

# French principles from the First World War for the defense in positional warfare

## The facility of the position

A distance of 6-8 km is expected. between the different positions.

It is not necessary to have a fixed line of fire, as long as the entire front can be covered from the front or by flanking.

Means of obstruction should in any case be continuous.

The support points must be connected with the regular trench network so that they are not recognized as support points by the enemy airmen, whereby they would be immediately exposed to overwhelming artillery fire. By connecting the support points so that a continuous trench appears, you also make it difficult for the enemy to penetrate past the support points, and give their crews a feeling of not being isolated.

The support points should be laid out in belts perpendicular to the front line to "channel" the enemy's incursion.

## Occupation of the position

A force which has occupied a trench system best reduces its vulnerability by having as small a force forward in the front line as possible; it is the route of the works in connection with planned flanking that has the decisive influence in terms of achieving a minimum in this respect.

Will a company have a strength of approx. 1 platoon in the front line, it can either advance a platoon and keep 3 platoons in the trench or from each platoon advance a section to the post line; the latter method is most frequently used; you achieve this by having the division articulated in depth.

The trench is divided into "active" and "passive" sections; the former get their crew, the latter are defended only by flanking.

## Insurance service

During the day, the guard service is provided by a few individual trench posts per platoon, at night the number of trench posts is increased and listening posts are set up. The trench to the listening post must be able to be held under fire from a shell and must be able to be blocked quickly. In addition, a special grave guard may be selected in the 1st line - exceptionally also at night - who is not allowed to take part in work or the like.

The trench posts often observe through shell casings that are placed diagonally on the front line, and their observation sector in this case lies to the side of the stand; here, good people with special training are required for trench posts (observers), each platoon must have at least 6 such people.

The daily "disturbing firing" is done mainly with rifle grenades and trench fire, only rarely by sharpshooters.

The patrol is ordered by the battalion or company commander. It is an excellent means of making the soldiers bold, and it should therefore only be exceptionally that volunteers are selected for patrol duty.

The patrols are often armed only with pistols and hand grenades. Their strength must be so great that they can lead one

wounded or prisoner with back.

Before leaving the trench, the patrol leader must ensure that the patrol's equipment will not make noise during the march.

## **Preparedness etc**

For each platoon in the front line, there must always be a commanding officer in the grave itself who supervises, maintains strict discipline and is responsible for the performance of the service.

The company commander also appoints an officer on duty who supervises the entire company section.

In the depots, hand grenades and cartridges are placed in sacks to facilitate supply. In each cavity there must be a small stock of grenades with which to make your way out.

The rifles must never be left in firing ranges or on the parapet. In the living rooms, special rifle supports can be arranged at the entrance, in which the rifles of the people who are currently in the room during the day can be placed. In addition, the crew must always have the rifles immediately with them.

To avoid accidents, the rifle must not be unloaded, but the magazine must always be kept full. Mouth caps, tufts of blue etc. in the mouth must not be used. The gun is cleaned every day; cleaning must always be done by team within the section.

Every day at a certain time, which however partly depends on the enemy artillery fire, a work command goes out from each company in the trench, carrying redundant equipment etc. the equipment of the killed and wounded, fired cartridge cases, etc.; the command hands over these cases to designated depots and instead receives rations and ammunition at the company commander's requisition. When a company has to take over the service in the 1st line, the commander and 1 officer or non-commissioned officer for each platoon should carry out a reconnaissance of the position while it is light, after which the actual relief only takes place after dark.

## **Notification Service**

In the event of an enemy attack, you cannot safely rely on the telephone, as the wires will usually be cut off by the previous bombardment, and optical signaling is also uncertain due to the smoke that lies above the terrain.

The use of ordinance (2 at a time) is the only means of connection that is almost certain, but it is expensive and slow.

Light bombs are the best of the quick means of communication.

For the sake of the uncertain message service, it is fortunate if lookouts can be set up at the various command stations in covered observation stands, so that they can see directly from there when an enemy attack breaks out.

## **Defense**

The defense is carried out in depth, as the enemy is sought to be halted little by little at points or lines which have already been marked out and prepared for stubborn defence.

Any small enough part of the position (for example, a trench junction set up for defense) should have its responsible commander.

A force tasked with defending a trench piece may only retreat on higher orders, any piece of ground lost must be immediately sought to be recaptured by counter-attack.

The greatest emphasis is placed on everyone having prepared a defense plan for their trench piece. With these, on the basis of the likely attack points, it must be determined in which areas of the trench that stubborn resistance must be offered, as well as how the reserves under the various options must be used for counter-attacks.

Every driver should have a written extract of that part of the defense plan and be thoroughly briefed on how the units behind intend to counter-attack against his trench sector.

Barrage may be requisitioned by any command station which knows that the enemy has begun an attack; if the enemy's bombardment is localized, own barrage against the subsequent attack will often best be requisitioned from the neighboring units.

If a company wants to reinforce the crew in the 1st line, this should only be done when the enemy has laid back his barrage from the front lines.

The forces designated for counterattacks according to the defense plan do not have to wait for orders, but can move to counterattacks on their own initiative.