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CAPTURED GERMAN DOCUMENT.

[S.S. 701.]

Ia/40342.

NOTES ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF POSITIONS ON THE YPRES BATTLE FRONT FOR THE COMING WINTER.

A captured order of the Wytschaete Group, dated 5-9-17, lays down the principles on which the construction of positions should be developed in preparation for the coming winter.

The following extracts from this order show that:—

- (i.) The Germans propose to substitute a trench line system of defence for the present shell-hole system.
- (ii.) A dummy line of trench is included in the scheme.
- (iii.) Stress is laid on the necessity of preparing all reinforced concrete shelters as machine gun emplacements.

In all other matters the principles laid down in the order issued by the 4th German Army, "The Construction of Defensive Positions" (S.S. 574), dated 30-6-17, are repeated and emphasized.

EXTRACTS.

(a) **Fire trenches** (*see* diagram overleaf).

"It is essential to provide a continuous fire trench, capable of defence, in the present foremost fighting line. Some 330 to 440 yards behind it, a further continuous trench, consisting of lengths of fire trench connected by narrow lateral communication trenches, will be constructed as a third fighting line (3rd trench).

"These two fighting lines will be connected in each company sector by two communication trenches. In conjunction with these, short lengths of trench of irregular form and at irregular intervals will be constructed to serve as a *second* fighting line (2nd trench)."

(b) **Machine gun emplacements** (*see* also under (d) below).

"The Group regards machine gun emplacements, when strongly constructed and suitably sited, as the most essential requisite for the defence of the whole position when fighting is resumed.

"If water is not encountered close below the surface of the ground, the isolated machine gun emplacements should be connected with the nearest trench by mined galleries or *covered* passages."

(c) **Dug-outs.**

"Concrete structures, which should, at the same time, all be constructed for use as machine gun emplacements, must be of low profile, and the slopes of the earth covering them must be kept flat.

"Dug-outs to accommodate more than two groups (*i.e.*, 2 N.C.O.s and 16 men) are open to grave objections, and should therefore be avoided.

"All shelters in the first trench, in addition to affording complete protection against the weather, should be at least splinter-proof."

(d) **Dummy works.**

"A dummy trench, with an entanglement of posts without wire, should be constructed behind the third trench.

"The identification of active machine guns must be rendered as difficult as possible by the construction of dummy emplacements."

(e) **Order of work.**

"The construction of shelters and dug-outs must be carried out at the same time throughout the whole defensive zone. The construction of machine gun emplacements in the ground between the trenches must be taken in hand at once on a particularly liberal scale."

General Staff (Intelligence),

General Headquarters.

2nd October, 1917.

[P.T.O.]