

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

REGULAR COURSE
1938-1939

Platoon in Attack
Leadership, Small Units

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Abbrevi-
ations**

Text

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- FSR** Field Service Regulations. U. S. Army, 1923, Pars. 16, 47.
- TR 10-5** Training Regulations No. 10-5, U. S. Army, W. D., August 10, 1935.
- Burns** Psychology and Leadership. By John H. Burns, Captain, Infantry. Publisher: The Command and General Staff School Press, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1934. (Library Classification: BF 412 B 89).
An individual study issued, because of its excellence, by a service school.
- Du Picq** Battle Studies. By Ardant du Picq (translation by Colonel J. N. Greely and Major R. C. Cotton). Publisher: The McMillan Company, New York, 1921. (Library Classification: U 102 A 7).
Accepted translation of the work of an important french military writer.
- Eltinge** The Psychology of War. By Leroy Eltinge. Publisher: Army Service Schools Press, 1911 (Library Classification: U 22 E 1). Lectures delivered at Command and General Staff School.
- Brittanica** Encyclopaedia Brittanica, Volume II. P 413. Publisher: The Encyclopaedia Brittanica Company, Ltd., London, 1929.
A standard reference work.
- Foch** The Principles of War. By General Ferdinand Foch. Translated by J. de Morinni, late Major C. E. F. Publisher: H. K. Fly Company, New York 1918. (Library Classification DC 301 F 63). Compilation of lectures given at L'Ecole de Guerre.
- 175 Battles** 175 Battles. By Roger M. Shaw and Colonel S. C. Vestal. Publisher: The Military Services Publishing Company, Harrisburg, 1937. (Library Classification D 25 S 4).
Brief synopsis of 175 important battles by two well known military authors.
- S. T. 266** Army Extension Courses. Special Text No. 266, Chaps 1 and 7.

I. PSYCHOLOGY AND THE LEADER

1. INTRODUCTION.--This paper makes no effort to define leadership, nor to deal with the many mechanical duties of the leader in combat. Its purpose is, rather, to explore the subject of psychology and morale as it affects the leader. Historical examples and references to our own official texts as well as to opinions of accepted authorities are used to support the conclusions drawn.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEADER.-- TR 10-5, par. 3 e, states in part as follows: "Leadership involves possession of professional qualifications and those personal characteristics which inspire confidence and loyalty". Among the personal characteristics is cited, "knowledge of human nature". Par. 15, FSR states:

"The commander must know from personal contact the mental moral and physical state of his troops."

The leader, then, in addition to being qualified professionally must be a practical psychologist.

3. PEACE TIME TRAINING.--It is unfortunate that in our peace time training we are unable to simulate the psychological effects of battle. The fact remains, however, that we cannot. As a result we are prone to disregard psychology and limit ourselves to the inculcation and study of the mathematical aspects of combat. (1) We lose sight of the fact that the infantry leader deals with individuals who possess all of the foibles and instincts that are man's. S. T. 266, Chapter I, Par. 1, has the following to say in this connection:

"It has been wisely said that the tactics of infantry are based on nature and human nature, not on mechanics or

(1) Foch, p. 9

geometrical perfection."

In spite of that we accept as fact in peace time training that tenacity in defense and aggressiveness in the attack are natural and that control, although difficult, is not impossible. Even an unimaginative visualization of combat will show that such assumptions are erroneous. (2) Once the maneuver is ended and the action is begun control will be impossible for all but the squad leader and even he may be able to control only those two or three men in his immediate vicinity. In combat the individual feels that death is in the air, invisible, and that his contest is with fate rather than with man. At such time, when moral pressure is at a maximum and control at a minimum he must go forward in attack or stand to his post in defense in the face of his instinctive urge to fly.

II. MORALE

4. IMPORTANCE OF MORALE.--What is it that forces the individual forward in attack and holds him to his position in defense. The answer may be found in paragraph 47, FSR, which states:

"Infantry fighting power rests upon a basis of morale. Superior morale furnishes the impulse that carries the infantry forward in attack and the staying power that holds it in positions in defense."

In support of this same theory General Foch once said:

"Victory in combat is a purely moral result and theories of war based upon mathematical conceptions are entirely wrong." (3)

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(2) Eltinge, p. 92
(3) Foch, p. 9

These quotations, it may be thought, are over-statements for the purpose of emphasis and as such should be accepted with a grain of salt. Or, on the other hand, perhaps you will accept them on faith alone at their face value. Neither course is necessary. We may go to history where we may find the basis for them.

III. HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

5. ANCIENT COMBAT-CANNAE. (Diagrammatic Sketch No. 1).--The first example selected is that military classic, the battle of Cannae, in which a Carthaginian Army led by Hannibal defeated a Roman Army of twice its number. (4) The Romans formed for battle in a deep wedge with the smaller point toward the enemy. Hannibal's forces formed in a wide shallow line which was slightly greater in depth on the wings. As the Romans advanced the Carthaginian center broke as Hannibal had warned his troops it would. The Carthaginian wings, however, moved forward, effecting a double envelopment of the Roman mass. The Carthaginian center was reformed and returned to battle and an extension of the envelopment resulted in the Romans being surrounded and routed with tremendous loss.

6. DISCUSSION.--The author of one of the many studies of this battle says: "Hannibal's tactics were brilliant but simple." (5) The simplicity of the plan is apparent but as to its brilliance there may be some question. A double envelopment is at best a dangerous undertaking. A double envelopment of a superior force seems suicidal. To what factor, then, can we attribute this brilliant victory? The answer is to be found in S. T. 266, Chap. 6, paragraph 27,

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(4) Du Picq, p. 108
(5) 175 Battles, p. 16

which says:

"This form of attack (the double envelopment) requires far greater superiority in at least one of several factors: morale, numbers, auxiliary arms, mobility or terrain."

Obviously, Hannibal's superiority lay in his correct evaluation of the psychological factors involved and in his willingness to risk a decision on that evaluation. (6) In all factors other than morale the Carthaginians were inferior or only slightly superior. In the words of General Foch the victory was "purely a moral result." The direction of the attack was not the secret. The Roman maniple was the most flexible organization ever devised. It could face in any direction to fight. Each Roman could be faced by only one Carthaginian at a time and, had they stood and fought, the battle could have ended only in defeat for Hannibal. The moral pressure resulting from the sudden change of successful attack into defense on flanks and rear was too much to withstand.

7. MODERN COMBAT, ³⁸ (36th German Reserve Infantry (Maps 2 and 3).--Modern combat will also support FSR concerning the importance of morale. The example selected occurred during the German offensive against Verdun in March, 1914. (See Map No. 2.) The 1st Battalion, 36th Reserve German Infantry was attacking south toward Forges on March 16, 1914. The 4th Company was the left assault company. On the left of the battalion was the 2d Battalion 51st Reserve Infantry. The 1st Battalion advanced to a line along Forges Brook and was held up by fire from the east. The 2d Battalion 51st Infantry was held up at the road junction north of Forges by fire from the town. Sergeant

Glodecks, with three men, was on the right of and slightly separated from the 4th Company. A few fruit trees afforded him concealment from the direction of Forges. He observed that the machine-gun fire which was directed at the 4th Company was coming from the group of houses southwest of Forges and decided to infiltrate forward and take the gun from the rear. He informed his men of this plan and the patrol rushed forward to the stream. Fording the icy stream they crawled forward past the house and reached the rear unobserved. They then threw grenades and rushed the house. Their attack surprised and captured 20 frenchmen.

Sergeant Glodecks and his patrol taking their prisoners with them then advanced to Forges where they captured in turn groups of 18 and 130 prisoners. The results of their actions enabled both the 1st Battalion ³⁸38th Infantry and the 2d Battalion 51st Infantry to advance.

Let us digress for a moment and suppose that this is a peace time maneuver instead of war. As a battalion or company commander defending Forges you are informed that a patrol of four men has succeeded in infiltrating through the line. What would your reaction be? It is unlikely that it would be stronger than a feeling of amused in difference. Yet, in actual combat, four men not only turned a possible costly defeat into cheap victory for two battalions but in doing so captured 42 times their own number in prisoners.

The basis for this military miracle was morale. Without superior morale it is inconceivable that a small group would undertake such a dangerous mission on its own initiative. On the other hand, the french were demoralized by the sudden change in the trend of the action and fell an easy prey to a foe with superior morale.

8. DISCUSSION.--Although widely separated by time as well as by many other factors there is a striking similarity between the two examples discussed. Both actions were based upon plans which, from a purely mechanical point of view, were unsound. At Cannae, Hannibal made a double envelopment of a vastly superior force. At Forges, Sgt. Glodecks and his patrol of three men attacked superior forces while hampered with prisoners who outnumbered them 5 to 1. Neither solution would be satisfactory in a field or map exercise. In war, both were rewarded by marked success.

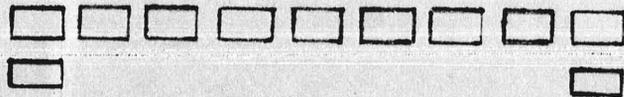
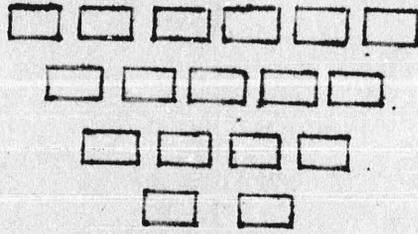
A close scrutiny of military history will reveal that many of the most decisive tactical victories of history were based upon plans that we consider unsound. The number of tactically unsound plans used with success by the great and near great leaders of history is, to say the least, astonishing. There is one factor, however, which is generally common to those plans. In almost every case success can be traced to a correct evaluation of the psychological factors involved. In that masterpiece, Cannae, Hannibal used the known weak morale of the troops in his center to his advantage. The Roman demoralization due to being attacked in flank was greater than if they had not gained initial success in the center. At Marathon the withdrawal of the center was intentional and the result the same.

A mathematical formula for success in war can no more be found than can one for success in art. The sculptor and the leader of troops both must have a sound groundwork in the use of their respective tools. Only the hack stops once that groundwork has been acquired. The true artist must delve into the realm of the intangible that lies beyond.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

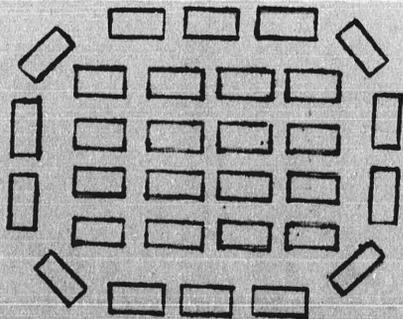
~~The conclusions that may be drawn from this study~~
are few in number but of great importance to the leaders of all units.

1. The leader, in his study of the mathematical and geometrical aspects of combat, must bear in mind that always he must deal with men.
2. All tactics are based ultimately upon psychological factors.
3. The critical test for a tactical plan is, "will it result in the greatest possible demoralizing effect on the enemy and the least possible on my own troops."
4. Historical solutions are inapplicable and often misleading unless the psychological factor is evaluated.
5. The leader must know the status of morale in his unit in order correctly to assign missions and make plans.



Phase 1

Phase 2



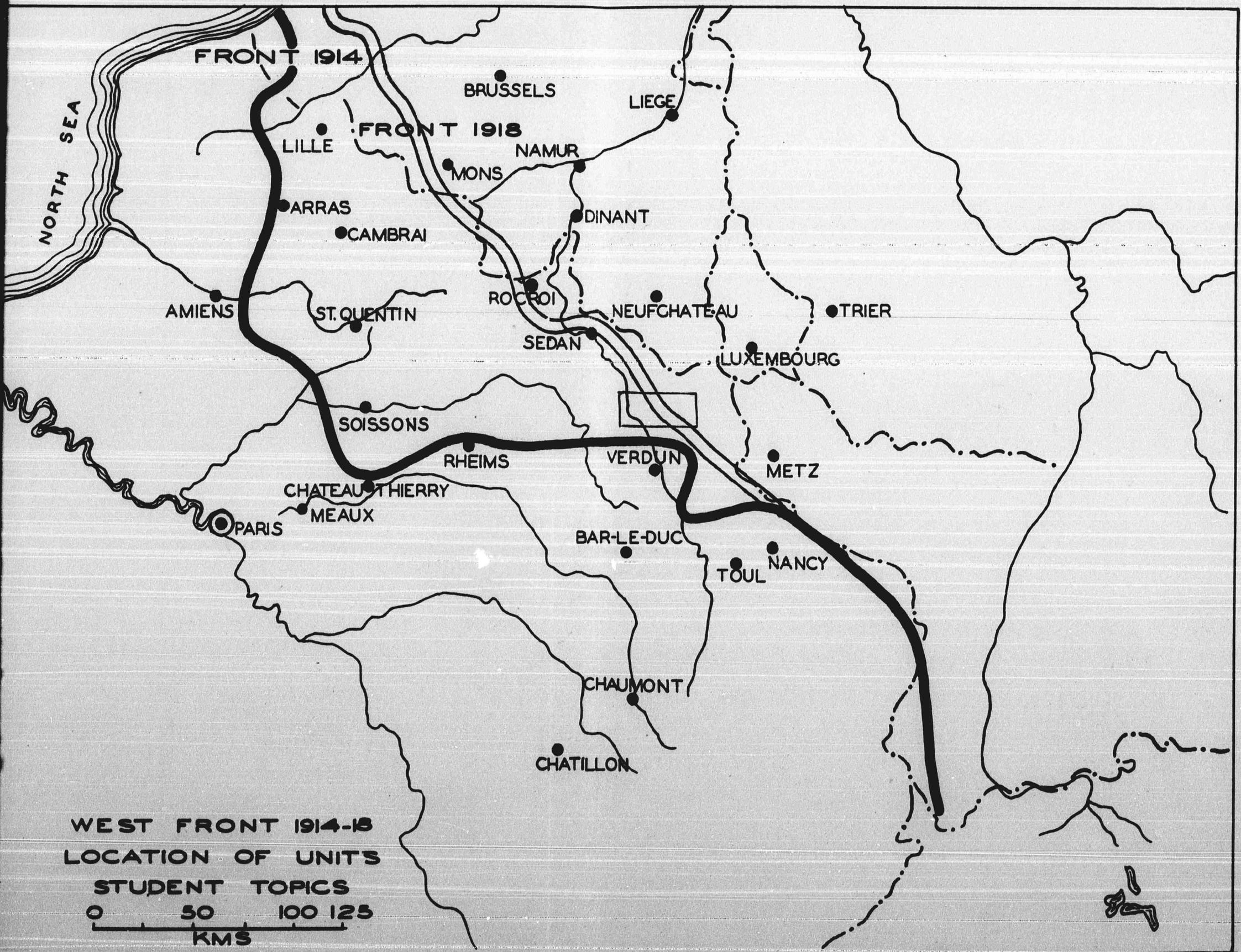
CANNAE

Rome



Carthage





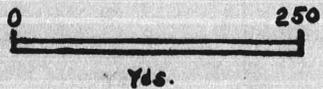
WEST FRONT 1914-18
 LOCATION OF UNITS
 STUDENT TOPICS

0 50 100 125
 KMS

1st Bn. ^{3d} 36th Res.
Inf.

2nd Bn. 51st.
Res. Inf.

Patrol 36th Gen. Res. Inf.
Forges, Mar. 16, 1914



FORGES

Forges Brook

