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ENTITLED

# THE EXPERIENCES OF THE GERMAN 1st ARMY IN THE SOMME BATTLE.

## I.—INFANTRY AND MACHINE GUNS.

**General.**—"The duty of every infantry commander is, firstly, to train and educate the infantry soldier for hand-to-hand fighting (which should not be a privilege reserved for assault units, but should be a universal one); next, and more difficult, to keep him physically and mentally fit to fight both before and during an engagement; and, lastly, the most difficult of all, to get the men out of their shelters and dug-outs in time and launch them against the enemy.

"In this war, which is apparently dominated by science and numbers, individual will-power is, nevertheless, the ultimate deciding factor.

"The defence of a position depends more than it ever did before on the unshakeable determination of the subordinate commander and of each individual man to hold his position."

**Training.**—The importance of the following is emphasized:—

- (a) Individual training.
- (b) Every man being thoroughly expert with all hand grenades, both his own and ours.
- (c) Every infantry officer being able to fire a machine gun and keep it in action. The standard set is 30 seconds to come into action from the bottom of a dug-out.
- (d) Patrol work.
- (e) Immediate counter-attack over the top, as well as along the trenches.
- (f) The quick organization of a methodical counter-attack.
- (g) Constant practice in passing through or round hostile artillery barrages.
- (h) Co-operation of infantry with artillery and aeroplanes.
- (i) The rapid organization of a position in shell-holes.
- (j) Regimental exercises.
- (k) The communication troops taking part in the above training, and the use of all means of communication, including light and sound signals, being practised.

"It is a sound principle to keep troops, intended for use on a certain battle front, behind this front for about 14 days, to enable them to complete their training. In this manner, immediate advantage can be taken of the lessons of the most recent fighting, while at the same time commanders can familiarize themselves with the ground on which they are to be employed and with the special features of operations in that locality."

**Construction of positions.**—"The front infantry trenches are well placed if they are situated on a reverse slope out of sight of the ground observation of the enemy's artillery, and are overlooked directly by their own artillery observers from a position at least 550 yards in rear.

"The deeper the dug-outs the more important are a good wide entanglement, continuous observation of the foreground, and reliable alarms. Dug-outs without these precautions are mere man traps."

**Conduct of the defence.**—Much stress is laid on front lines not being thickly held and troops being distributed in depth on a narrow front. In front lines, one man for every 4 to 6 yards, on a frontage of 880 yards for a brigade, is reckoned sufficient.

Distribution in depth is arranged with a view to immediate counter-attacks; the necessity for these on the part of subordinate commanders is continually insisted on. In spite of the defended areas in rear, fighting must be for the possession of the foremost line. Should the immediate counter-attack not be successful, a methodical counter-attack must be organized as soon as possible.

From 8 to 10 hours should be allowed for orders to reach the front from divisional headquarters.

"The necessary preliminary for the repulse of a hostile attack is that our own infantry, distributed in depth, shall be kept fit for fighting in spite of effective and intense bombardment for days by the enemy's artillery. Continual work on the positions, and a good organization of the supply of rations and ammunition, are the most important points in maintaining their fighting strength."

**Counter-attacks.**—In methodical counter-attacks 1,000 yards of front is regarded as a fair allotment to a brigade in the attack.

Counter-attacks should not be arranged to take place shortly before or after day-break, on account of the difficulties of artillery registration.