company was to attack straight toward 289. The 3d Company was to attack toward 288, then wheel to the west, taking the strong point in rear. The 156th Infantry was to attack on the left of the 3d Company and the 10th Reserve Infantry was to attack on the right of the 1st Company.

The 3d Company overcame resistance near 288 and faced generally west as shown on the sketch. One platoon, commanded by Ensign Bötticher, was sent to 287 with the mission of protecting the flank of the 3d Company.

Upon arrival at 287 the following situation confronted the platoon leader:

He heard heavy firing near 289 and concluded that the 1st Company was hotly engaged.

He saw that the 3d Company was confronted by a French force at A, and that this force seemed to be preparing for a counter-attack.

Near 292 the 10th Reserve Infantry was engaged in a fight with the French and seemed to be making no progress.

Near B he saw French troops marching toward the strong point, and near C another group resting in reserve.

The German platoon had not been seen by the French.

Bötticher decided to attack the French reserves at C. This he did, scoring a complete surprise and capturing a French colonel, two captains and 150 men. Reorganizing rapidly, the platoon then attacked the French opposing the 10th Reserve Infantry near 292. The attack was successful and several hundred additional prisoners were taken.

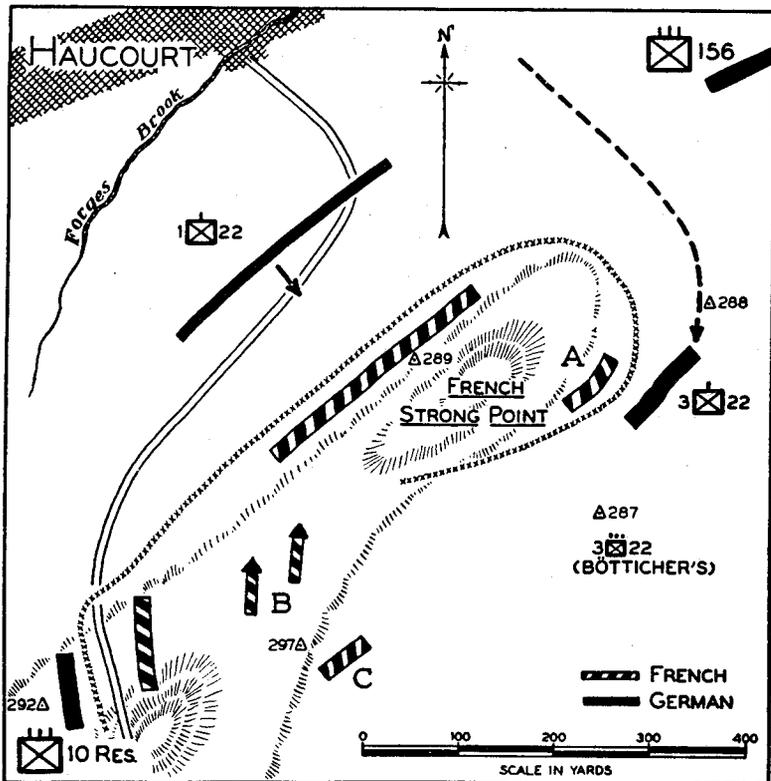
From an article in "Kriegskunst im Wort und Bild," 1931.

DISCUSSION. This is an example of a security detachment that accomplished its mission and more by means of an attack.

The leader reasoned that the French moving forward near B

could be dealt with by the 1st Company, since the French direction of advance was such that they would meet the 1st Company frontally.

He considered the advisability of aiding the 3d Company by



Example 5

firing on the enemy at A, but this would leave the company still exposed to the danger of being attacked in rear by the French reserves at C. These reserves constituted the chief threat. Once they were disposed of the whole problem would be solved.

Ensign Bötticher's estimate of the situation was correct, and his prompt action met with spectacular success.

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CONCLUSION. Decisions will have to be made regardless of the fact that the situation may be vague, abnormal or illogical. Each event that occurs, each bit of information received, will cause the leader to ask himself, "Shall I continue with my present plan and dispositions, or is it now necessary for me to give a new order?" Whatever the answer to this question, it involves a decision on the part of the commander.

Even if information be lacking, the leader must produce decisions. In most cases a poor decision will be better than no decision at all. Negligence and hesitation are more serious faults than errors in choice of means.

No rule can tell us how to time decisions correctly. All we can say is that the decision must be made early enough for action based upon it to be effective. On the other hand, it must not be taken prematurely, lest it fail to meet a changing situation.

How can we learn to make decisions that meet the existing situation? Usually our map problems state a definite situation and then conclude, "It is now 10:00 a.m. Required: Decision of Captain A at this time." Possibly Captain A would have made a decision before this time. Perhaps he would wait for more information or for a more ideal situation to develop. At any rate, one of the most difficult elements of his decision, *i.e.*, when to make it, has been made for him.

Problems and exercises in which the principal element is the time at which decisions are made should be included in peacetime instruction. By such means the natural tendency to temporize in obscure situations may be counteracted and leaders trained to take timely action.

In war, situations will frequently arise which are not covered by express orders of superiors. Perhaps the situation will appear

entirely different from that which higher authority seemed to have in mind when it issued orders. The subordinate may feel that literal compliance with orders received would be disastrous. In such cases he must act in accordance with the general plan. He must take the responsibility and make a decision.

Marshal Foch said:

There is no studying on the battlefield. It is then simply a case of doing what is possible, to make use of what one knows and, in order to make a little possible, one must know much.

Chapter X: *The Plan*

A unit must be engaged in accordance with a definite plan. It must not be permitted to drift aimlessly into battle.

IT REQUIRES perfect performance by a leader to insure that his unit is committed to action according to a clear, workable plan and under favorable conditions. Indeed, it may require extreme energy and forethought to insure that his command is engaged according to any plan at all.

We consider it axiomatic that in war there will always be a plan. But history is replete with instances where organizations have drifted into battle for no particular reason and with no particular plan. It is true that the leader's plan may, and frequently will, change with changes in the situation, but the motivating idea behind it must remain. "Battles of which one cannot say why they were fought and with what purpose, are the usual resource of ignorance," said Napoleon. And this indictment holds true for any pointless maneuver in the presence of the enemy.

The effective coordination of the means at hand for the accomplishment of some desired end has been a major problem since wars began. Too frequently the problem has not been solved and splendid fighting units have been expended in purposeless effort or have failed to accomplish anything at all by reason of masterly inaction.

Lord Chatham with his sword undrawn
Was waiting for Sir Richard Strachan.
Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
Was waiting too. For whom? Lord Chatham.

Hundreds of similar situations are revealed in the World War. Operations of the British at Suvla Bay in August, 1915, are particularly reminiscent of the two fiery noblemen.

It has been well said that "in war all is simple, but it is the simple which is difficult." Misunderstandings, misleading information, late orders, the fact that troops are not actually where the higher commanders think they are, often result in units being engaged aimlessly. But, on the other hand, subordinate leaders as well as their superiors can do much to mitigate such evils by forethought, by careful planning, and by good troop leading.

In every operation there must run from the highest to the lowest unit the sturdy life-line of a guiding idea; from this will be spun the intricate web that binds an army into an invincible unit embodying a single thought and a single goal.

✓ ✓ ✓

EXAMPLE 1. On July 29, 1918, the 3d Battalion of the U. S. 47th Infantry (attached to the 168th Infantry) had advanced to a position in the valley of the Ourcq south and southwest of Sergy. The enemy had been steadily driven back. Now he occupied positions a short distance north of the Ourcq.

The 3d Battalion knew little of the situation except that it had suffered heavily from German artillery and machine-gun fire during the advance to the Ourcq. Some American troops seemed to be on the south slopes of Hill 212.

The battalion, with units intermingled, was extended in one long line under cover of the woods along the stream. Most of Company L had become separated from the battalion. This is how the situation appeared to a platoon leader of Company M:

Runners were sent to locate battalion headquarters and ask for orders.

Of three runners sent out only one returned. He brought back word that both of the majors [there were two with the battalion] had been wounded and that the captain of Company I was in command of the battalion. We were to organize our position and remain where we were until further orders.

The company commander [of Company M] decided to go to battalion headquarters. He came back in an hour with the information that Sergy was still occupied by Germans, but that patrols were working into it; that we would make no attempt to sort out companies until

after daylight the next morning. The present position was organized for defense.

It was now getting dark. Fire was decreasing. It was easier to move about. Rations were collected and ammunition distributed. We were now advised that the new battalion commander had been killed and that the captain of Company M would take command of the battalion. The runner who brought this message was told to notify all officers that the new battalion commander would remain with Company M, and to inform them of the location of his command post.

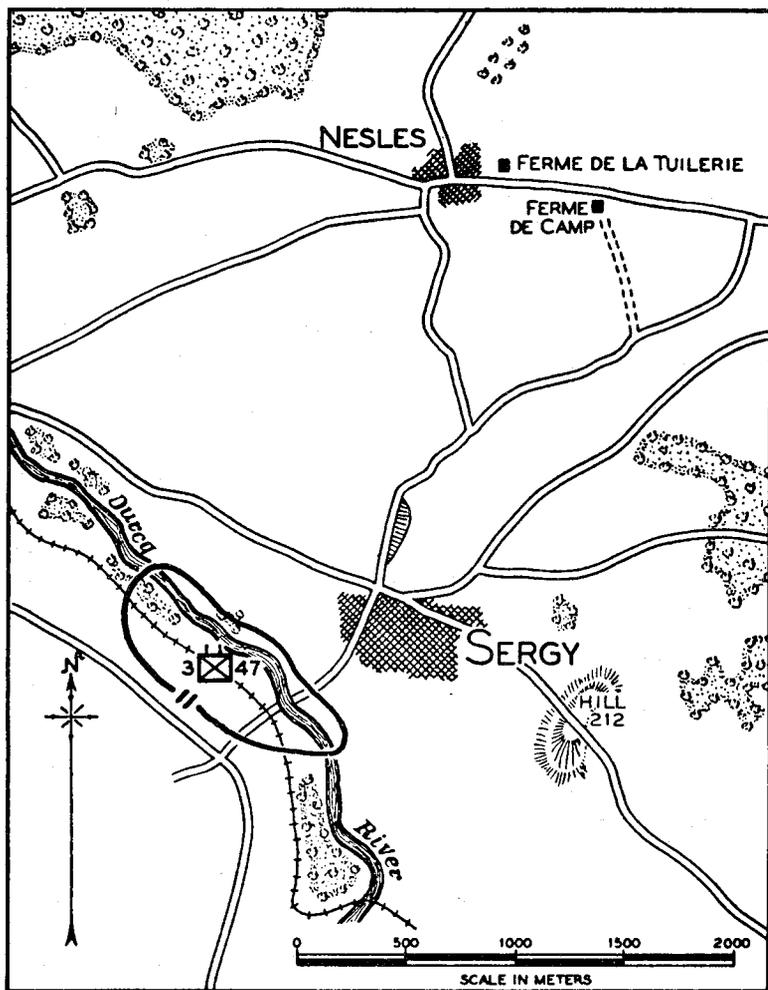
There was a shell crater about fifty feet in front of our line. Since it gave much better observation to front and flanks, the battalion commander and I went out there and spent the night. Save for gas alarms, the night was uneventful. We received one report from a patrol to the effect that the troops on our left were the 1st Battalion of the 47th Infantry. This was our first inkling that the 1st Battalion was in action with us.

At 7:30 a.m. a runner from the 168th Infantry located us and directed the battalion commander to report with his officers to the commanding officer of the 168th Infantry. He stated that we could find the headquarters by following the creek to the other side of the village. The battalion commander took me with him. On the way we picked up four officers. We reported to a major of the 168th Infantry southwest of Hill 212, who gave us the following oral order:

"You will form your battalion and move through the village. When you come to the sunken road leading out of the village, move due north, keeping the road as your right guide. A barrage will be fired. Keep as close to it as possible. You will find a lot of artillery and machine-gun opposition, but do not let it stop you. Continue the advance to the next village, Nesles, and consolidate your line on the north side of the village. The barrage starts at 8:00 a.m. Move out promptly at 9:00 a.m."

It then being after 8:00 a.m. and no barrage being fired, the question was asked if the time to start the barrage had been changed. We were informed that there had been some delay in receipt of the firing data, but that the barrage should be working beyond the village at that time.

We then returned and organized three platoons from Companies I, K, and M. I say platoons because the strength averaged five squads. (There were some men of the battalion not included in these three platoons. They were on the left under officers of Company K. A runner was sent to this group with an order to advance on the left of the village and join the battalion at the northern exit.)



Example 1

The battalion then moved out in column of squads in the order I, K, and M. No battalion attack order had been issued. We moved through the village with no difficulty but came under machine-gun fire as we reached the northern exit. As the two leading companies moved up the sunken road, I could see that quite a few of the men were being knocked down, so I took my company into the field on the left. Here, too, we received considerable fire. I put the company into skirmish line. I could not locate the battalion commander or his adjutant although I had seen them get out of the road when the leading units began to get into trouble. The following day I learned that the battalion commander had been killed and that his adjutant died of wounds that night. I also learned that the leader of the first company was badly wounded and that the leader of the second company was dead.

Company M advanced some 500 yards in about two hours. At the end of this time the company commander, seeing no other troops near, stopped the attack and held his position. At dusk he received orders to withdraw Company M to the sunken road near the village, which he did. Here the survivors found that there was some conflict of opinion as to why the 3d Battalion had attacked. Indeed, there appeared to be considerable doubt whether it had been intended to attack at all.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Howard N. Merrill, who commanded a platoon of Company M, 47th Infantry, and later, that company.

DISCUSSION. The attack of the 3d Battalion conveys an impression of utter aimlessness. Let us grant that orders came in late and were incomplete. Let us grant that the battalion did not have time to assemble all of its elements; that it was in poor condition to attack; that promised artillery support did not materialize; that the majors of the battalion were casualties; that enemy information was vague; that it was not known what other friendly troops were to do. Such a state of affairs is in the very nature of war. In this case it appears that some of the adverse factors could have been avoided, but let us forget that for the moment.

The attack order received by the battalion can be summed up as, "Attack at 9:00 a.m. toward Nesles with your right on the

road." What the companies of the battalion now needed to know was "What part are we to play in this battalion attack? Where do we deploy? What company is on our right? Who furnishes flank protection? Who is in reserve?" In other words, a battalion attack order, no matter how brief, was desperately needed. Instead, the battalion commander issued what was, in effect, a march order.

The battalion moved to the north edge of Sergy in column of squads and there came under fire. At once everyone did what seemed best to him. There was no coördination of effort—no plan—and the battalion promptly ceased to function as a unit. It drifted blindly and aimlessly into battle. Company M, on its own, moved to the left and attacked, and for the rest of the day labored under the impression that it was fighting the war single-handed.

A brief order regulating the deployment before the battalion came under fire would unquestionably have made a great difference. That the time for this was short was no excuse. An attack should have been anticipated. The enemy was being driven back and the battalion was close to his position. What could be expected but an attack?

It is obvious that the battalion commander should have made a point of getting in touch with the 168th Infantry, to which he was attached, in order to learn the plans for the next day. Also, much could have been done during the night toward effecting a reorganization of the battalion. So, too, the most perfunctory reconnaissance would have disclosed the fact that the Germans were still close at hand; this would have averted the movement in the sunken road.

The battalion was in its first fight. It lost twenty-five officers and 462 men. Its courage was marked, but courage is not a substitute for experience and training.

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EXAMPLE 2. Late on the afternoon of July 25, 1918, the

U. S. 167th Infantry completed the relief of elements of the 26th Division northeast of Courpoil. The 1st and 3d Battalions, each with a machine-gun company attached, took over positions in the front line; the 2d Battalion was held in reserve near the north end of Etang de la Lagette.

Enemy artillery fire was heavy during the night and continued throughout the next day.

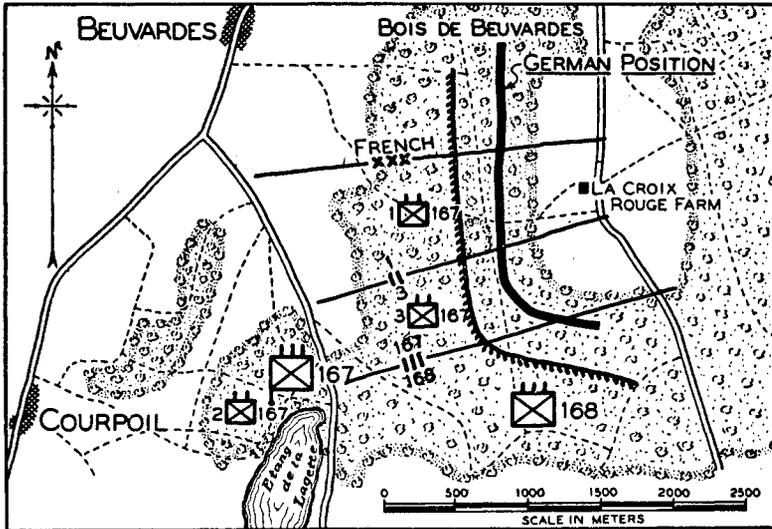
Early on the 26th, front-line battalion commanders sent patrols forward to gain contact and locate the enemy line. At 8:00 a.m. the patrols returned. They reported that the enemy line was only four to five hundred yards in front of the American position and that it bristled with machine guns. Patrols from both battalions had suffered casualties. Since the 26th Division had stated that the enemy was four or five kilometers away, this report was immediately forwarded.

The same morning, the regimental and battalion commanders inspected the front line. During this inspection the colonel oriented his battalion and company commanders on a proposed plan of attack. In fact, he issued what amounted to a tentative attack order. To be put into execution it required only confirmation and designation of H-hour.

The direction of advance, probable objective (which the regimental commander said would undoubtedly be la Croix Rouge Farm and the woods beyond) and the mission of each battalion were covered. Positions from which the 37-mm. guns and the Stokes mortars were to support the attack were specified. The aid station, the ammunition distributing point, and the regimental command post were located. Each company knew what it was to do.

Shortly after these arrangements had been completed, the regimental commander was directed to report to brigade headquarters. Expecting to receive an attack order, he ordered the battalion commanders to assemble at the regimental command post to await final instructions.

The brigade attack order was issued to assembled regimental commanders at Courpoil at 4:20 p.m. The order called for a two-hour artillery preparation. H-hour was designated at 4:50 p.m. The colonel of the 167th pointed out that the artillery could



Example 2

not comply unless H-hour were changed. He further stated that the French commander on the left of the 167th said he had no orders to attack. The brigade commander replied, "We will attack as ordered, and be sure you jump off at 4:50 p.m."

The colonel of the 167th Infantry immediately issued an oral attack order to his executive who was waiting with a motorcycle and side-car to rush it to the assembled officers at the regimental command post.

The colonel's order was simply this:

H-hour is 4:50 p.m. Tell battalion commanders to attack as we planned this morning. There will be no artillery preparation. Caution Major Carroll to place a platoon to protect his left, as I don't believe the French are going to attack.

The battalion commanders received the order at 4:42 p.m.

The regiment attacked on time, made a successful advance and captured 305 prisoners and seventy-two machine guns. The 168th Infantry on the right attacked somewhat later. The French did not attack.

From the personal experience monograph of Colonel William P. Screws, who commanded the 167th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. Owing to the foresight of its regimental commander, the 167th Infantry was enabled to attack on time. In anticipation of an attack he had carried his preparations to an extreme. Fortunately, his tentative plan was in full accord with the instructions he subsequently received.

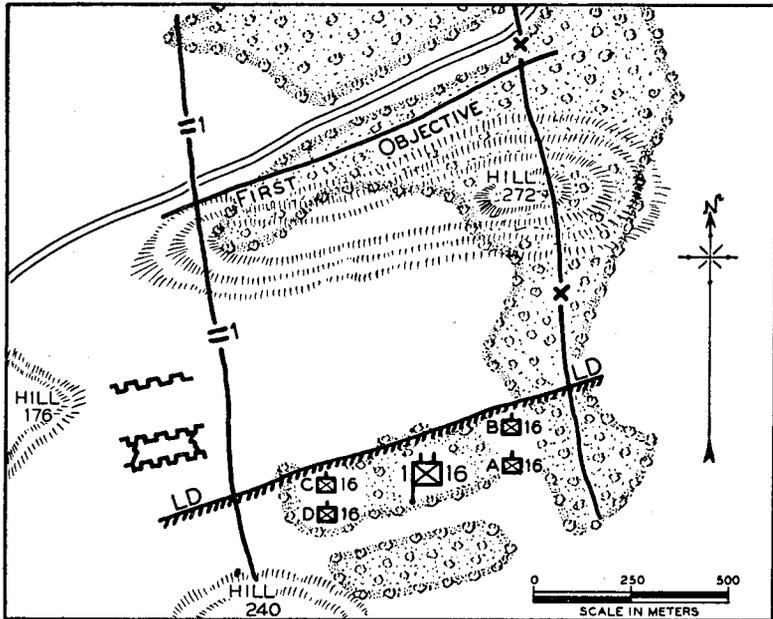
In open warfare, anticipation to this extent is seldom advisable. Nevertheless, if the general situation clearly indicates the order that can be expected, a subordinate leader may well make many preliminary provisions. Reconnaissance, the establishment of contact with adjacent units, feeding a hot meal to the troops, issuing extra ammunition, dropping packs, providing for the instant transmission of orders, and the orientation of subordinates, are matters that need not await the receipt of an attack order. Indeed, such steps will frequently change many a laboriously logical explanation of failure to comply with orders to the succinct and satisfying phrase — "Attack launched on time."

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EXAMPLE 3. On October 9, 1918, the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, participated in an attack by the 1st Division in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. The first mission assigned the battalion was the capture of Hill 272. This hill was strongly held and several previous attacks against it had failed in the face of a well-prepared and highly-coördinated system of protective fires.

The attack was ordered to jump off at 8:30 a.m. behind a

rolling barrage. One company of the 1st Gas Regiment was directed to fire a thermite concentration on a German machine-gun nest located near Hill 176 to the left-front of the battalion.



Example 3

The plan of the battalion commander was essentially as follows:

Companies B and C in assault (B on the right), each having one-half of the battalion zone.

Companies A and D in support (A on the right), to form just in rear of the line of departure. Both companies to be well-closed up to escape the German protective barrage known to be registered on the forward slope of Hill 240.

To charge Companies A and B with the protection of the right flank.

Company C to be particularly alert for activity near Hill 176 in the zone of the unit on the left.

Aid station in a shell hole to the right front of Hill 240.

Command post between Companies A and D. The battalion commander to advance initially with Company C.

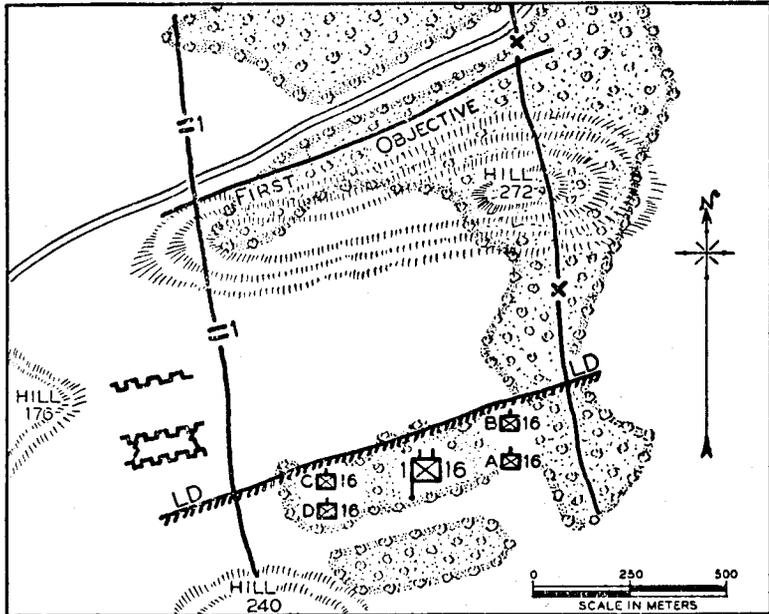
Although the attack jumped off in a thick fog, the Germans realized that something was afoot and called for their defensive barrage. This came down in rear of the support companies, both of which held their position until the assault companies had gained distance.

Soon after the attack started, Company C came under heavy machine-gun fire from Hill 176. The left half of the company wheeled toward the hill and vanished in the fog; the other half continued to the north. The battalion commander immediately confirmed this action, directing the left assault and left support platoons to continue their efforts against Hill 176 and then to advance, protecting the left flank of the battalion. When Company D came up he ordered it to continue toward Hill 272, since the capture of that hill was the battalion's main mission.

In the fog companies lost contact, but all moved forward. Arriving at the foot of Hill 272 the battalion commander halted Company D and checked up on his battalion. He found that all companies had arrived at the foot of the steep slope. Company B, on the right, had advanced straight to its proper position and Company A had come up abreast of it on the left. Two platoons of Company C were to the left of Company A, and Company D was some distance to the left of these.

Having determined the disposition of his companies, the battalion commander issued oral orders for them to move forward and capture that part of the hill in their immediate front. Following this they were to spread out to the flanks until contact was complete within the battalion and all parts of the hill occupied. The companies were told to get to the top of the hill and stay there at all costs.

Each company gained a foothold on the hill by working small groups up the hillside between German machine-gun positions.



Example 3

The footholds thus gained were then enlarged by a continuation of this infiltration. At 11:00 a.m. the hill fell.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Charles W. Ryder, who commanded the 1st Battalion of the 16th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The attack of this battalion appears to be just another frontal push. The artillery fired and the infantry moved forward to exploit the effect of the fire. The fog was a bit of luck. What is there noteworthy about the affair? There is this: the battalion was commanded. It acted according to a plan.

The plan was not merely a routine, stereotyped announcement of which two companies would be in assault and which two in

support. It contained several ideas. First, it foresaw where the German protective fires would be dropped and arranged to mass the battalion well forward so that even the support companies would escape this fire. Nothing revolutionary, perhaps, but still not the usual thing.

Second, the battalion commander foresaw what was going to happen on his left. Accordingly, he took action to protect this flank by orders to Company C and by personal intervention there at the start of the fight.

Finally, at the foot of Hill 272 we see the battalion commander getting his units in hand. We hear him revise his plan, bringing it up to date, thereby insuring a battalion blow instead of a series of haphazard, disjointed efforts.

Thus, even in a frontal attack behind a rolling barrage, one of those cut-and-dried "once more, dear friends, into the breach" affairs, there is need for an infantry unit to have a plan and there is room for its commander to have an idea.

/ / /

CONCLUSION. We have examined a case or two where units have drifted into battle. We have seen what happened to them. Undoubtedly it would be going too far to say that every unit that becomes engaged without a definite plan is slated for defeat, for occasionally sheer valor is able to surmount passive leadership. In such cases, we have a "soldiers' battle." But even in those rare instances where such battles achieve a certain measure of success, they are seldom decisive since full exploitation is impossible. Regardless of the occasional exception, the fact remains that planless action is an open invitation to disaster.

We have examined other situations where the foresight of the leader enabled the unit to attack under conditions far more favorable than would otherwise have been the case. In these, success was achieved not by transcendent flashes of genius but merely by having an intelligent plan.

Insuring teamwork and coördinating the attack is the responsibility of the leader. Whatever the method adopted, he must guard against a disjointed, piecemeal effort. He can best accomplish this by keeping ahead of events instead of letting them drag him along in their wake.

It is always well to keep in mind that one fights to gain a definite end—not simply to fight.

Chapter XI: *Orders*

An order must clearly express the will of the leader and must fit the situation.

IT IS FAR more important that orders be written clearly and issued promptly than that they be correct in form. With well-trained troops, little time, and poor maps, orders will tend to be general. Especially should details be eliminated when time is short and changes in the situation are probable before the order can be executed.

With plenty of time, excellent maps, and troops lacking in experience, more details may be advisable.

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EXAMPLE 1. Early in 1915 the 4th Company of the German 256th Reserve Infantry Regiment, part of the 77th Reserve Division, took part in an attack against the Russians.

Although the bulk of the troops had no war experience, there were one or two men in every squad who had been in battle. The officers were veterans.

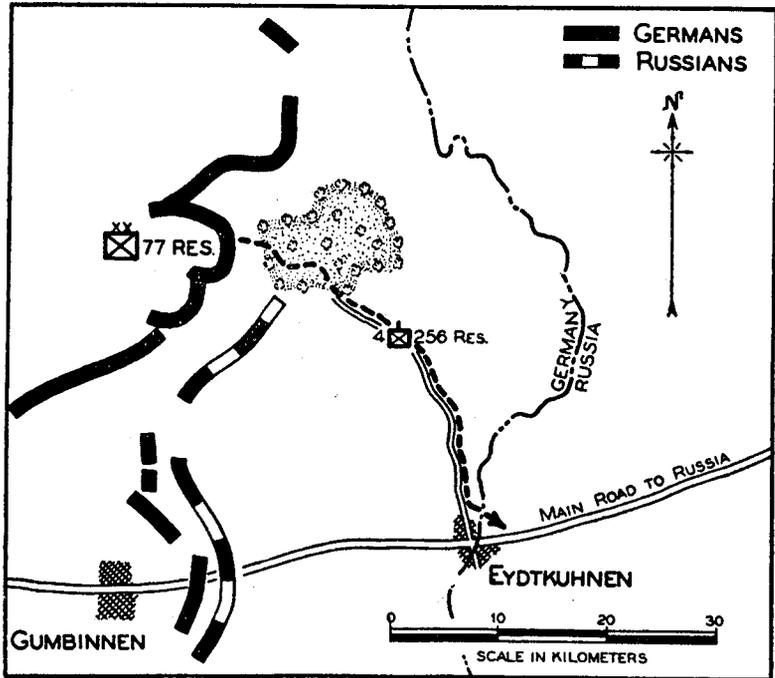
The march to the front was long and difficult, but the fact that General von Hindenburg was in command of the operation instilled great confidence in all ranks. The Germans attacked at dawn, surprised and defeated the Russians, and promptly took up the pursuit. The battalion of which the 4th Company was a part found virtually no enemy to its front. Occasionally it met a few Russians who quickly took to their heels.

The battalion marched all day and all night, first toward the east, later toward the south. The cold was intense and the snow deep. The men who marched at the head of the column and broke the path through the snow had to be relieved every half hour.

In spite of the exhausting march and its attendant hardships, morale remained high. The entire command had estimated the

situation correctly: "This long march," they said, "is to enable us to encircle the Russians. This will be another Tannenberg."

Toward morning the weary column approached the town of Eydtkuhnen. The men were rejoicing over the fine billets they



Example 1

would find there, when suddenly the column bent away from the main road and again moved east.

Some of the recruits began to growl. But the old soldiers said, "Shut up, you dumb recruits. Do you think you are cleverer than Hindenburg? If we old timers are satisfied, you ought to be. We were making marches when you were still at your mothers' apron strings."

Morning came but the troops marched on. Fog limited visi-

bility to 100 yards or less. Suddenly the column halted. Company commanders were assembled and the battalion commander issued the following oral order:

About two kilometers in front of us is the main road from Eydtkuhnen to Russia. It is possible that we will find the enemy on that road trying to escape to the east.

The battalion advances deployed toward that road and gains possession of it. The 3d and 4th Companies lead the advance, moving on both sides of the road on which we are now marching. The 1st and 2d Companies follow at 500 meters.

I will be at the head of the 1st Company.

The leading companies moved out with one platoon in assault and two in reserve. Each leading platoon sent forward two pairs of scouts. The advance had scarcely started when one of the scouts came running back and reported:

"The road is 300 meters in front of us. Russians are marching on it toward the east."

Upon receipt of this information the battalion commander merely ordered:

"Attack at once!"

The battalion, continuing its advance, suddenly burst upon the highway which was jammed with trains and artillery. A shout, a few shots, a rush, and the Germans were on the road in the midst of the enemy's transport. The Russians were completely surprised; all but a few who escaped in the fog were captured, with all their guns and vehicles.

From an address delivered at The Infantry School by Captain Adolf von Schell, German Army, who commanded the 4th Company in this action.

DISCUSSION. The battalion commander's order in this situation was brief, simple, and issued in time to permit subordinates to make their dispositions. The battalion commander did not refer to road junctions and points on the map; he spoke in terms of the ground which the troops could see. He did not go too far into the future, nor did he prescribe what would be done if various situations were encountered. He was satisfied to place his

troops in such a formation that they could handle any situation that came up.

Of this order Captain von Schell says:

Please notice that the order included no information of the enemy.

We had no information of the enemy. Nevertheless as we approached the road, a decision had to be made; not because we had met the enemy, but because it was time to give an order. The situation demanded it.

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EXAMPLE 2. Near Cantigny on May 28, 1918, the U. S. 1st Division launched the first American attack of the World War. For obvious reasons it was highly important that their initial effort be a smashing success. To this end the operation had been planned far in advance and in the most minute detail.

The 1st Division had been holding this sector for several weeks and this, plus the excellent maps that were available, insured a high degree of familiarity with the terrain. Although seasoned in a defensive sector, the troops were still inexperienced in offensive combat.

The division order was an extremely lengthy affair that neglected no detail. Indeed, it left practically nothing to the initiative of subordinates. Finally, the attack itself was conscientiously rehearsed behind the lines on terrain that approximated the coming scene of battle. The attack succeeded.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain George E. Butler, Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The order for the Cantigny attack is an extreme example of the extent to which minute details may be prescribed in preliminary arrangements for combat. It illustrates the maximum authority a commander can exercise over a subordinate who leads a unit in combat. In war of movement, such an order would be wholly impracticable, but it was well suited to the special conditions at Cantigny. The troops were inexperienced; the objective was strictly limited; there were good maps;

there was plenty of time. Therefore the higher commander, having much at stake, exercised the maximum of authority.

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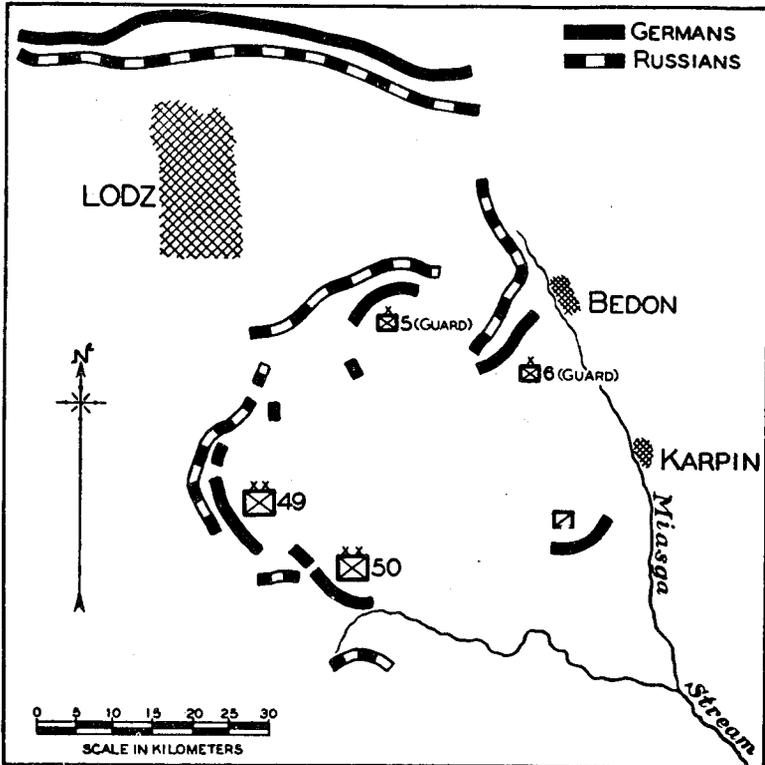
EXAMPLE 3. On November 22, 1914, a German corps, reinforced, had attacked westward and northwestward toward Lodz. In conjunction with other German troops it had wheeled down from the north as part of a wide envelopment. But the envelopment struck a snag: the attack was checked, communication with other German forces cut, and reports indicated superior Russian forces closing in on all sides.

The position of the German force is approximately given on the sketch. The 3d Guard Division (5th and 6th Guard Brigades) faced north and northwest. The 49th Reserve Division faced generally west and the 50th Reserve Division faced south and southwest. The troops were exhausted, and units were depleted and intermingled. The effective strength of the divisions was not over two or three thousand men each.

In this situation the commander of the German enveloping force decided to withdraw to the east of Miasga Stream, and then strike north. His written orders directed the 3d Guard Division to remain in position until midnight, and then move east of the Miasga between Bedon and Karpin. The order also directed the division to send "a flank detachment to the south of Bedon immediately." In addition to this order the Guard Division received various oral messages, and from these it understood that its mission was to secure the right flank of the corps.

Accordingly five battalions of the Guard were moved south to establish protection on that flank. The division interpreted "right flank" to mean "south flank," and the instructions to place a "flank security detachment south of Bedon" to mean that the Guard Division was responsible *for all flank security in the region south of Bedon*. Actually the corps intended that the Guard should furnish flank protection on the north.

The five battalions dispatched to the south repeatedly crossed columns of the 49th Reserve Division withdrawing to the east, and caused great confusion. The German force withdrew successfully and escaped, but this crossing of columns and the en-



Example 3

suing confusion resulted in both the Guard and the 49th Reserve Division fighting on the following day in extremely unfavorable circumstances.

From the Reichsarchiv account and "Der Durchbruch bei Brzeziny," by Ernst Eilsberger.

DISCUSSION. A force which had been advancing west turned around and withdrew eastward. Everyone was tired and exhausted. Things were complex enough without having to puzzle over rules for writing orders. When the withdrawal began, it appears that some German headquarters considered the right flank to be the north flank, while others considered it to be the south flank. In such a confused situation as this, or in any situation where there is even a remote chance of misunderstanding, the words "right" and "left" should not be used.

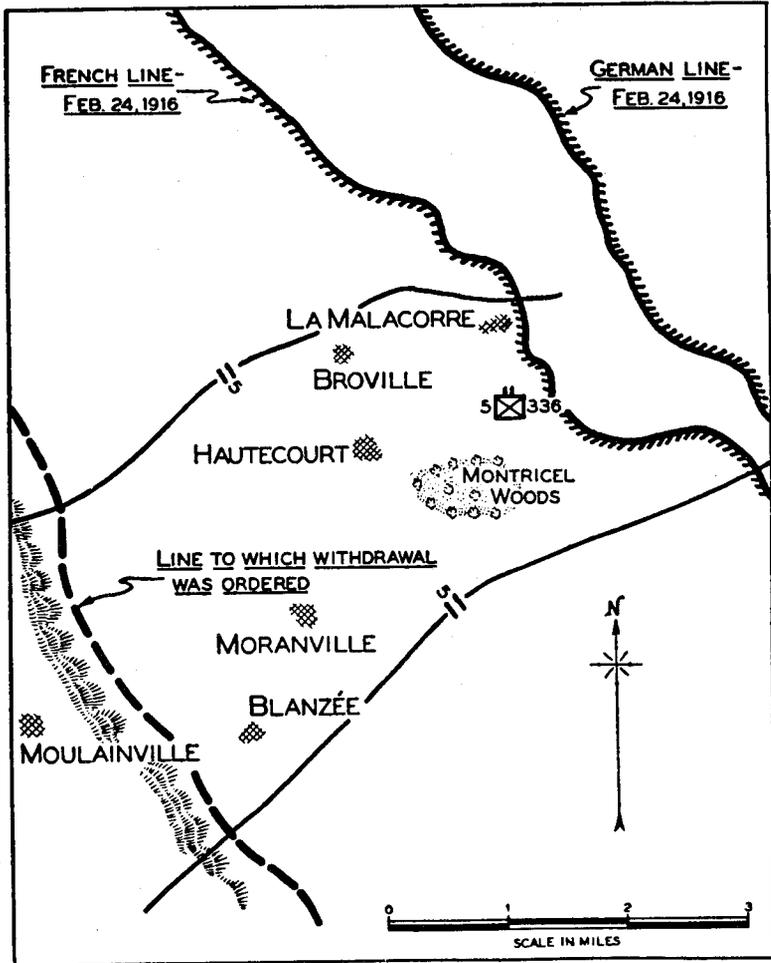
The construction placed on the commonplace military expression "a flank security detachment south of" is instructive. It forcefully illustrates the dangers that may lurk in many a time-worn expression. If seasoned professionals can misinterpret their own specialized vocabulary, it is certain that nonprofessionals will fare even worse. In peace, then, special emphasis should be laid on the language employed in orders. Leaders of all grades should be trained to test every word, every phrase, every sentence, for ambiguity and obscurity. If, by even the wildest stretch of the imagination, a phrase can be tortured out of its true meaning, the chance is always present that it will be.

Short, simple sentences of simple, commonplace words, will go far toward making an order unmistakable.

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EXAMPLE 4. On February 24, 1916, the 5th Battalion of the French 336th Infantry held a sector east of Verdun. Germans were attacking the fortress from the north. After a study of the situation the French high command decided that the troops in this sector should be withdrawn to a position closer to Verdun. Although this movement was planned for the night of February 24-25, the division order did not reach the 211th Brigade until after midnight, and orders for the front-line troops did not arrive until 4:00 a.m.

The division order went into great detail. In addition to pre-



Example 4

scribing the line to which the division would withdraw and boundaries between units, it directed two battalions of the 211th Brigade to act as a covering force. Both battalions were named in the order and their dispositions and duties minutely covered. The 5th Battalion, for example, was ordered to hold

Hautecourt and Broville with one company, Montrichel Woods and la Malacorre with another company, and Moranville and Blanzée with the remainder of the battalion. The order then summed up the mission in these words:

The rôle of the covering detachments is to keep the enemy in ignorance of our movement. To this end they will fight a delaying action, employing powerful fires. For this purpose each battalion will be assigned two platoons of machine guns. Weak outguards will be left in the front line with the mission of holding enemy patrols in check and covering the withdrawal.

In spite of the detail in which this order abounded, it was silent on one point—the hour when the covering detachment would withdraw.

The movement got under way and, from all accounts, the withdrawal of the bulk of the division was well executed. At 6:00 a.m., with the division safely out of the way, the 5th Battalion believed its mission accomplished and began its own withdrawal under cover of a snowstorm. Its movement went undiscovered.

By 10:00 a.m. the battalion had reached the vicinity of Moulainville. The movement had been successfully completed—or so the 5th Battalion thought. An hour later came disillusionment in the form of an order to return at once to the positions occupied that morning.

During the march back, the battalion ran head-on into a German attack and never succeeded in reaching its old position. Its withdrawal had been premature and had cost the French several pieces of artillery.

From Infantry Conferences by Lieutenant Colonel Touchon, French Army, at l'École Supérieure de Guerre.

DISCUSSION. Here is an order that violated two fundamentals: it was late in reaching subordinate units and it omitted one essential fact—when the covering force would withdraw. Though not stated in the order, the division commander intended

this force to remain in position until *forced back* by the enemy.

The order may have seemed clear to the man who wrote it, but it was not clear to the man who had to execute it, and that is the all-important thing. One of the first things the commander of a covering force wants to know is "how long do we stay?" Upon the answer to that question depends the entire tactical course of the action.

In war, leaders of small units are usually no more than one or two jumps ahead of physical and mental exhaustion. In addition, they run a never-ending race against time. In such conditions long, highly involved orders multiply the ever-present chance of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and plain oversight. Such orders also increase the chance of error on the part of higher commanders. In seeking to work out all details for subordinate units they may, like the division commander in this example, forget some essential. By looking too long through a microscope, they may lose sight of the big picture.

Perhaps in the above instance subordinates may be criticized for not correctly interpreting the order. But even if we concede this, the issuing authority must still shoulder the greater blame. The order should have left no room for misinterpretation. The elder Moltke's admonition, "Remember, gentlemen, an order that can be misunderstood will be misunderstood," still holds.

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EXAMPLE 5-A. On June 6, 1918, the 3d Battalion of the U. S. 5th Marines was due west of Belleau Wood. Late in the afternoon the captain of the 47th Company (part of the battalion) assembled his platoon leaders and issued an attack order. He briefly indicated the direction of attack, the company dispositions, and then directed:

"Get your men into position as fast as you can. We attack at 5:00 p.m."

He pulled out his watch, glanced at it and added, "It is 5:15 p.m. now."

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Raymond E. Knapp, U. S. Marine Corps.

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EXAMPLE 5-B. The U. S. 35th Division attacked on September 26, 1918, and made a deep advance into the German lines. The division then issued an order prescribing a resumption of the attack at 8:30 a.m. on the 27th, after a three-hour artillery preparation. Among other things, the order provided that the 140th Infantry pass through the 138th Infantry. Shortly after the division order had been sent out, a corps order arrived directing the attack to be resumed all along the front at 5:30 a.m. The 35th Division attempted to change its first order. However, since some units had already been notified to attack at 8:30, it was considered impracticable to advance the time to 5:30. Therefore a compromise hour, 6:30 a.m., was decided upon.

In the midst of this confusion, the 140th Infantry received an order at 5:05 a.m. to attack at 5:30 a.m., after a five-minute barrage. The barrage failed to come down, but nevertheless the 140th moved out, passed through the 138th and attacked. The advance, unsupported by artillery, was quickly stopped with heavy casualties. The order directing the attack at 6:30 a.m. arrived too late.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Fred L. Lemmon, Infantry.

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EXAMPLE 5-C. The 142d Infantry, part of the U. S. 36th Division, spent October 7, 1918, southeast of St. Etienne-à-Arnes, having relieved front-line troops in that vicinity. The 2d Battalion held the front line; the 1st Battalion was in support.

During the afternoon the commanding general of the 71st Brigade received an oral warning order of an attack that would jump off at 5:15 the next morning. Formal written orders, he was told, would follow. At about 8:00 p.m. he summoned his

regimental commanders and passed on this meager information. Not until after midnight did the brigade receive its written orders and not until 3:00 a.m. did its written order go out to the regiments.

At about 3:30 a.m. the battalion commanders of the 142d Infantry were called to the regimental command post and given oral orders for the attack which was scheduled to jump off in one hour and forty-five minutes. There was little time left for the battalion commanders to formulate and issue orders to their companies.

Five-ten (5:10) a.m. found the four company commanders of the 1st Battalion crouched around a map spread on the ground near the entrance to the battalion command post. They had little idea what the attack was all about. They knew the 2d Battalion was ahead of them and would attack in the direction indicated by the big red arrow on the map. The names of some towns had been mentioned as possible objectives, but none of the company commanders had heard of them, or if they had they didn't remember them.

Companies A and B, A on the right, would follow the assault battalion at 1,000 meters and take advantage of whatever cover the terrain might afford. Companies C and D would follow A and B. No boundaries had been given nor was any other information forthcoming. Meanwhile, the American barrage had already started and the Germans were replying with their counter-preparation.

The attack jumped off a few minutes later and, after heavy casualties, scored a partial success. More time to acquaint the companies with the situation and tell them what was expected of them would undoubtedly have produced greater results at a smaller cost.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Ben-Hur Chastaine, who commanded Company A of the 142d Infantry; and from the monograph "Blanc Mont," prepared by the Historical Section of the War Department General Staff.

DISCUSSION. These examples are not rare exceptions. In

fact, almost every unit in the A.E.F. had the unpleasant experience of receiving orders too late. The cause was usually the same—too much time absorbed by higher echelons in preparing, issuing, and transmitting their orders.

It should always be remembered that no matter how perfect an order may be, it fails in its purpose if it does not arrive in time.

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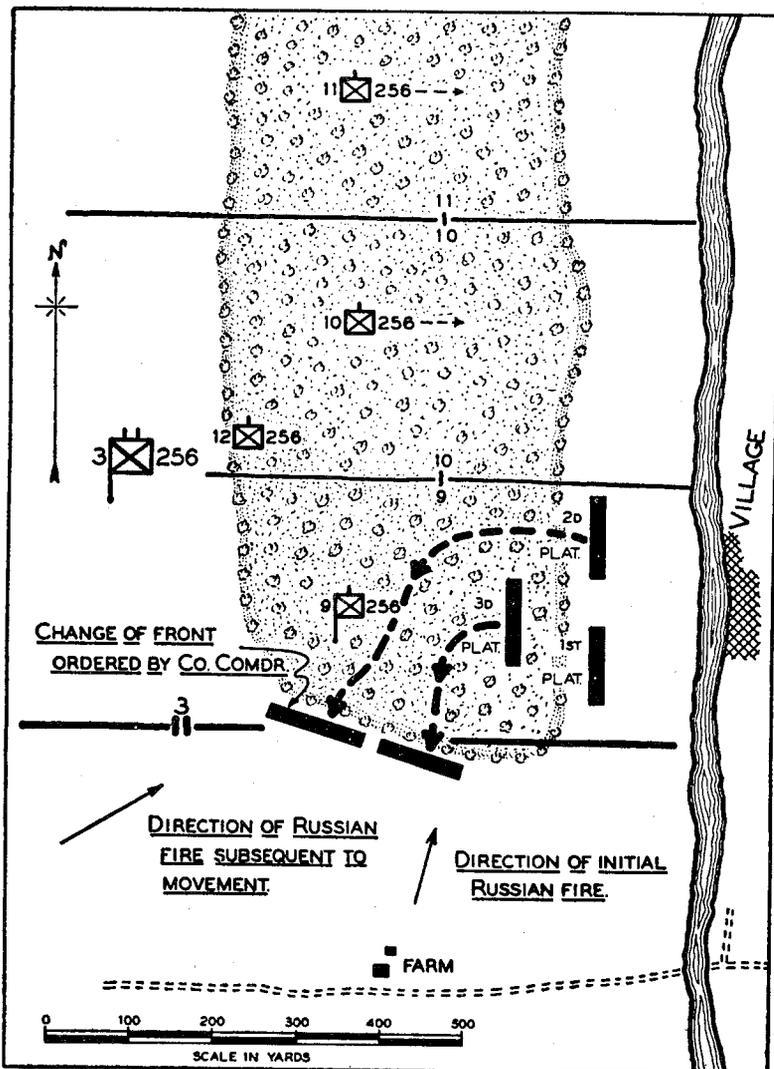
EXAMPLE 6. In September, 1915, the German 256th Reserve Infantry Regiment was marching eastward into Russia. Although there had been fighting a few days before, the regiment was now meeting little resistance. This happy state of affairs was short-lived. At about 10:00 o'clock on the morning of September 20 the commander of the 3d Battalion, who had ridden forward, returned to his unit, assembled his officers and told them:

"The Russians have attacked our cavalry with strong forces and pressed it back. We are to assist it by defending a river which lies about two kilometers to our front."

The advance continued. When the battalion reached the river they found it wide and deep. On the far bank they saw a village. But they saw no Russians, no German cavalry, and heard no firing. The battalion commander then issued this order:

Over there on the right about 500 yards away is a farm; a battalion of another German unit will be there. We defend generally along this edge of woods to the left. The 9th, 10th and 11th Companies, from right to left, will hold the front line, each with a sector 300 yards wide. The 12th Company will be in reserve behind the middle of the battalion. Our cavalry is to our left. Send patrols across the river. I will get in touch with the cavalry.

The 9th Company commander sent a patrol toward the farm and then, with a few subordinates, moved forward to the river to reconnoiter. Following his reconnaissance, he decided to place his 1st and 2d Platoons in the front line near the river, and hold



Example 6

the 3d Platoon in reserve. He then issued a complete order and platoon leaders returned to their units.

The company commander remained near the river looking for a boat. Looking back he saw his platoons moving forward. Suddenly he heard a few shots off toward the right. At first he thought his men were shooting pigs, but as the firing increased he concluded that a Russian patrol had been discovered on the right. Then he heard another burst of fire, this time from his right-rear. Bullets whistled over his head. There was no mistaking the characteristic crack of the Russian rifle.

With a command to his runners to follow him, the company commander set off at a run for his reserve platoon. On the way he gave this message to a particularly reliable runner:

The left platoon will retire into the wood and get ready to follow me in an attack toward the farm. The right platoon will defend the entire company sector. Give this order to the platoon commanders and then report this decision to the battalion.

On reaching the reserve platoon, which had faced toward the farm and was replying to the fire coming from that direction, the company commander ordered:

"The whole platoon will attack in double time toward the farm."

As the platoon advanced through the wood toward the farm, a member of the patrol arrived with this message:

"The patrol is north of the farm. The Russians are at the farm. They are trying to get around us."

Upon reaching the edge of the wood where he could see the Russian position the company commander ordered:

"Lie down; range 400; commence firing!"

The German platoon opened fire and immediately drew down a heavy Russian fire in return. A few moments later a runner reported:

"The 2d Platoon is 200 yards behind us."

The company commander called out:

"I am attacking with the 2d Platoon on the right. This platoon will keep up the fire and then join the attack."

The company commander ran back to the 2d Platoon and led it forward on the right. During the movement he pointed out the position of the platoon already engaged and gave the order:

"There are Russians on this side of the river near the farm. We are attacking."

As the platoon emerged from the wood, it received heavy fire on its right flank. The Russians were not only much stronger than expected, but were much farther across the river than anyone had thought. At this moment a runner from the battalion commander reported:

"The Russians have broken through the cavalry. The battalion commander is wounded."

Since there were no signs of the German battalion which was supposed to be at the farm, the company commander decided to retire. This was accomplished successfully.

From an address at the Infantry School by Captain Adolf von Schell, German Army, who commanded the 9th Company.

DISCUSSION. The more difficult the situation, the less time there will be to issue long orders. Furthermore, men will be excited, and only the simplest movement can be executed.

Usually the first order for the fight can be given without hurry. It should therefore be complete. Above all, the mission and the information at hand should be given. In this case both the battalion and company commanders issued orders for defense which oriented all concerned.

Once combat has started, new orders of any length are impracticable. New situations should be met as Captain von Schell met them—by fragmentary orders that are *brief* and *clear*. In the foregoing example the situation was critical; had time been taken to issue long, formal orders, the battalion would have been cut off. The troops being veterans, an indication of what was desired was enough.

CONCLUSION. A good order must meet three minimum requirements:

- (1) It must cover the essentials.
- (2) It must be unmistakably clear to the subordinates who are to carry it out.
- (3) It must be issued early enough to reach subordinates in time for them to execute it.

Chapter XII: *Control*

The test of control is the ability of the leader to obtain the desired reaction from his command.

EVERY TRAINED SOLDIER knows that control is essential to success in battle, but combat records afford ample evidence that the measures necessary to insure it are frequently neglected in the early stages of a war. The reason is plain. Officers without combat experience—even those who have had considerable peace-time training—do not fully appreciate the difficulties of control under battle conditions. There is a tendency to take it for granted; to assume that it will be there when needed.

To maintain control in battle, the leader must keep constantly in mind the supreme importance and great difficulty of the problem. The control factor must be carefully weighed in every tactical decision. This requirement is absolute; for no plan can be carried through, no previously conceived maneuver executed, no fleeting opportunity grasped, unless a leader has control of his unit. If he has it, even indifferent troops may obtain decisive results. If he does not have it, the most highly trained organizations become partially or wholly ineffective.

During certain phases of an action, control may be temporarily sacrificed or attenuated for other advantages—such as a reduction of casualties. This, however, is justified only when the leader is sure that he can regain control of his command and makes positive arrangements to do so.

Some of the more important matters affecting control within the unit itself are its organization, its state of training, the capacity of its subordinate leaders, and its morale. Every commander should bear these things in mind in evaluating his control problem. In addition, he should remember those factors

that tend to promote good control. Among these should be listed:

- A simple plan, based on easily identified terrain features.
- Convergent rather than divergent movements.
- Clear, brief, definite orders.
- A suitable formation.
- Good communications.
- Constant supervision.
- Seizure of opportunities to reorganize.

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EXAMPLE 1. On August 19, 1914, the 7th Company of the French 153d Infantry made an approach march of some three miles in the preliminary phase of the Battle of Morhange. The 4th Platoon of this company numbered about fifty-five men—forty of them regulars and the rest reserves who had been called to the colors three weeks before. These reservists had forgotten much of their former training, and consequently lacked the dependability, confidence and aggressiveness of the other members of the platoon.

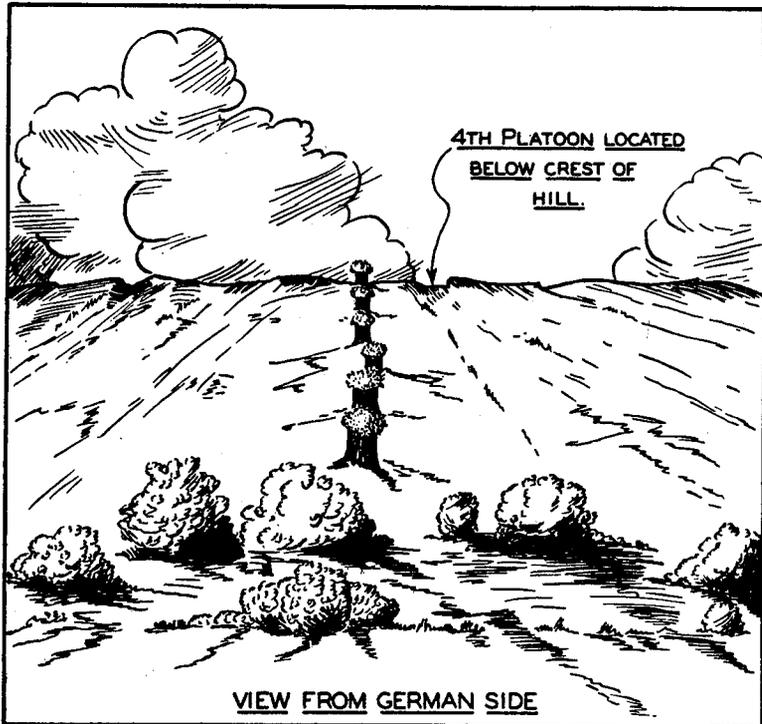
The platoon advanced some two miles under continuous artillery fire but, thanks to a combination of good leading and good luck, lost only two men. The remainder of the 7th Company was not so fortunate; it lost 33.

Late in the afternoon the platoon reached the reverse slope of a bare hill which had to be crossed. The crest, though out of small-arms range, was within easy range of the German artillery. A company to the left of the platoon attempted to cross in skirmish line and was shot to pieces. The platoon witnessed this.

The platoon leader studied the terrain carefully. He noted a ravine at the foot of the forward slope that offered fairly good protection. The only cover from the crest down to this ravine was a line of grain shocks spaced at intervals of four or five yards. The platoon leader decided to move his unit to the ravine a man

at a time, taking advantage of the cover offered by the shocks.

He led the way and directed his platoon to follow. On reaching the ravine he took cover and waited for the platoon to rejoin him. One by one they filed in. The enemy had not fired a single



Example 1

shot. Nevertheless, a check revealed '12 men missing—all reservists. The platoon leader had not left anyone behind to see that all men made the forward movement.

From studies on the advance of infantry under artillery fire by Major André Laffargue, French Army. Major Laffargue commanded the 4th Platoon of the 7th Company.

DISCUSSION. The formation adopted for crossing the crest

was undoubtedly correct. It enabled the platoon to escape the enemy's notice, and thus avoid the disaster which had overtaken the company on its left. True enough, this formation temporarily sacrificed control, but in this case it was justified in order to save casualties. Furthermore, the leader made positive arrangements to regain control at the earliest possible moment. He prescribed the length and method of the advance and he led the way in order to be on hand to gather up his men as they came in. He probably had an additional motive in going first: his outfit was undoubtedly shaken by the fate of the company on the left; by leading the way he provided his men with a first-class sedative.

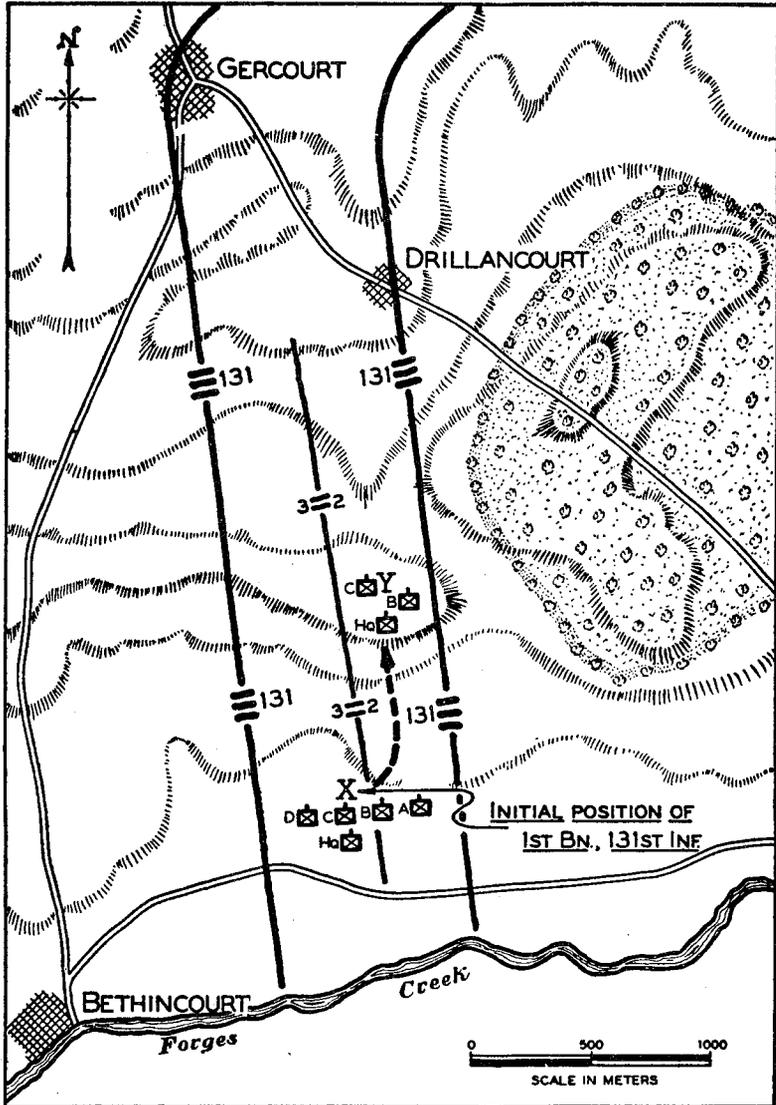
Indeed, this young officer can not be criticized for anything he did, but, as so often happens in war, he can be criticized for something he failed to do. In this instance he forgot half of his command problem—the rear half. He failed to charge any of his noncommissioned officers with the job of seeing that the entire platoon followed him as directed. We have seen the result: when the platoon reformed in the ravine 12 reservists—nearly one-fourth of the command—were missing.

So far as these twelve men were concerned, special precautions were necessary. These men were reservists; they had but recently joined the unit; the platoon leader knew practically nothing of their state of training or their dependability. In such circumstances the closest supervision is necessary if control is to be maintained. The figures speak eloquently—two men lost from physical causes, twelve from moral causes.

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EXAMPLE 2. On September 26, 1918, the U. S. 131st Infantry attacked to the north with the mission of gaining the high ground beyond Gercourt. The 1st Battalion, in regimental reserve (Point X), was to follow the assault battalions at 500 yards.

The battalion commander prescribed a formation in line of



Example 2

companies in the order: A, B, C, D, from right to left. Battalion headquarters and attached units followed in rear.

At H-hour fog and smoke limited visibility to a few yards. After a short while contact patrols informed the battalion commander that the left assault battalion was held up by machine-gun fire and that they had been unable to locate the right assault battalion.

Realizing that both forward battalions were well behind the schedule of advance, the commander of the 1st Battalion decided, on his own initiative, to take advantage of the protection afforded by the rolling barrage, which was now some distance ahead, and advance in the zone of the right assault battalion.

He made no change in dispositions although his battalion was now moving forward as an assault unit. Much difficulty was experienced in maintaining direction owing to poor visibility and to the deep trenches that crisscrossed the areas. Frequent checks by compass were necessary.

About 20 minutes after the battalion moved out, it reached the top of the hill (Point Y) on which it had been advancing. At this moment the fog lifted from the hill and the sun broke through. Strange things had happened during the short advance. On the *right* the battalion commander saw Company B; on the *left*, Company C; just in rear, the battalion headquarters group. Companies A and D had disappeared. No other friendly troops were in sight. Visibility to the rear was still greatly limited by the fog and smoke which clung to the low ground over which the battalion had advanced.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Carroll M. Gale, who commanded the 1st Battalion of the 131st Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The battalion entered the combat as regimental reserve. During this period it should have been held in as compact a formation as the covered approaches and the effectiveness of hostile long-range fire permitted.

The formation of four companies abreast spread the bat-

tion over a wide area. This dispersion was particularly objectionable because of the poor visibility. In general, formations in column facilitate control; formations in line make it difficult. Premature development or deployment surrenders, before necessary, a portion of that full control which should be retained to the last possible minute. In this particular situation the formation adopted by the leader multiplied the chances for mistakes and for units getting lost.

When the battalion commander decided to take over an assault rôle, he might well have adopted the familiar "square" formation—two companies leading, two companies following. Certainly that disposition would have been far easier to control than four companies in line. Moreover, with visibility what it was, intervals and distances should have been reduced to the minimum.

The consequences of the faulty formation are instructive: at the moment the battalion required all of its fighting power, it found itself only fifty per cent effective.

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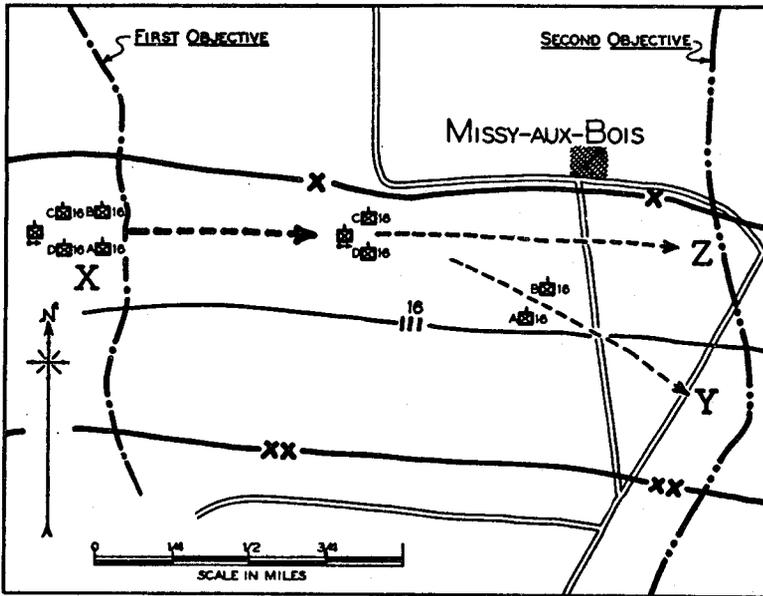
EXAMPLE 3. On July 18, 1918, the U. S. 16th Infantry attacked to the east in column of battalions. The 1st Battalion, in assault, reached the initial objective, quickly reorganized, and pushed on toward the second objective in the formation shown on the sketch.

Just as the battalion moved out, its leader was struck down and the captain of the left assault company (B) assumed command. This officer promptly delegated the responsibility of coördinating the movement of Companies C and D and the attached machine-gun company to the captain of Company C, while he undertook to do the same job for the assault companies (A and B). At the same time he continued actively in command of his own company.

After a short advance the assault companies met resistance

from the right front, veered in that direction, and eventually found themselves on the second objective, but out of the battalion zone of action. Meanwhile the rest of the battalion had disappeared.

After some delay, the battalion commander took steps to



Example 3

rectify the error in direction and sent patrols to locate his other three companies. They were finally found at Point Z.

The time lost in locating the companies that got out of control gave the enemy an opportunity to restore order and strengthen his defensive dispositions, and compromise the battalion's chance of achieving a striking success.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Fred McL. Logan, who commanded Company L of the 16th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The loss of control in this situation can be

attributed primarily to faulty organization of command. The new battalion commander assigned one officer to command the three reserve companies while he himself commanded the two assault companies. In so doing he failed to appreciate his new responsibility, which was the command of the battalion as a whole. In fact, it may be said that he inadvertently abdicated control.

When the reserve consists of more than one unit it may be desirable from a control viewpoint to have one officer responsible for its movements. This leaves the commander free to study the enemy situation and fight his assault units. He controls his command *through his subordinates*. In this particular case, the battalion commander was probably correct in designating an officer to command the three reserve companies but he erred in failing to restrict this officer to coördinating the advance of the reserve with the progress of the assault units. In effect, he set up two independent commands.

In retaining active command of his company, the new battalion commander committed his second error. He became so engrossed in the problems of Company B that he forgot his primary responsibility—control of the battalion. The result was all but inevitable: communication within the battalion broke down and the leader had no idea what had happened to the larger part of his command or even where it was.

Control presupposes that the leader know the location of all elements of his command at all times and can communicate with any element at any time.

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CONCLUSION. The consequences in each of the three examples in this chapter were identical—a great reduction in the effective strength of the unit concerned. This reduction was caused by loss of control and not by casualties or pressure from the enemy. It is clear that a leader cannot strike with his full

power unless the elements of his command are available when needed.

In maneuvers, with good visibility, no casualties, no confusion incident to battle, the most perfunctory effort is often enough to keep track of the location of subordinate units. It is far different in war; there, the control problem assumes giant proportions. Only those leaders who realize its difficulties and who take positive and constant action to solve it will find their units in hand and ready to strike at the critical moment.

Chapter XIII: *Command and Communication*

An infantry headquarters must be mobile and must keep close to the troops. From this forward position, communication must be rapid and reliable.

THE INFANTRY LEADER should have a good view of the terrain, personal observation of the enemy, and be in close touch with his own troops. Thus will he be able to deal promptly with rapid changes in the situation. He cannot be tied to a remote command post and take effective action in a sudden crisis. The mere fact that communications function well does not excuse him from intimate contact with his subordinates or from personal observation of the action. Even though technical means of communication fail, a commander must still be able to exercise his influence on events.

To quote Major General J. F. C. Fuller of the British Army:

If intercommunication between events in front and ideas behind are not maintained, then two battles will be fought—a mythical headquarters battle and an actual front-line one, in which case the real enemy is to be found in our own headquarters. Whatever doubt exists as regards the lessons of the last war, this is one which cannot be controverted.

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EXAMPLE 1. On the night of July 18-19, 1918, the French 365th Infantry, which had been in reserve, made a march of eight kilometers to the front in order to effect a passage of lines and attack at dawn.

For this attack the 4th and 6th Battalions were to be in assault. The 4th Battalion, with its right resting on and following the Maubeuge road, was directed to attack toward Montagne

de Paris while the 6th Battalion, on the left of the 4th, was ordered to move against Mont-sans-Pain. The line of departure was in the vicinity of the Carrières trench. H-hour was set at 4:45 a.m. Units were to move out when the first shells of the rolling barrage came down.

At 4:00 a.m. the 4th Battalion reached the locality indicated on the sketch. Here it found that the battalion zone of action was much wider than had been expected. Liaison had not yet been established on the right with the 1st Zouaves of the 153d Division nor on the left with the 6th Battalion.

The battalion commander made a rapid reconnaissance and issued his orders. Company commanders rejoined their units.

As the first shells of the barrage fell, the 6th Battalion suddenly appeared, moving directly across the front of the 4th. It disappeared in the dust and smoke, attacking along the right boundary of the regiment. The 14th Company of the 4th Battalion joined the movement and became intermingled with the 6th Battalion and the 1st Zouaves. The barrage began to move forward.

Observing this movement, the battalion commander at once assembled his company commanders and issued the following order:

We were to attack on the right. Now we attack on the left of the regimental zone. Our objective was Montagne de Paris. Now it is Mont-sans-Pain. The 13th Company will cover the entire battalion front. Forward!

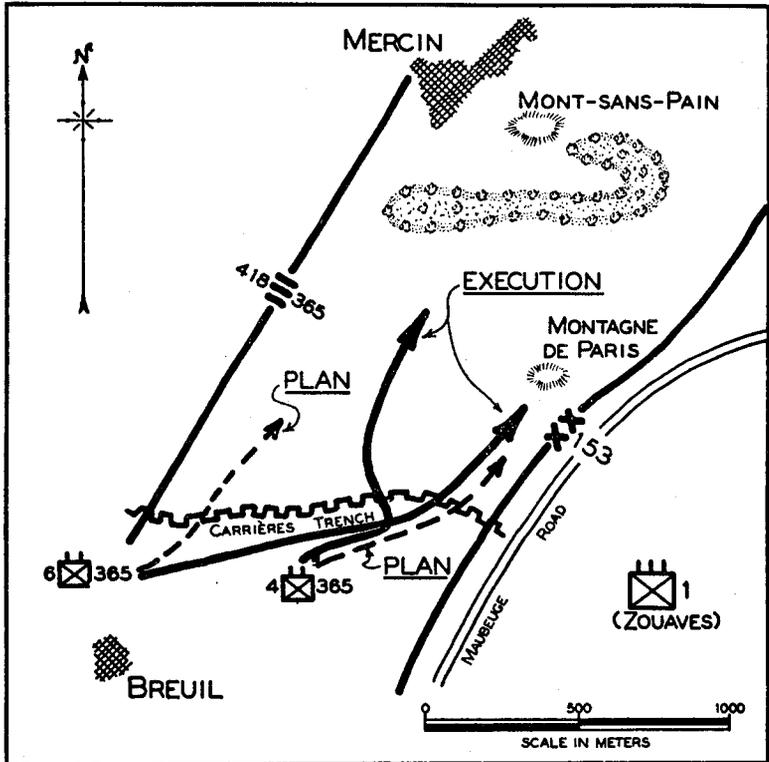
The attack of the battalion was fairly successful.

During the morning twenty-two messages dealing with tactical matters were sent or received by the battalion commander, who kept close behind the advance. All of these messages were *carried by runner*; not one was unduly delayed. This figure does not include messages sent to the regimental commander, or those dealing with anything but strictly tactical matters. The total number of all messages handled, including those dealing

with losses and supply, is said to have been about seventy-five.

From an article by Major Pamponneau, French Army, in "La Revue d'Infanterie," October, 1930.

DISCUSSION. Here we see an instance of a battalion losing its direction in a night march and attacking in the zone of the



Example 1

unit on its right. This action, coming as a complete surprise and at the very moment of the jump-off, presented an unexpected and confused situation to the 4th Battalion. Fortunately, the commander of the 4th Battalion was well forward, in close contact with his units, and was thereby enabled to retrieve the

situation. Had he been mulling over maps or orders in some sheltered command post, his entire battalion, instead of one company, would have become intermingled with the 6th Battalion and there would have been no assault in the left half of the regimental zone.

By means of personal contact with his unit commanders, supplemented by excellent communication within the battalion, this leader actually commanded.

In an attack, infantry commanders must be well forward.

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EXAMPLE 2. By desperate fighting from August 6 to 8, 1918, the U. S. 112th Infantry, supported by the 1st Battalion of the 111th Infantry, had succeeded in capturing the little town of Fismes and driving the Germans to the north bank of the Vesle. On the night of August 8 the 111th Infantry relieved the 112th, and the 1st Battalion of the 111th, which had been attached to the 112th, reverted to its proper unit.

The 111th Infantry had orders to cross the Vesle and continue the attack. The 1st Battalion, being the most available unit, was directed to cross the river and assault Fismettes.

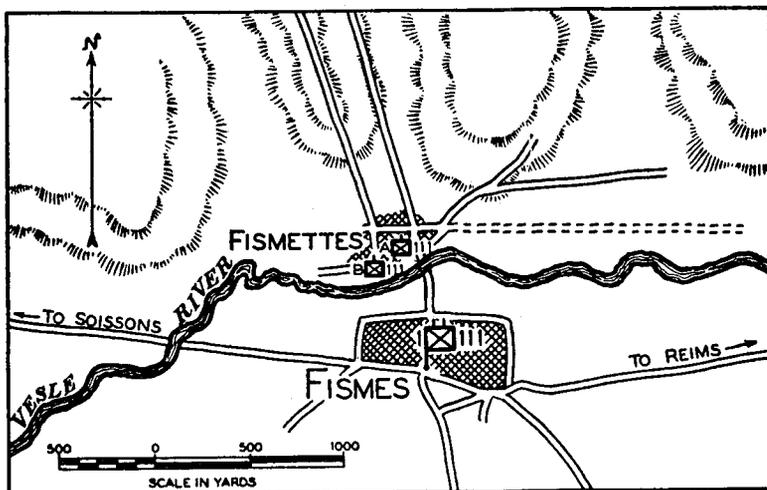
What little had remained of the one bridge across the Vesle had been completely destroyed. Bridging, in the face of the murderous accuracy of the German fire, was considered impossible. The barbed-wire entanglements that filled the river rendered wading or swimming out of the question.

Under cover of darkness, the men of Company A gathered rocks and débris from nearby ruins and heaped them in the stream until the pile formed a species of footpath close enough to the opposite bank to be bridged by a stout plank.

Utilizing this slippery and treacherous causeway, the men of Company A, with other troops of the battalion, filtered across the river and took cover in the ruins along the southern edge of Fismettes. It was 4:15 a.m. when this move was completed.

It now developed that no one knew the plan. The company commander had been given an oral order. He did not know the line of departure, the time of attack or, for that matter, just where he was.

Suddenly heavy artillery fire fell to the front, all the American guns appearing to open simultaneously. At this moment a



Example 2

runner appeared and thrust a package into the hands of a platoon leader. A hasty examination disclosed the fact that it contained the division's confirming order for the attack and was intended for the brigade. From this order it was learned that the artillery fire crashing to the front was a barrage in preparation for the attack and was due to raise to the objective at that very moment. The barrage was wasted as far as the 1st Battalion was concerned for this unit was supposed to be 500 yards farther to the front, 300 yards farther to the right, and ready to jump off at the next instant.

The battalion commander had remained in Fismes.

Daybreak found elements of the battalion huddled in Fis-

mettes. The commander of Company B, being senior, took command and organized an attack to the north. The attack was broken up by heavy fire at close range.

The Germans now gradually filtered back into Fismettes and began firing on the battalion from the rear. Confused house-to-house fighting followed. After a desperate struggle the battalion, though seriously depleted, still held Fismettes.

Several messages were sent to the battalion commander advising him of the situation and requesting reinforcements, ammunition, rations, and help in evacuating the wounded. Runners went back, under fire, over the foot-bridge. No word came back. No help was received. The fighting continued.

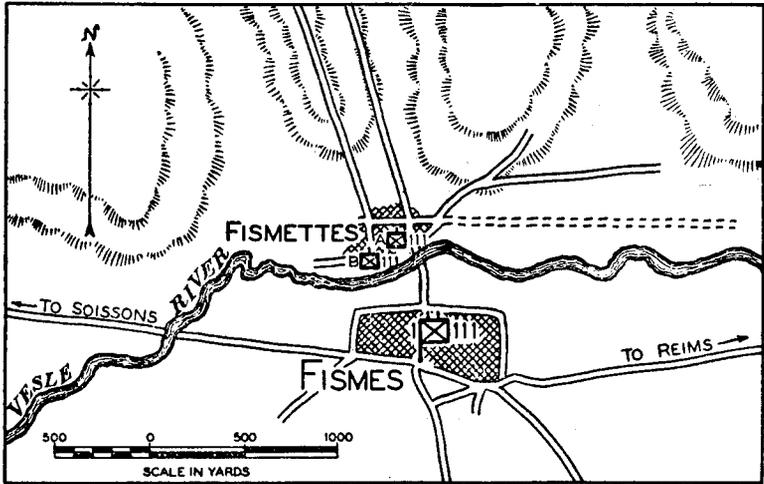
On August 11, a vigorous German counter-attack was repulsed. Immediately thereafter both German and American artillery opened on the town. Frantic messages were sent back to battalion headquarters to have the American barrage raised or stopped. But there was no relief from the artillery and no response from battalion headquarters. All the Very cartridges and rockets in the battalion were fired, but to no avail. Heavy casualties piled up.

Finally an officer made his way back to the battalion command post south of the Vesle. He stated that there were nearly as many men around the C.P. as the battalion had in the front line—among them many of the runners who had carried messages back from Fismettes.

This officer asked why the messages to raise the American barrage had not been complied with. The reply was that the telephone was out and that the information could not be sent to the rear. Upon the insistence of this officer, the liaison officer started back in person to tell the artillery to stop its fire.

The battalion commander appears to have been equally out of touch with the regiment. Although many detailed messages had been sent back by the troops north of the Vesle and many got through to the battalion command post, a regimental report,

dated August 20, stated that repeated requests sent to the C.P. of the 1st Battalion for information of the condition of the troops in Fismettes brought no definite information up to the afternoon of August 11.



Example 2

On the morning of the 14th the battalion was relieved.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Ottmann W. Freeborn, Infantry.

DISCUSSION. During the capture and occupation of Fismettes the battalion commander remained in his command post south of the Vesle. From such a position he was unable to deal with the many desperate situations which his battalion had to face—situations that demanded immediate action on the spot. In a word, he failed to command.

His only possible excuse for remaining south of the Vesle would be easier communication with the regiment and with the artillery. But even this must be invalidated since neither of these agencies was kept informed of the situation, although the

units in Fismettes poured vital information into the battalion command post.

Because the wire system failed, the battalion commander assumed that he was unable to communicate with either the artillery or higher authority. This, of course, is no excuse. So long as anyone, including the commander, can walk, crawl, or roll, an infantry unit is not "out of communication."

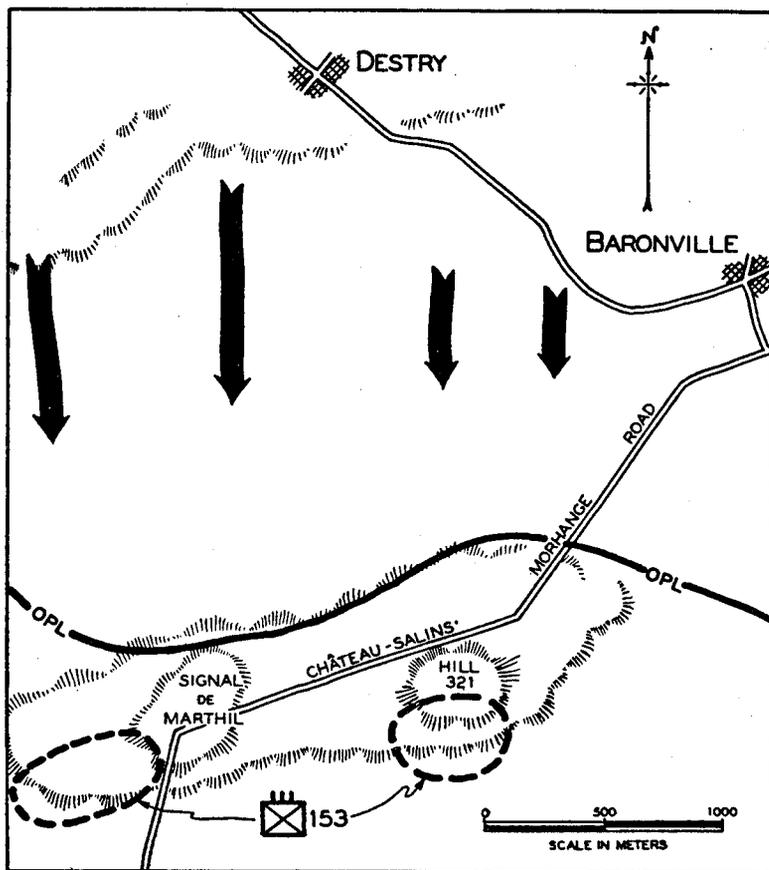
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EXAMPLE 3. After pushing forward all day August 19, 1914, in pursuit of a retiring enemy, the French 153d Infantry reached the heights of Signal de Marthil and Hill 321. During the day heavy artillery fire had been received from the direction of Baronville, but the region north of Signal de Marthil seemed free of the enemy.

Outposts were established on the north slopes of the heights between Hill 321 and Signal de Marthil. As the advance was to be resumed the following day, no elaborate communications were established between the observation elements of the outpost and the remainder of the regiment. There was no wire or radio, and the outposts had not been provided with pyrotechnics.

At dawn on the 20th, the battalions assembled on the south slopes of the hills, awaiting orders. Breakfast was being prepared. Suddenly a hail of shells fell on the French position. Men ran for the nearest cover. Since no message came from the outpost it was assumed that the Germans were laying down a counter-preparation to prevent a French advance. Fifteen to twenty minutes passed and then a rumor spread: "The enemy is attacking."

The battalions received orders to deploy on the crests to their front. Scarcely had the leading platoons climbed the slope when they encountered a strong hostile attack. The French left was enveloped. The Signal de Marthil fell. The undeployed battalions, still on the southern slope, were taken in flank by heavy



Example 3

fire. The French vainly strove to establish a firing line, but were so confused that they did not even know in which direction to deploy. They were driven back in disorder.

The French outguards had seen the Germans debouch from the heights south and west of Destroy, but messages sent to the rear did not reach the French regimental and battalion commanders until the Germans were almost on them.

From an article by Major Laffargue, in "La Revue d'Infanterie," April, 1927.

DISCUSSION. The German attack progressed 1,500 to 2,000 yards in full view of the French outguards and reached the Château-Salins—Morhange Road before the French battalions received word of it. The Germans appear to have covered this distance in about twenty minutes.

The French battalions were only 400 yards or so from the crests. The commanders were among their troops. Their desire could be expressed simply: "Deploy on the hills to your front." Yet the Germans got there first. Regardless of the fact that the French appear to have been too confident to take warning from the artillery fire, the striking thing is that the German attack progressed 2,000 yards before messages from the outpost could travel a third of that distance and be acted upon.

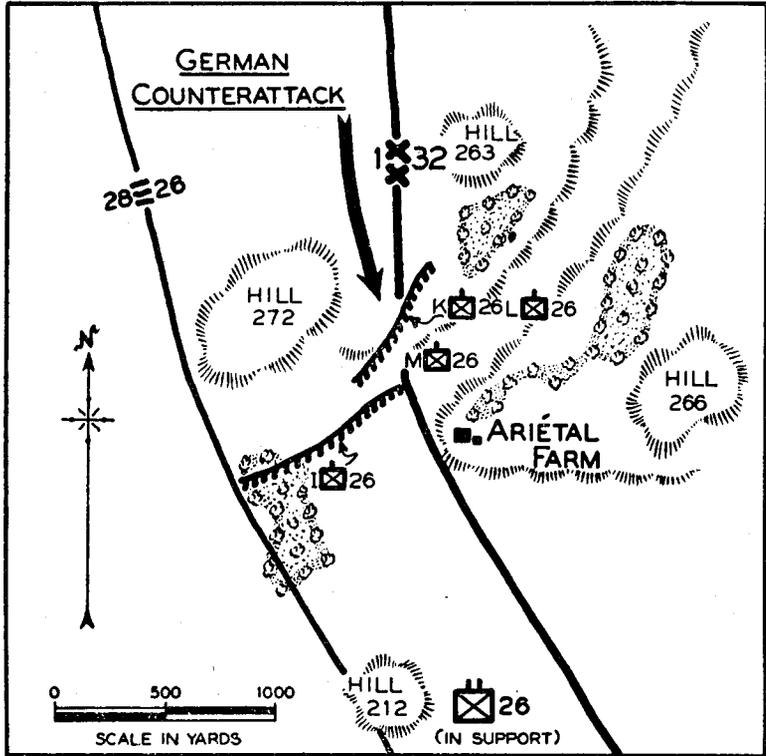
In such a situation, the value of visual means of communication must be apparent. Pyrotechnics or projectors, using a pre-arranged code to express simple, important ideas such as "enemy attacking," would have met the situation.

The disaster to this regiment must be attributed, in large part to inadequate communications.

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EXAMPLE 4. On October 6, 1918, the 3d Battalion of the U. S. 26th Infantry attacked Hill 272. Two companies, K in assault and M in support, advancing from the southeast, had reached the slopes of the hill, which was still strongly held by the Germans. Company I, extending along the entire battalion front south of the hill, assisted the attack by fire. Farther to the left some guns of Company A of the 3d Machine-Gun Battalion and elements of a battalion of the 28th Infantry added their fire to the effort. Company L, with two machine guns, covered the right flank and rear of the attack from the ravine northeast of the Ariétal Farm. It was realized that this was a danger point since the 1st Division, to which the 26th Infantry belonged, appeared to be farther advanced than the troops on its right. Ele-

ments of the 7th Field Artillery supported the attack, and a system of rocket signals had been arranged with them in case telephone communication should break down. The support battalion of the 26th Infantry was located near Hill 212.



Example 4

About 3:00 p.m. the commander of the assault battalion was south of the left flank of the leading elements of Company M. He could see Hill 272 and Companies I and K. He also had a fair view to the northeast.

An extension of the telephone line from the battalion command post was within 400 yards of the battalion commander's

position. Actually, he had expected to have a telephone with him, for it was well understood in the regiment that if the communications of any unit failed to function, that unit would soon have a new commander. But in this case casualties among the telephone detachments had prevented a further extension of the telephone, so an advanced C.P. was established at the end of the line.

About this time artillery fire and some scattered rifle fire were heard to the northeast, and men from Companies L and M came running past the battalion commander. They reported that hundreds of Germans were counter-attacking southwest down the valley east of Hill 272. This would take the American attack in flank and rear. Company K, the leading assault company, began to withdraw. The battalion commander could now see the Germans moving down the valley in close formation. They seemed to be in force. A forward movement of the widely deployed Company I was not believed possible in the face of the fire from Hill 272. Moreover, any movement by this company would take time.

The battalion commander took the following action:

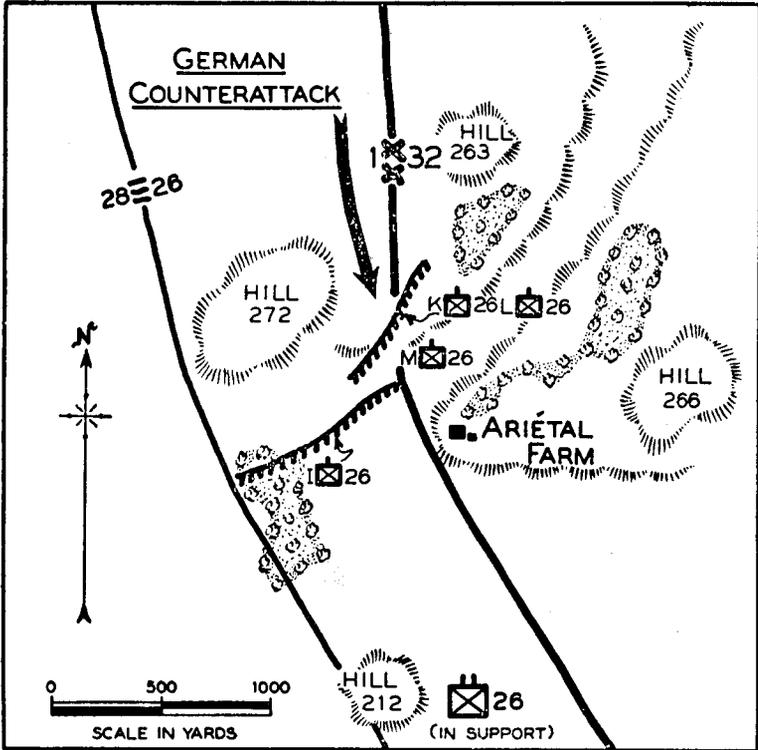
He sent an oral message by runner to Company K directing that it hold its ground and continue to face Hill 272.

He sent two runners by different routes to the end of the telephone line with written messages to be telephoned to the support battalion asking for machine-gun and artillery support. (It was routine for the support battalion to pass such messages on.) The runners were then to find the artillery liaison officer, inform him of the situation and ask for Fire No. 9, data for which had been prepared. The liaison officer was known to be observing artillery fire from a tree in the woods south of Hill 272. He had a telephone line to the artillery.

Meanwhile, with the aid of three veteran noncommissioned officers of Company M, the battalion commander succeeded in halting and assembling some 40 of the retreating troops. Tak-

ing charge of these 40 men, he moved through the woods and counter-attacked the advancing Germans on their left flank.

The runners sent with the written message found that the officer left at the telephone extension had been killed, but they



Example 4

telephoned the message properly and promptly. They then found the liaison officer and delivered their message to him.

The German movement had also been noted by the regimental command post. As a result of the prompt transmission of information, the machine guns of the support battalion on Hill 212 placed accurate, indirect fire on the valley. The artillery also brought down its fire promptly.

These fires, in conjunction with the efforts of Companies L and M, and the fire of the two machine guns that were covering the right flank, broke the hostile attack. The Germans suffered heavy losses and withdrew in confusion.

From the personal experience monograph and supplementary statements of Major Lyman S. Frasier, who commanded the 3d Battalion of the 26th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. This situation, which developed so suddenly, appeared extremely serious to the battalion commander. Men from two companies had started to run. A third company had started to withdraw. Intervention by the battalion commander was imperative.

Had he not been well forward where he could see the enemy, see his own troops, and exert his personal influence, he would have been helpless. Information would not have reached him in time.

Thanks to excellent communications, he was able to make his wants known to the regiment and to the artillery. The telephones were working and he was within 400 yards of one. Moreover, the artillery liaison officer, though not with the battalion commander, was not far distant, and he had a telephone connected with the artillery. The battalion commander knew just where this liaison officer was. So did the runners. They knew where they were to go, and in a crisis, they telephoned important messages promptly and properly.

This situation could not have been fully met if preparations had not been made for such an eventuality. The artillery and the machine guns were prepared to place fire in the valley. On receipt of a short, simple message, they did so and did so promptly.

The following passage from the monograph of Major Frasier indicates the methods used in the 1st Division (by that time a veteran organization) to insure communication in the Meuse-Argonne offensive:

Battalion commanders had been informed before the battle that their

chief duty was to advance but that next to this their most important function would be to keep in touch with regimental headquarters. If these two things were done, the ground gained would undoubtedly be held.

It was understood that the assault battalion was responsible for the wire line as far back as the support battalion. The support battalion would maintain the line to the regimental C.P. The telephone section of the regimental signal detachment would assist in the supply and maintenance of the entire telephone system.

The wire scheme generally employed at that time was called a ladder line. The lines were laid about ten yards apart or at any other distance which would permit a lineman on patrol to observe both lines for breaks. At regular intervals these wires were bridged.

The linemen detailed to bridge the wires carried test sets. In order to keep the system working, men were detailed as line guards and patrols. At all times, both day and night, there would be one man patrolling every 500-yard section of wire. These guards would meet.

During the second phase of the Meuse-Argonne offensive it cost the 3d Battalion 74 men to maintain telephone communication, but had we not had communication at all times, the number of casualties that could have been charged to the lack of it might well have been 740 instead of 74.

Runners were depended upon entirely for communication between companies, and between companies and the battalion command post. Runners and mounted messengers were depended upon for communication (other than by telephone) with regimental headquarters.

An important message would be sent by at least two runners, one leaving some little time after the other. It was also found advisable to place some distinguishing mark upon runners. When no distinguishing marks were worn, it required that they carry their messages pinned on their blouses in a conspicuous place.

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CONCLUSION. In order to exercise control, battalion commanders should be well forward. In their field training, battalions should practice methods of maintaining communication between the commander's forward position and his command post. Frequently an extension of the telephone system will be the simplest solution.

As a rule, the battalion commander should move forward along the announced axis of signal communication. If, for any reason, he leaves this axis, a runner should be left behind who knows where he can be located. The command-post personnel should always be able to find the commander.

Runners must be relied upon for communication within the battalion. Unless this messenger service is carefully planned and its personnel is of high quality and well trained, it will not be able to survive the tests of the battlefield.

To fight his unit efficiently, a leader must be able to impart his decisions to his subordinates quickly and correctly. To insure prompt, intelligent assistance from the higher echelons, he must be able to keep them informed of the situation.

In brief, without effective communications the efforts of infantry in battle will be aimless and uncoördinated.

Chapter XIV: *Supervision*

Leaders must supervise the execution of their orders. The more untrained the troops, the more detailed this supervision must be.

A SUPERFICIAL READING of military textbooks is likely to convey the idea that the duties of a leader consist only of estimating the situation, reaching a decision, and issuing an order. It is evident, however, that unless the orders of the commander are executed, even a perfect plan will fail. On the other hand, a poor plan, if loyally and energetically carried out, will often succeed.

A commander, then, must not only issue his order but must also see to its execution. It is the omission of this final step that has caused many brilliant plans to go awry. Too often a leader assumes that once his plan is completed and his order issued, his responsibility for the action terminates. He seems to feel that he has discharged his obligation and that the execution remains entirely with his subordinates. Such an assumption is false even when dealing with veteran troops. Where poorly trained troops are involved, the necessity for vigilance and supervision becomes even more imperative. Initiative must not be destroyed, but the commander must nevertheless bear in mind that the responsibility for the result of the action rests squarely with him. Consequently, he is not only justified in carrying out the supervision necessary to insure proper execution, but is seriously delinquent if he fails to do so.

Of course, a leader cannot be everywhere, but he *can* and should weigh the capabilities and limitations of his subordinates, determine the critical point or time of the action, and lend the weight and authority of personal supervision where it is most needed:

EXAMPLE 1. On the foggy morning of August 29, 1914, the German 2d Guard Regiment, located just south of the Oise River, faced an obscure situation. French outguards were known to be a mile to the south, but the strength and intentions of their main force remained problematic. Although the French had been withdrawing for several days, this was no guarantee that the withdrawal would continue.

The 2d Guard Regiment was ordered to advance, making a first bound to the high ground near Hill 164. The regiment moved out with the 1st Battalion on the right as base unit, the 3d Battalion on the left, and the 2d Battalion in the second echelon behind the center.

Neither the regimental commander nor the 1st Battalion commander gave the direction of march by compass bearing. Routes of advance were not reconnoitered.

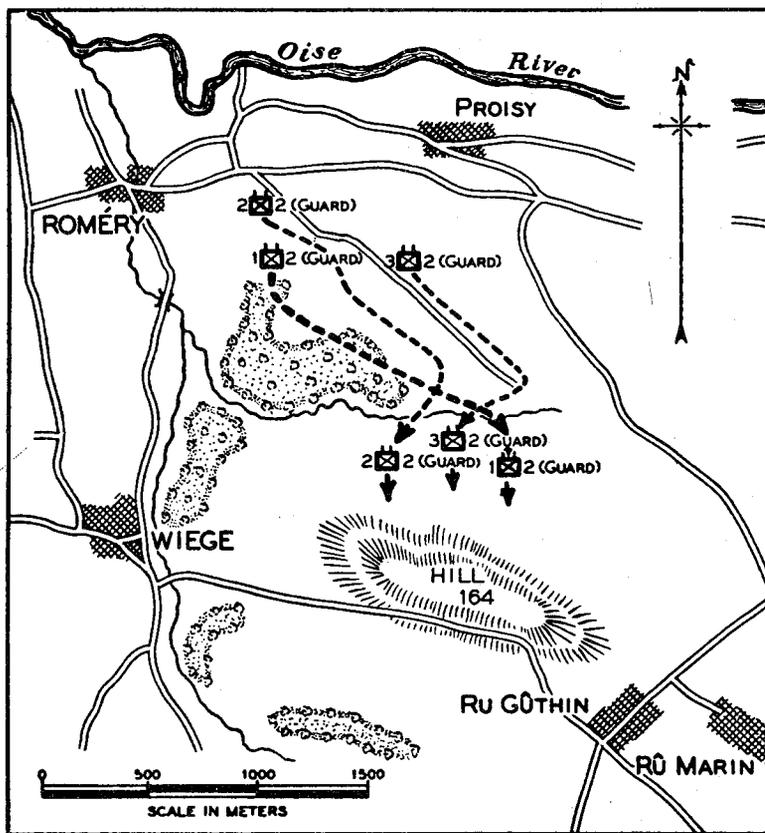
The 1st Battalion descended the slopes of the ridge east of Roméry, and reached a wooded valley which it took for the valley leading to Wiege. After marching for half an hour the battalion reached the edge of the wood, but found no Wiege. Thereupon the battalion commander ordered a halt. Maps were produced and officers became involved in a discussion as to the location of the battalion. The truth was soon apparent—the battalion was lost!

At this point the brigade commander, Major General von Schacht, arrived. He showed the battalion commander that he had followed the valley leading from Roméry to the southeast and that if the battalion continued on its present course it would march diagonally across the zone of the division on its left.

General von Schacht then reoriented the entire regiment, and with this information the correct position was soon reached. This proved of great importance, for the French had ceased retreating and were making a stand.

From the account by Lieutenant Colonel Koeltz, French Army, in "La Revue d'Infanterie," June, 1927.

DISCUSSION. Except for the fact that the brigade commander was well forward, supervising the execution of this movement, the attack of the brigade, and very possibly the at-



Example 1

tack of the entire division, would have been launched under most unfavorable circumstances. Had the brigade commander given orders and then remained at a command post in rear, one of his regiments would have gone wandering off into the zone of another division.

The brigade orders were correct; it was the execution by the regiment which was at fault. We may well put down for reference the fact that neither the regimental nor battalion commander had given the direction by compass.

Fortunately, the brigade commander knew that even with such excellent troops as the German Guards, mishaps and mistakes can occur; and that after an order has been given, it is necessary to see that it is properly executed.

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EXAMPLE 2. On October 9, 1918, the U. S. 92d Division took over the Marbache sector. By November 1 it had been in line for three weeks. During this time patrols had been ordered out nightly, and at least two raids had been made. But in spite of this activity no prisoners had been brought in. This, coupled with the fact that reports sent in by patrols were highly conflicting, indicated that many patrols were not going far beyond their own wire. Consequently, a staff officer of the 183d Brigade (92d Division) was directed to keep a large-scale patrol map of the routes followed by all patrols as shown in their reports, together with any detailed information submitted, such as location of hostile wire, lanes through wire, trails, and enemy outposts. By checking patrol reports against recent maps and aerial photographs it was soon possible to determine which reports were reliable.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain Roy N. Hagerty, who was aide-de-camp to the Commanding General, 183d Brigade.

DISCUSSION. This example shows one form of supervision that a staff may take to assure itself that orders are being carried out. Junior officers—lieutenants and captains—had failed to see that orders were executed. It was not practicable for the brigade commander or his staff to go out personally with the patrols, but they could and did deduce from the means at hand which patrols

were actually going out, and which were sending in misleading reports.

This incident illustrates the necessity for close supervision of a partly trained command whose discipline and morale are questionable. Here it would have been desirable to relieve all unreliable junior officers, but this was not practicable at the time.

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EXAMPLE 3. During the period September 26-October 6, 1918, the U. S. 305th Infantry, with Company D of the 305th Machine-Gun Battalion attached, took part in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Most of the officers of the 2d Battalion of the 305th Infantry had been recently promoted or had just joined and were new to their jobs. A few days previously the battalion had received replacements, many of whom had little training. These replacements constituted about 20% of the battalion's effective strength. There were several instances during the ensuing action when men asked officers how to place a clip of cartridges in a rifle.

Late on the afternoon of September 30 the 2d Battalion reached a position near the Naza Ridge where the Germans were making a determined stand. It was too late to organize and launch an attack, so the battalion was ordered to halt and dig in. The terrain was broken and shell-torn. The ridges all looked more or less alike. No two officers could agree from a study of the map as to what ridge they were on. The battalion commander therefore disregarded the map and, taking all company commanders with him, made a personal reconnaissance and assigned sectors. Company commanders then led their companies into position.

Early on the morning of October 1 the battalion commander inspected the dispositions. He found a wide gap between the 305th Infantry and the 28th Division on the right which had to be closed by the battalion reserve. He also found that the two

machine guns attached to each company had been placed on the extreme flanks of the company lines without regard for fields of fire. In one case, the guns had been placed some 50 yards beyond the rifle company, without a single rifleman near enough to protect them. The machine-gun company commander had not been consulted in locating these guns.

Inspection of machine-gun emplacements showed that two had been dug with so much consideration for the protection of the gun crew that any firing would have to be done at an angle of 45 degrees!

From the personal experience monograph of Major Erskine S. Dollarhide, who commanded Company D of the 305th Machine-Gun Battalion.

DISCUSSION. The fact that soldiers were found in the front line who were unfamiliar with the simplest fundamentals of their weapons must appear incredible. Yet such conditions were not uncommon in our army during the World War and they may occur again in a future conflict of major proportions. They serve to emphasize the necessity for careful supervision.

We see a lack of training in map reading on the part of company officers, making it necessary for the battalion commander to conduct his unit commanders to their areas. Later, partly because of the character of the terrain and partly because the troops were unaccustomed to night movements, we see company commanders guiding their units into position by hand. The next morning's inspection of the dispositions disclosed that, in spite of all previous efforts, there was a dangerous gap on the right flank. Thanks to the battalion commander's vigilance this was discovered in time to take corrective measures.

Finally, the necessity for checking such details as the siting and construction of machine-gun emplacements, is clearly demonstrated. Personal safety is likely to be uppermost in the minds of partly-trained troops and only the most rigid supervision will insure that units and individuals are not sacrificing battle efficiency for an unwarranted amount of activity.

EXAMPLE 4. General Pétain, later commander-in-chief of the French Armies, commanded a corps in the French attack in Artois in the spring of 1915. After issuing his orders, the General repeatedly questioned subordinates in regard to their conception of the manner in which they would carry out those orders. He is said to have questioned every gunner about his part in the attack, and to have supervised the registration of every piece of artillery.

DISCUSSION. This is an extreme example of supervision and one that is rarely practicable. The results justified General Pétain. His corps achieved a remarkable success: it rapidly overran the German defenses in its front and effected a deep penetration. It was the only corps to achieve such a signal success in the general attack.

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EXAMPLE 5. On the evening of June 1, 1918, the U. S. 7th Machine-Gun Battalion (two companies) occupied positions on the south bank of the Marne at Château-Thierry. Company B was disposed with one platoon covering the right flank of the battalion, and two platoons generally covering a bridge across the Marne.

French troops who had been fighting north of the Marne began withdrawing south of the river, and a German attack developed against the American position on the south bank. Germans were reported to have crossed the Marne in the darkness. The battalion commander had exercised little supervision over his companies. The situation as it appeared to the captain of Company B is described in the personal experience monograph of Major John R. Mendenhall, who at the time commanded this company. He says:

To the captain of Company B the situation appeared desperate. Runners sent to the battalion C.P. failed to return. His own reconnaissance and the report of a lieutenant from Company A, who had

INFANTRY IN BATTLE

been on the north bank, convinced him that, without rifle support, Company B could not avoid capture and was ineffective in the positions it then occupied. Moreover, failure to gain contact with the battalion C.P. implied that it had moved, probably to the rear, and orders had been to cover such a withdrawal.

The captain therefore sent oral messages by runners to his platoons, directing the 1st and 3d Platoons to withdraw to the second-line position, and the 2d, which he hoped was still commanding the bridge, to cover the withdrawal.

The company commander then went to the battalion command post which he found had not been moved. There he received orders to move his company back to its former positions. The captain, with his headquarters personnel and four reserve guns, moved back to the bridge. There he found the 2d Platoon had gone, as well as the others.

In his monograph Major Mendenhall then describes a fight in the dark between Germans, who could be recognized by their helmets, a few French, and the crews of his reserve guns which went into action.

The combined fire of these guns drove the remaining Germans across the bridge. The guns were then moved to positions from which they held the south bank until daylight when the remainder of the company was reestablished in its former positions.

Investigation later showed that the runners had become confused and delivered the company commander's order to each of the three platoons as "Withdraw at once."

Let us now see what happened to the two platoons near the bridge. This is described by Lieutenant Luther W. Cobbe, who commanded one of these platoons.

About 9:30 p.m. a runner came to me with an order to retreat with all possible speed; that the Germans had crossed the river and were on our side. Supposing that the Germans had made a crossing without my knowing it, I followed the instructions given, which were nothing less than to "beat it."

On the way back we passed through an enemy barrage. We moved about four kilometers to the rear, taking up a position on a hill overlooking the river, where the French had prepared a line of resistance. On arriving there I found Paul (Lieutenant Paul T.

Funkhouser, commanding a platoon of Company B) with his platoon; he had received the same order.

After putting our guns into position, we waited for the German attack that we expected at any moment. At about 1:00 a.m. Paul said, "Don't you think we had better go back into Château-Thierry and find out whether the Germans are actually in the town?"

Paul and I took one runner and started back. We finally reached the place we started from and to our surprise found there were no Germans on our side of the river. We immediately went to battalion headquarters to find out why we had been ordered to retreat. The major denied any knowledge of our retreat, and showed no interest in the matter. He didn't seem to give a darn what we had done or might do.

Paul and I felt that the only thing to do was to go back, get our men and guns, and get into action again in our old positions, which we were finally able to do about daylight.

From the personal experience monograph of Major John R. Mendenhall, who commanded Company B of the 7th Machine-Gun Battalion.

DISCUSSION. The 7th Machine-Gun Battalion was lucky indeed that this mishap did not result in a serious reverse. Its predicament affords a triple illustration of the necessity for supervision.

First, partially because of lack of supervision and control by the battalion commander, one of his companies began an unauthorized withdrawal contrary to his desires. Since he had not kept in close contact with Company B and since he had failed to supervise its operations (either personally or through a staff officer), he must be credited with a share of the responsibility for its withdrawal. During the operations, he gave his subordinates the impression of inactivity and indifference.

Second, as the captain of Company B discovered, orders—particularly oral orders sent by runner—may be easily altered in the transmission or misconstrued. It will often be necessary to issue oral orders in the haste and confusion of battle, but the next step must invariably be a verification of the execution.

Finally, this example shows that when errors are promptly discovered they may be repaired. True, the captain of Company B discovered his error too late to keep his platoons from with-

drawing, but he was able to prevent disastrous consequences by using his four reserve guns.

In spite of all we can do, misunderstandings will occur in war. The leader's job, then, is to detect these errors early and correct them quickly; this can be done only through close supervision. If he fails to supervise he will usually learn of the blunder after the disaster has occurred.

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CONCLUSION. Orders will be misunderstood by troops, regardless of their experience or degree of training. But even when orders *are* understood, fear, fatigue, or sheer inertia may result in a failure to carry them out unless leaders exercise a continuous and untiring supervision.

A simple, workable plan is important; a clear, understandable order is important; but supervision to see that the will of the commander is executed is all-important.

Chapter XV: *Direction*

The marching compass is the infantry officer's most reliable guide.

IN AN ATTACK, one of the leader's most important duties is maintenance of direction. *Infantry Drill Regulations (Provisional)*, 1919, fresh from the experience of the World War, states: "More attacks fail from loss of direction than from any other cause." Whether or not this statement can be fully substantiated is not important. The important thing is that so many attacks *did* fail through loss of direction that this statement was written into post-war regulations.

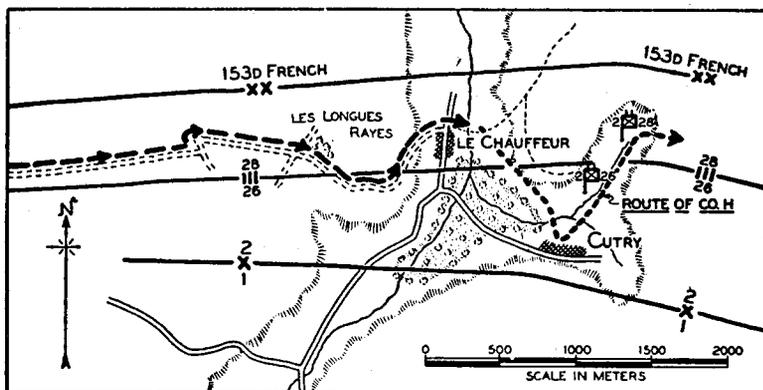
Undoubtedly the best aids in maintaining direction are clearly visible terrain features that can be seen by all men and that cannot be mistaken. Distant direction points or such features as roads, streams, railroads, ridges or valleys that run in the desired direction are invaluable. It frequently happens, however, that these natural guides either do not exist in the desired locations or else lead only part way to the assigned objective. In such instances reliance must be placed on the marching compass.

Even when guides are furnished, the responsibility for getting a unit to the proper place at the proper time is still the commander's. It will therefore pay him to check on the guide.

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EXAMPLE 1. On the night of July 17, 1918, the 2d Battalion of the U. S. 28th Infantry moved forward with orders to attack at 4:35 the following morning. Leaving its position near Mortefontaine at 9:30 p.m., it marched via a trail and an unimproved road to the environs of le Chauffeur. A violent rainstorm set in shortly after the battalion got under way. A description of the march, as given by the battalion commander, follows:

The darkness became so intense that it was impossible for the men in ranks to see those in front of them. The trail, which was bad at best from recent shelling, now became a quagmire. It was necessary to close the units without distance and have the men hang on to the equipment of the men ahead. Great difficulty was experienced in keeping the column from being broken, as the men were constantly slipping and falling into shell holes.



Example 1

As the column approached the front, the roads and trails became congested with horses, cannon, motor trucks, tanks and artillery, en route to their positions. This added to our difficulty and it was only through the almost superhuman efforts of the officers and the men that the battalion ever reached its destination.

The battalion commander joined the column as it passed the regimental command post. At this point the battalion was broken up and the individual companies, led by French guides, proceeded toward their respective positions.

The battalion commander had the only available map.

As Company H started to descend into the ravine near Cutry, the Germans began to scorch that area with artillery fire. The guide, becoming excited and confused, promptly led the company in the wrong direction. The company commander, having neither map nor compass, did not realize this until he arrived in a town. Here French soldiers told him that he was in Cutry and

that there were some Americans to the east. Later he met the adjutant of the 26th Infantry, the unit on the right of the 28th, and this officer gave him general directions. The company then proceeded northeast.

At 4:15 a.m. it passed the command post of the 2d Battalion of the 26th Infantry, whose commander pointed out the position of Company H on the line of departure. Day was just beginning to break. The company dared not move out of the ravine to go into position lest it be seen by the enemy, and the benefit of surprise be lost. Therefore the company commander continued his march up the ravine until he reached the command post of the 2d Battalion of the 28th Infantry. Upon reporting to his battalion commander, he was directed to form his company near the top of the steep slopes of the ravine and be prepared to emerge at a run at H-hour and close on the barrage.

The company had failed to get into position for the attack on time. By a bit of good luck it did manage to get into a position from which it could join the advance at H-hour. This it did—quickly catching up with the barrage.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Clarence R. Huebner, who commanded the 2d Battalion of the 28th Infantry.

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DISCUSSION. That the troops got into position at all speaks highly for the energy and determination of both officers and men. It also speaks well for the capability of the guides that most of the companies were properly led to the line of departure.

However, the guide assigned to Company H lost direction and took the company south instead of east. The company commander had no compass, and did not realize the mistake. In fact, if he had not reached a town which he knew was not in his zone of action, where he could make some inquiries, his company would not only have been unable to attack with its battalion,

but in all probability would have continued south into the zone of the other brigade of the 1st Division.

Guide or no guide, a leader should have a compass and use it.

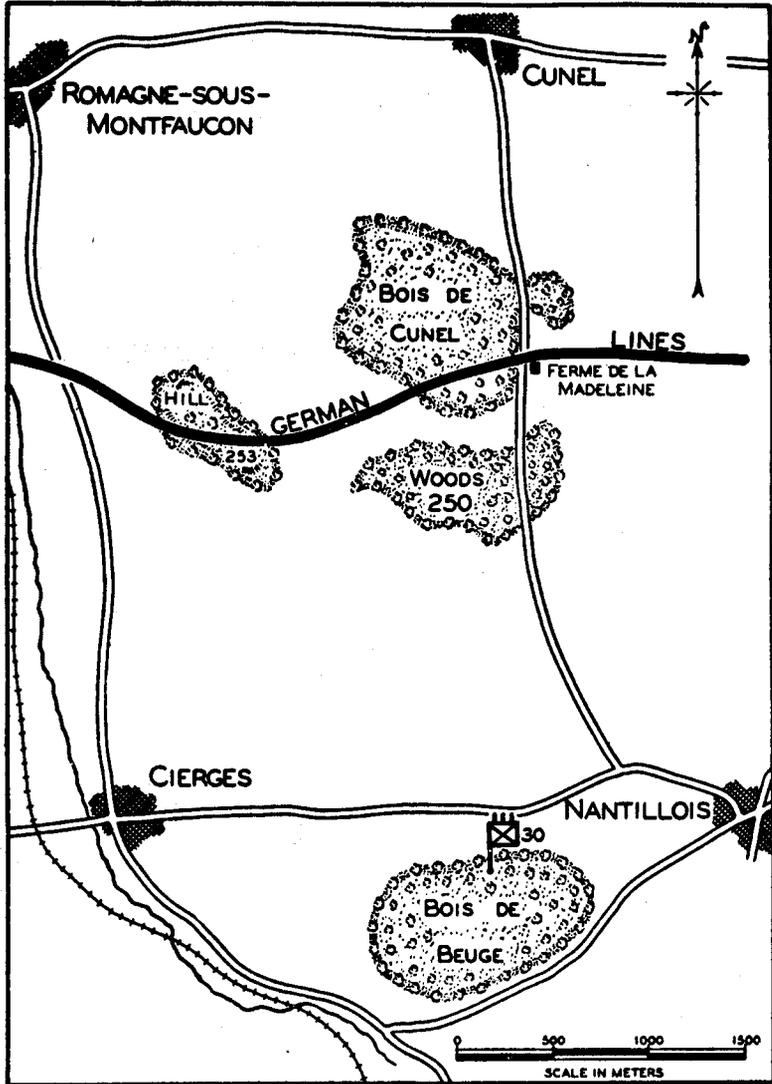
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EXAMPLE 2. On October 7, 1918, the Germans in front of the U. S. 3d Division held a line that ran from Ferme de la Madeleine through the south edge of the Bois de Cunel and over the crest of Hill 253 to the Cierges—Romagne-sous-Mont-faucon Road. They seemed to be strengthening this position. Heavy fighting had been in progress for several days.

During this time the 6th Brigade was in reserve. On October 8, division orders directed that the attack be resumed at 8:30 a.m., October 9, with the 6th Brigade in assault and the 5th Brigade, which was then in the front line, in reserve.

The 30th Infantry, part of the 6th Brigade, was located near the north edge of the Bois de Beuge. On the afternoon of October 8, the regimental and battalion commanders made a personal reconnaissance of the front lines in Woods 250. During the course of this reconnaissance the regimental commander informed the battalion commanders of his general plan. At 10:00 p.m. at his command post he issued his formal orders which placed the 3d Battalion in assault and the 2d Battalion in support.

The 2d Battalion was ordered to be in position along the south edge of Woods 250 by daylight. Guides from the 3d Battalion were furnished for this movement. At 3:00 a.m. the battalion moved from the Bois de Beuge in column of twos and advanced across a shell-swept zone. Strict orders from higher authority prescribed that in all troop movements 50-yards distance would be maintained between platoons and 200-yards between companies. The battalion commander believed that this was impracticable for troops moving at night over a shelled area. Accordingly, he closed up the column.



Example 2

The route taken by the guide was not the one the battalion commander had previously reconnoitered. About halfway to Woods 250, shells began to fall near the line of march. Then and there the guide lost the way and the column was compelled to halt.

At this point, the battalion commander took things in his own hands and conducted the march by compass bearing. He reached the designated location in good time, but here he discovered that the shelling had resulted in a break in the column and that he had with him only one and a half companies. Officer patrols were at once sent out to locate the missing units. These were eventually rounded up, and daybreak found the entire battalion assembled in the south edge of Woods 250.

From the personal experience monograph of Major Turner M. Chambliss, who commanded the 2d Battalion of the 30th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. Here we have the simple problem of moving a support battalion a short distance forward to a new position. True, the movement had to be made by night over a shelled area, but the occasion did not seem to call for special precautions to prevent loss of direction. It was natural to assume that the guide would conduct the battalion to its destination. However, as this battalion commander discovered, implicit reliance on guides is dangerous.

Officers responsible for the direction of the march should use their compasses as a check on their guides. Even the leaders of subordinate units should verify the direction of march by compass. Otherwise, as in this case, rear elements may become detached and lost.

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EXAMPLE 3. General Pétain, later commander-in-chief of the French armies, commanded an infantry brigade at the Battle of Guise on August 29, 1914. His brigade attacked late in the afternoon. General Pétain had taken particular care to insure

that his brigade would attack in the right direction, having given both compass bearing and distant direction points that could be easily seen.

However, as twilight closed in, the direction points became indistinguishable. Moreover, the brigade began to receive fire from several localities not directly to its front. This resulted in part of the command veering off from the proper direction. As night deepened, the situation became more and more confused. The brigade seemed to be disintegrating.

To the front a burning village was clearly visible. Although not in the exact direction of attack, it was not many degrees off. General Pétain sent orders to all units to converge on this village. By this device the bulk of his brigade was brought under control again.

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EXAMPLE 4. After repulsing the German attack on July 15, 1918, the Americans and French crossed the Marne and advanced north and northeast.

On July 22 the 3d Battalion of the U. S. 38th Infantry was advancing toward le Charmel in a diamond formation—Company I in the lead, Company K on the left, Company M on the right, and Company L following in rear. The 7th Infantry was on the left and the 1st Battalion of the 38th Infantry on the right, but contact had not been gained with either of these units.

The Germans seemed to be fighting a stubborn rear-guard action. Their light artillery hammered at the American advance; their airplanes struck at it with machine guns and bombs; and their snipers, concealed in trees, let the leading American elements pass and then fired into them from the rear.

Company K had two platoons leading and two in rear. The 1st Platoon, to the right front, was designated as the base unit of the company. A compass bearing—30° magnetic—was followed.

About 8:00 a.m. the leader of the 1st Platoon noted that

Company I appeared to be cutting across the front of his platoon. He reported this to his company commander. The latter, after personal reconnaissance, ordered a change of direction to 20° magnetic, the bearing on which Company I was then marching.

The company had marched about fifteen minutes on the 20° azimuth when a corporal from the 1st Platoon, in charge of a connecting group between Companies I and K, reported to his platoon leader that he had lost touch with Company I. The company commander, upon being informed of this, sent the corporal and his party out to the east to regain contact and continued the advance—going back, however, to the original 30° azimuth.

About thirty minutes later Company K became involved in a heavy fight near Crossroads 224, almost due north of les Franquets Farm. No friendly units were near and the company, after suffering heavy losses, finally withdrew.

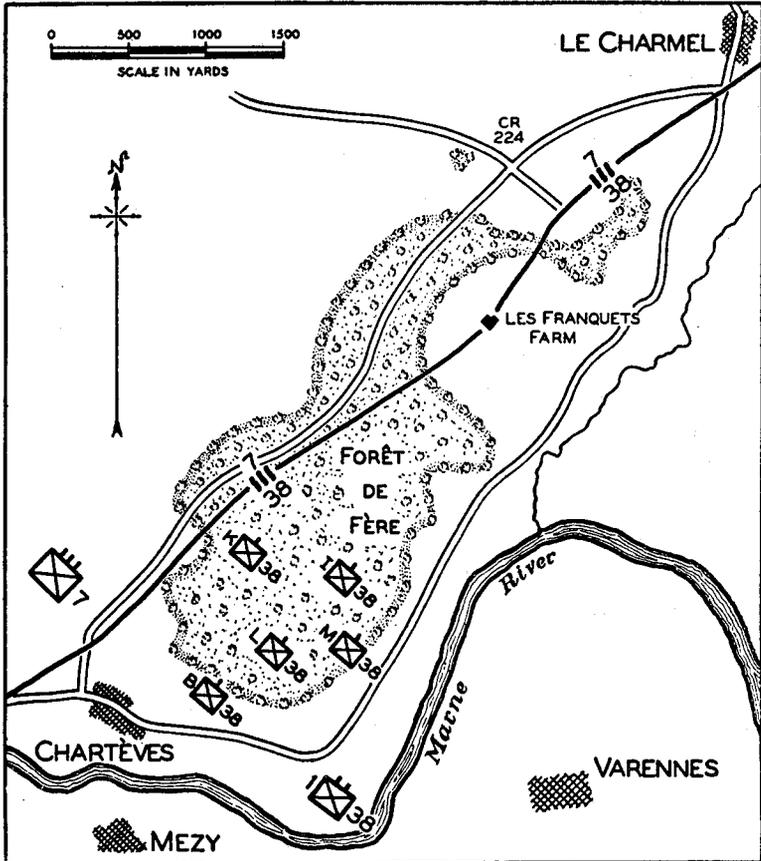
At the same time the remainder of the battalion encountered serious resistance southwest of les Franquets Farm. They attacked but failed to dislodge the enemy.

On this day various American units lost contact. As a result little progress was made.

From the personal experience monograph of Captain John H. Hilldring, who commanded Company K of the 38th Infantry.

DISCUSSION. The loss of direction took Company K well into the zone of the 7th Infantry, where it became involved in a desperate fight to no purpose. In commenting on this incident Captain Hilldring stresses the necessity for visual contact in moving through dense woods. He says:

Company I was responsible for direction. The other companies of the battalion should have linked themselves to Company I at close range and should have gone where Company I went. Such a formation has disadvantages, but in woods it is a far better scheme to close up and accept the disadvantages and losses arising from a



Example 4

too-compact formation. To make certain that the battalion went forward as a unit, the battalion order should have read:

Direction: For Company I, 30° magnetic azimuth; all other companies will conform to direction established by Company I.

It is true that the blame might be fixed upon the leader of the 1st Platoon, which was the base unit of Company K. However, in combat the platoon leader is a busy individual, and if he be made responsible for contact with some unit he cannot see, he must of necessity delegate that responsibility to another.

It will frequently be necessary for units to march on a compass bearing. The opportunity for error and confusion will be lessened by keeping the number of columns to a minimum as long as possible. For example, a company should move as a company as long as it can before breaking into platoons.

Visual contact will keep a unit together; the compass will take it in the right direction.

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EXAMPLE 5. On August 8, 1915, the British and New Zealanders were attacking what was considered the key position on the Gallipoli Peninsula. A footing had been gained on the dominant ridge known as Chunuk Bair. Two battered New Zealand battalions were entrenched on the summit. Turks and British had both suffered heavy losses.

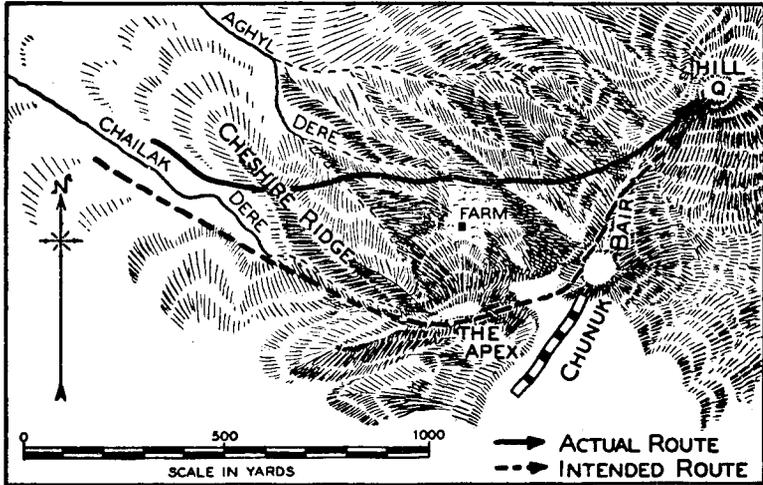
The British plan was to capture Hill Q (northeast of Chunuk Bair) by an attack at dawn on August 9. A heavy bombardment from 4:30 to 5:15 a.m. was planned, following which Hill Q was to be attacked by one force generally from the west and by another force from the general direction of Chunuk Bair. The latter force, commanded by General Baldwin, consisted of four battalions from three different brigades.

At 8:00 p.m. General Baldwin's force was within a mile or two of its attack objective. The intervening country, however, was extremely difficult, being traversed by high ridges and deep ravines. The slopes of the ridges were often so steep that they were impassable even for infantry, and the deceptive character of the terrain made it easy for units to lose their way.

General Baldwin's force was located in the Chailak Dere, a deep ravine. Casualties from Chunuk Bair were sent back to The Apex and thence down Chailak Dere. From The Apex a narrow saddle led forward to the advanced foothold of the New Zealanders on Chunuk Bair. Except for this, the approaches to the Chunuk Bair—Hill Q range consisted of steep ravines with

corrugated, scrub-covered slopes on which no advancing line could retain its formation for half a minute.

"How on earth can we do it?" asked one of the reconnoitering officers. The Australian official history answers:



Example 5

The one possible method was obvious to most of those on the spot.

The assault could be made only if the battalions of the new force were marched up the Chailak Dere and right to the advanced New Zealand position, then at dawn turned to the north and straight up the crest of the ridge.

This march would be possible, if, after a certain hour, the Chailak Dere were kept strictly free from all down-traffic—if no troops, even wounded, were allowed to descend it, and the new battalions were then led up it in single file. Some of the New Zealand brigade at The Apex explained this to Baldwin and his brigade-major and it was undoubtedly by this route that Godley (the division commander in charge of the attack) and his chief of staff intended the advance to be made.

The plan decided upon, however, was to move up the Chailak Dere, cross over Cheshire Ridge, drop down into the Aghyl Dere and then climb the far side to Chunuk Bair and Hill Q. This

route had not been explored, but on the map it seemed to be the shortest and straightest. Baldwin considered the other route, which had been urged with considerable force by some officers, as unnecessarily circuitous.

Baldwin's battalions began their advance about 8:00 p.m. Movement was slow, and guides lost their way. Baldwin then turned the column back and guided it by an easier route into the Aghyl Dere. Exactly what happened is uncertain, since many of the leading participants in this famous night march are dead. The Australian official history states, "The available records at this point are very vague and defective, and the story cannot be told with certainty."

The results, however, are clear. Baldwin's force, after marching all night, was not in position to attack at the hour set. Indeed, it was nearly as far away as when it started.

"Hours later," says the Australian official history, "a brave, disjointed, pitifully ineffectual attack was made by Baldwin's force." It failed with heavy losses.

From "Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18," Volume II, and "The Dardanelles Commission Report."

DISCUSSION. The shortest way in this case would have been the circuitous route urged by the New Zealanders. This route had the following advantages: it had been reconnoitered; it was practicable, as evidenced by the fact that the New Zealanders sent back their wounded that way; it followed clear-cut terrain features. The Chailak Dere led up to The Apex; from The Apex a narrow saddle led forward to Chunuk Bair; from Chunuk Bair the ridge toward Hill Q was clearly marked.

The movement recommended by the New Zealanders was not easy; it would take considerable time, and upon arrival near the New Zealanders the force would have to make a somewhat difficult deployment. However, the plan had one outstanding virtue: it practically insured that Baldwin's force would be within striking distance of its objective at dawn.

The shortest route proved to be the longest. The British commander-in-chief, General Sir Ian Hamilton, says in his report: "In plain English, Baldwin, owing to the darkness and the awful country, lost his way."

The Australian official history refers to Baldwin's decision as "a tragic mistake" and says: "The sum of its possible consequences is beyond calculation."

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EXAMPLE 6. On September 25, 1915, the British launched an attack in the vicinity of Loos. Although the similarity of such landmarks as mine-heads, buildings and oblong woods made the directional problem extremely difficult, no provision was made to keep direction by compass.

The British official history states that in England, where there are many hedges and other obstructions, some companies detailed a "navigating officer" who was responsible for maintaining the proper direction. This excellent peace-time arrangement seems to have been overlooked in the war training of the new divisions.

The 9th Black Watch, 8th Seaforth Highlanders, 10th Scottish Rifles, and 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers, were the assault battalions in the 15th Division which attacked east toward Loos. In this attack there were two towers in Loos which initially served as excellent points of direction.

During the early stages of the advance, direction was well maintained and the attack achieved considerable success. The German first position and Loos were quickly captured.

The towers, well known to all ranks, now lay behind.

The 47th Division on the right of the 15th, was supposed to halt and form a defensive flank after reaching the vicinity of Loos, but this does not appear to have been clearly understood in the 15th Division. Consequently the Black Watch, right bat-

talion of the 15th Division, inclined to the right to maintain contact on that flank.

Resistance now seemed stronger to the right front. This, coupled with the fact that the battalions on the left flank crossed the two roads from Loos to Hulluch, which ran obliquely to their line of advance, caused these units to veer to the southeast. Hill 70 was captured and Germans were seen running to the south. Leading assault elements, badly intermingled with reserve battalions that had been pushed forward, now turned to the south. They were promptly fired on from the front and enfiladed from the east.

The entire division attack disintegrated. Losses were extremely heavy.

The British official history says:

On reaching the top of the hill (Hill 70) a number of officers of the 44th Brigade, unaware of the change of direction, believed the houses they could see ahead of them to be those of Cité St. Auguste, and that they were still advancing eastward. Reports and sketches sent back to brigade and division headquarters during the morning showed that this erroneous view was fairly prevalent. As a matter of fact, the view east from Hill 70 and the view south are extraordinarily similar.

The history further says:

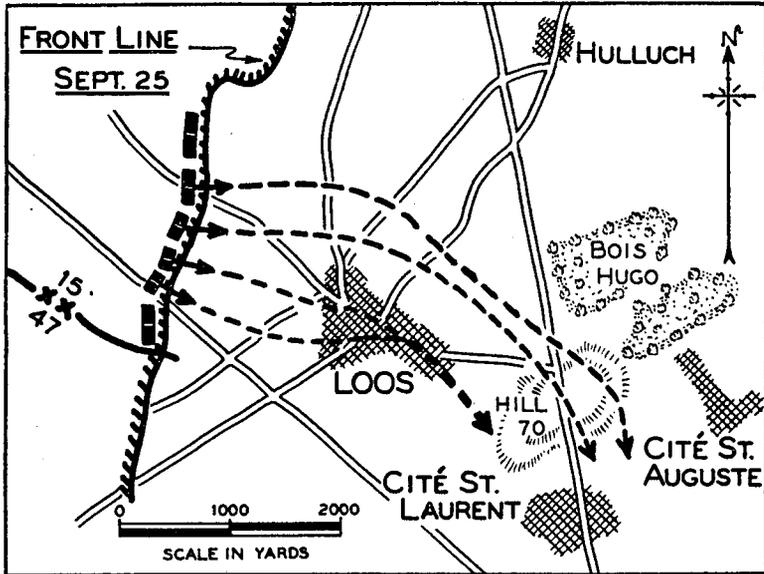
In the meantime the change of direction which had destroyed the initial cohesion and weight of the attack, and exposed its left flank, made any continuation of the advance eastward more than ever out of the question.

Later in the day a German counter-attack retook Hill 70.

During the night the 63d Brigade of the 21st Division was moved up. Portions of this brigade attacked at 11:00 a.m., September 26, in conjunction with the 24th Division on its left. The men of the 63d Brigade moved over the same ground that had been covered by the left flank of the 15th Division the day before. Almost the identical thing happened.

The attack was to go east. After crossing the roads from Loos to Hulluch, fire was received from the right-front and units

veered to the southeast, thereby exposing their left flank to enfilade fire of Germans from the Bois Hugo. In spite of this enfilade fire at close range, the attack moved southeastward up the slopes of Hill 70. Finally, flesh and blood could stand no



Example 6

more. The troops broke and retired in disorder.

The right flank of the 24th Division followed the example of the troops on their right. As a result, the attack of this division dwindled to the efforts of some two and a half battalions going in the proper direction. It failed with heavy losses.

The British official history suggests that the roads between Loos and Hulluch, running diagonally across the line of attack, were largely responsible for the loss of direction. It states: "The general movement was eventually at right angles to them (the roads) towards Hill 70."

From "British Official History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Belgium," Volume IV.

DISCUSSION. Loss of direction was the principal thing that stopped the attacks of these three divisions. The British official history, in commenting on Loos, says:

The number of occasions on which troops mistook their objectives is extraordinary. It was a difficulty that had been overcome by good staff work at maneuvers in England, even in blind country intersected with hedgerows.

Five points stand out at Loos:

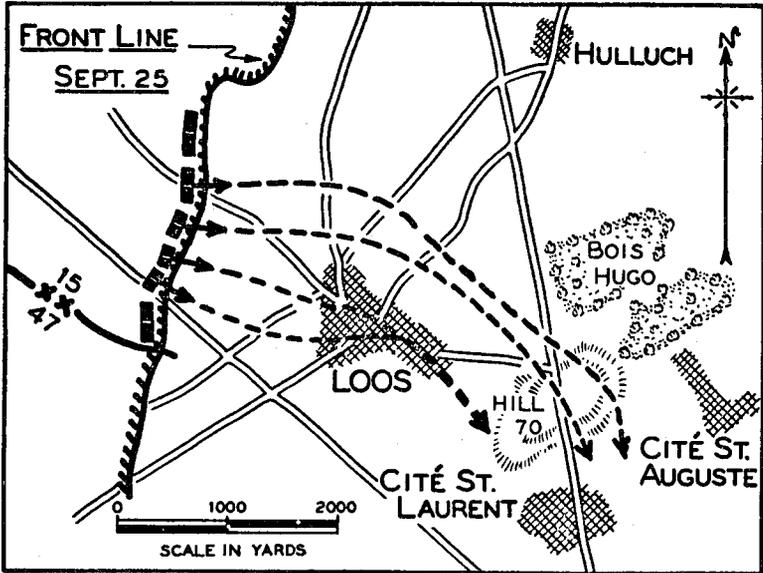
(1) It is essential to use the compass to maintain direction.
(2) An unmistakable direction point that can be seen by all ranks is of great value. The Loos towers helped the assault battalions of the 15th Division maintain the proper direction as far as Loos.

(3) It is highly desirable to know what the units on the flanks are going to do. When the 47th Division, acting in accordance with its orders, halted to form a defensive flank to the right, the right battalion of the 15th Division followed suit. This helped draw the entire assault to the southeast.

(4) When a road, a hedge, or a stream intersects the route of advance there is always a strong tendency to move forward at right angles to it. It cannot be stated definitely that the location of the roads running from Loos to Hulluch was the only cause of the change of direction by two divisions on two successive days. Unquestionably there were other contributing causes. Nevertheless, it is extremely suggestive that, in each case, immediately after crossing these roads, the advance moved forward at right angles to them, and not in the direction desired. When such features are encountered, running neither parallel nor perpendicular to the desired direction of advance, the danger signal is being waved.

(5) Enemy fire attracts attacking troops. A unit fired on tends to face in the direction from which it thinks the fire is being received.

CONCLUSION. Maintenance of direction is a hard job and it cannot be solved without thought and effort. The casual manner in which we sometimes see this matter handled in prob-



Example 6

lems, indicates that as the war recedes, many of its most vivid lessons grow dim.

We see boundaries of infantry units drawn with a ruler, bisecting woods and occasionally passing a house or a road junction. To be of real value a boundary should be visible on the ground. We see directions of attack that take troops diagonally over ridges, or that cut across main roads at an angle of 10° to 20° .

In planning attacks this matter of direction should be kept well to the fore. If it appear that a certain plan of attack will make maintenance of direction unusually difficult, the commander may well consider altering the plan.

Of course, attacks cannot be planned only from the viewpoint of ease in maintaining direction. Small units have to go where they are told. However, since so many attacks do fail from loss of direction, infantry commanders will be well repaid for time and thought expended on the question: "How can I make sure that my subordinates will go in the right direction?"

Maneuvers, over familiar terrain, in which a compass direction is given to subordinates may do some good, but not enough. Exercises in which the compass is actually needed will be far more valuable.