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Extracts from a German document, issued by the 6th Army, 27th Sept., 1916,

ENTITLED:

SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONS AS TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEFENCES.

1. General principles.—Corps must make the greatest efforts to improve the defences *in depth*, and to provide them with good obstacles and switches at those parts of the front which are especially threatened by a hostile attack. All salients and all mining areas should, as a matter of course, be cut off by retrenchments.

When work on a new line has to be begun, the obstacles should be erected first; the concrete structures and shelters which require a long time for completion should then be proceeded with.

In order to ensure that the fire trenches, which may be subsequently dug, shall bear the proper relation to the concrete-built flanking works, the fire trenches should be excavated provisionally to a depth of 1 ft., but to their full width. Preparatory work of this kind will alone enable large working parties to be taken full advantage of, if they become available, and if operations are to be carried out on a large scale.

All localities in the lines of the rearward positions should be organized for defence as strong points.

2. Front line trench.—The principal fighting line is the front line; approval of Army Headquarters must be obtained if, for local reasons, it is only intended to treat it as the outpost position.

3. Trace of trenches.—In tracing the lines, great care must be taken to secure flanking fire. The flanking defences form the framework of a position and should be traced by commanders in co-operation with the General Staff.

4. Design of trenches.—Where the widening of existing narrow trenches cannot be done throughout, it should at once be executed at the entrances to shelters, so as to form courtyards and ensure the possibility of defence, even if the trench is blown in.

5. Wire entanglements.—*The trace of the wire entanglements should be entirely independent of that of the fire trenches.* This will prevent their being destroyed by the enemy, if he relies on the plan of the fire trenches in aeroplane photographs for their positions.

Entanglements, if destroyed, must be reconstructed at once. If the entanglement in front of the 1st trench has been destroyed, its re-erection must take precedence of all other work on the position, and every means at our disposal must be employed.

6. Communication trenches.—As, in the event of hostile attack, communication and approach trenches are exposed to heavy fire, cross-country tracks must be reconnoitred and clearly marked, so as to be available both by night and by day. They should not be used during quiet times, or the signs of traffic will betray them to aeroplane observation.

Care must also be taken, while an action is in progress, that roads are not used in more than one direction.

7. Dug-outs.—Concrete shelters are preferable to mined dug-outs in all circumstances.

From our experience on the Somme, mined dug-outs require from 23-26 ft. of overhead cover in hard chalk, and of from 33-36 ft. in clay. Such dug-outs are impracticable in front line, as men cannot reach the fire-step in time from such depths.

Concrete shelters should be built in future of reinforced concrete, 5 ft. thick (2 ft. 8 ins. hitherto).

In a gas-cloud attack, braziers with low fires have kept the shelters completely free from gas. The shelters should be distributed over all three lines of trenches of a position, as required by the distribution of the formations in depth.

In general, too much cannot be done to provide secure shelter from shell fire on reverse slopes for the reserves. If there is not sufficient time to make complete dug-outs, numerous recesses in the form of gallery entrances will answer the purpose.

8. Observation posts.—Shell-proof infantry observation posts *must* be constructed in all trenches of the 1st and 2nd line positions.

9. Machine gun emplacements.—The ruling factor in the siting of fire positions for machine guns is that they must be echeloned in depth. It is advisable, therefore, to construct machine gun emplacements, not only in the trenches but in the spaces between the lines. Machine guns should only be placed in the 1st trench when they can bring flanking fire to bear, and when the foreground near the enemy cannot be swept from a machine gun position on high ground behind the line.

10. Trench mortar emplacements.—Trench mortar emplacements may sometimes be constructed in the 2nd trench, but are preferably placed between the lines. They should be sited near those points which are particularly menaced by the enemy, or where an increase of the artillery barrage fire is necessary.

GENERAL STAFF (INTELLIGENCE),
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

5th May, 1917.