

THE CONDUCT OF WAR.

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INTRODUCTION.

The conduct of war is a very wide and deep subject and one of which the majority of people know but very little. When war is declared some have not the slightest idea what it means. They cannot realize the amount of skill and knowledge that is required to bring a campaign to a successful close. They have no conception of how this work is carried on not even knowing that part of it is really done in time of peace.

War is not blind. It is wide awake. It is a science and an art and as such requires men of knowledge and artists to conduct its beginning, progress and ultimate success.

This production is not meant for a work of reference and it will not deal with all, or at full with any, of the many important phases connected with this subject.

The fundamental parts into which this subject is divided are Strategy and Grand Tactics.

DEFINITION OF STRATEGY.

Owing to so many different opinions as to the extent of strategy and the numerous definitions given we will here give some of the most common. Some say:-

"Strategy is the conception; tactics the execution", others that, "Strategy is the science of operations; tactics that of battle"; also "Strategy is the science of directing armies; tactics the art of leading troops". Strategy deals with manoeuvres which cause the troops to enter upon decisive action under favorable conditions while tactics comprises all the arrangements for the engagement itself. We shall adopt the view of Jomini, that "Strategy is the art of manoeu-

vering armies in the theatre of operations; tactics the art of disposing them upon the battle-field".

In this production we will consider only the Strategic side of the conduct of war.

POSITION OF WAR IN SOCIAL LIFE.

Diplomatic agents are now maintained at every foreign court by every civilized nation for the regulation in a peaceful way of all points of controversy which may arise between their own and the country in which they are stationed. This has indeed lessened the probability of war but never will it be practicable to avoid entirely those questions which each of the contesting parties believes that it is impossible to yield without dealing himself a fatal blow. It is useless to talk of peaceful solutions of problems in every case. Questions may and do arise in which both sides are in the right at least to a great extent. In these a violent solution through war then becomes unavoidable.

It has been well said that "War, therefore is the continuation of politics; only the means for the attainment of the object have changed". It seems clear, therefore that the best way to avoid war is to be always thoroughly prepared. Having a military organization that all others are bound to respect. A strong nation is not as readily attacked nor is it so ready to attack as the expense is too great.

The form in which most modern armies appear is that of the skeleton army. Only a part of the war forces are kept organized and these serve for a training school for the entire male population.

THE SPECIAL NATURE OF MODERN WARS.

As war is a continuation of politics when two nations enter into conflict, it must result in the complete overthrow or destruction of one of them. Destruction does not mean annihilation; the moral effect of killing or capturing of a portion is sometimes sufficient to cause the weaker to lose all hope of gaining the victory and peace is the result.

It is not true now as formerly that mere strategical manoeuvres of an army shall decide the war but a deadly battle is the sure result

Nations are not as ready to enter upon a war now as it means enormous expense and the putting forth of all the war resources that a country can command. The people will not stand to see a point which they believe is theirs decide by only a portion of their forces.

PREPARATION FOR WAR.

Realizing the enormous advantage given to the offensive army both in its choice of battle-fields and the unestimatable moral effect on both armies it becomes very important to have every thing in such shape that when war is declared, we can push directly to the frontier and be first on the field. This can only be accomplished by having made a thorough preparation in time of peace.

This thorough preparation includes more than might at first be supposed; embracing a study of the theatre of operations, the resources of the enemy and the preparation of the project of operations. Preparations for war includes first a study of the theatre of operations and of the resources of the enemy. To this end, topographical maps have been and are being prepared by the general staff, in time of peace of all the civilized countries of the world. These serve the commander-in-chief in mapping out a plan of campaign when war

comes.

A topographical map is a map of a certain district giving all the distinguishing characteristics as the main and cross-roads, stream woods, large structures, depressions in ground, hills, cities, stone walls, character of the soil, etc., etc.

The topographical features of most importance are the communications classified as railroads, ordinary roads and water routes.

RAILROADS.

These are used to transport troops and utensils of war over great distances to points of concentration and from one place to another separated by considerable distances and are a very rapid means of transportation. They make the establishment of a base, an easier matter now than formerly. A country whose railroads are so arranged and operated that its troops can be transported to the theatre of operations the more quickly has the greatest chance of success.

One of the best means for preparing for war in time of peace, is by building of a military system of railroads. It is impossible in this day to choose a line of operations without taking into account railroads, and as these serve also as a means of subsistence the chief cities along its route will be some of the objectives chosen.

ORDINARY ROADS.

Although railroads play so important a part of this age, we must still hold to the ordinary roads for the completion of many of our manoeuvres or in a country where there are no railroads. A study of them is necessary before forming a plan of operations. Within the zone of operations, in getting to the battle ground and from ^{one} place to another separated by a short distance we are still dependent upon or-

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dinary roads.

WATER COURSES.

These are of great importance to both the aggressor and defence. If the stream runs parallel to the line of operations, it becomes a line of communication and a very good one. Water courses serve also as a protection to one of the flanks of an army marching parallel to its course but may become a serious obstacle if running perpendicular to line of march.

For the defense, it forms a protection. In retreating, the bridges can be destroyed or the fire can be so directed against them that the crossing is made almost an impossibility; and even were the offense to get across he would need deploy before being in any shape for action.

MOUNTAINS REGIONS.

Mountain regions need not concern the offensive much except when a battle is pending. The defense must study where best a defense could be made and get possession of the strong points. The mountain being held by the defense and only a few defiles accessible and these well guarded, makes a possibility of capture or defeat very improbable.

WOODY REGIONS.

Woody regions serve as a shelter for both offensive and defensive armies.

CITIES AND FORTIFICATIONS.

In this day we know so well the capacity and quality of all fortifications of all nations that they need not be considered here .

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They became important only in the immediate vicinity of battle.
The offensive should gain speedy possession of them.

LIMITS TO THEATRES OF OPERATIONS.

There are limits to theatres of operations marked by sea coasts, boundries to neutral states, etc., which sometimes need be taken into account in the considerations of a turning movement to cut off the opponents line of communications.

In this age of improved weapons considerable space is required for a turning movement. When this space is too contracted, there is little possibility of accomplishing such movement.

VALUE OF THEATRE OF OPERATIONS.

The establishment of a project of operations requires not only a knowledge of the various accidents of the ground within the theatre of war but also exact notions of the military importance of each.

Before establishing a line of operations, we must have definitely in mind certain strategic points, called objectives, which we wish to attain in order to further our power. Generally the first objective will be the principal army of the enemy but incidentally others may come in such as fortified places, large cities, railroad centers, etc.

STRATEGICAL LINES.

Strategical lines are lines embracing all lines which can be of service; such as lines of operations, etc.

BASES OF OPERATIONS.

By these are meant, the points at which an army communicates

with its country. They are the points at which an army concentrates before beginning active operations: A good base must always take into account its direction and its extent. They should be extended enough to supply themselves without difficulty. Upon this, I wish to quote some from Derrecagaix.

1st. Bases of operations have been transformed by the establishment of railroads;

2nd. The supplies formerly assembled upon bases will henceforth be distributed along the railroads charged with army transport service;

3rd. Bases of operations are frontier zones which connect armies with their country, and upon which they concentrate before commencement of operations;

4th. The direction of the base, with regard to the enemy's lines of operations, increases in importance in proportion as the masses become more numerous and the first conflicts more imminent;

5th. An angular base is always the most advantageous;

6th. There should be a sufficient number of railroads running from the interior of the country to the base to assure prompt concentration of the army.

LINES OF OPERATION.

A line of operation of an army is a line conducting it to its objective or the general direction followed by its columns.

According to Napoleon, the most advantageous line is that which permits an army to threaten the communications of the enemy without compromising its own.

The direction of the line of operations depends upon the configuration of the country and the position of the enemy. It is best

to direct it against one of his wings; the one nearest his line of communication if possible, but if his front is too extended, it would be better to direct yourself upon his center.

Military men say to have but one line operation, or if two, to be sure they are interior lines. An interior line is a good position when the space between the two exterior enveloping lines is sufficiently great to allow the interior to first fall upon one line and then crush the other; but it may become an undesirable one resulting in a disastrous defeat if the exterior lines are close enough together to both make an attack. The rules relating to lines of operation are few in number and as given by Derrecagaix are:- -

1st. The aim in selecting lines of operations should be to direct upon decisive points a stronger force than the enemy is able to bring to bear;

2nd. This selection depends upon the form of the bases, the configuration of the ground and the positions of the enemy;

3rd. Simple and interior lines of operations are always to be preferred;

4th. The most advantageous lines of operations are those which lead an army upon the enemy's communications without endangering its own.

LINES OF COMMUNICATIONS.

"Lines of communication are lines which connect an army with their magazines". They usually are lines of retreat and in a great many cases coincide with the lines of operations. They are the routes by which an army connects with its sources of supplies. To change this line is a serious problem and should be left only to a genius.

In a few cases, lines of communication have been changed or

even abandoned for a few days to gain a good position for a battle; but this should never be done except if it is really necessary and the outcome warranting the risk is sure and certain. If the army, having risked its communications, suffers a defeat, it is as good as destroyed. At present the lines of communications are composed of railroads and water routes connecting armies with their supply centers and extending to the interior of the country.

The organization, protection, development, establishment of intermediate stations and depots, and all such services have been fixed by regulations.

DEFENSIVE LINES.

Defensive lines are obstacles behind which an army can organize a resistance. They are mountains, rivers, deserts, etc., as Derrecagaix puts it "A good line of defense should have its flanks so well covered as to offer security against a turning movement. Its front should be protected by an obstacle difficult of access, and there should be in its rear, lines of retreat, protected by positions of the second line".

RESOURCES OF ENEMY.

A theatre of operations could not be skillfully determined without taking into account the resources of the enemy. Before preparing for war, we must have some knowledge of the enemies forces and plans.

Today the facility of communications and the publicity given things by the newspapers, make it quite easy to keep acquainted, not only with the military resources of the people but, the organizations, disciplining, weapons, and distributions or stationing of its army.

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Nearly all countries at present, maintain traveling bureaus to keep the home government posted in regard to organization, recruitment, armament, equipment, the geographical configurations of neighboring countries, the construction and demolition of fortresses, the development of roads, railroads, canals, etc., etc..

PROJECTS OF OPERATIONS.

"The aim of the study of the theatre of operations, the resources of the adversary and of the conditions under which the war is likely to be carried on, should be the establishment of a plan of campaign". All these steps must be gone through with and were formerly but owing to the short space of time now between declaration of war and the opening of hostilities these must be completed in time of peace. These plans of campaign which are only projects are called correctly projects of operations. They consider the probable theatre of operations, the strength and plans of the enemy and take in all possible contingencies which may arise.. They determine before hand the points of concentration, the objectives, and the lines of operations.

When trouble arises the commander-in-chief looks up these projects and modifying them to suit the conditions he is able in the few days in which the mobilization and concentration are going on, to form a plan of campaign.

Of course these projects of operations cannot extend any farther than the first battle, the nature of which may change the course of events but they are of the utmost necessity in a conflict.

A Plan of War is the combination of several of these projects and is dependent upon the political situations. In a war there may be several of these projects to carry out before the war is concluded.

DATA NECESSARY FOR DRAWING UP A PROJECT OF
OPERATION.

As given by Derrecagaix, these are; - -

- 1st. Information regarding the probable theatres of operations;
- 2nd. Exact ideas regarding the forces at the disposal of the enemy;
- 3rd. Statistical information upon the resources of all kinds which the various theatres of operation afford;

As soon as these data are gathered, the question will arise of deciding upon the offensive or defensive.

The number of the adversary's forces are known and the distribution of all the parts. The railroad terminations are known and the point of concentration of the enemy can be determined as can nearly the exact time. We know how quickly we can concentrate our forces and the number we have, therefore it will be very easy to know whether to adopt the offensive or the defensive.

If we are the first or at the same time and in equal or greater numbers we adopt the offensive. After this first work, Derrecagaix says a decision must be taken.

- 1st. Upon the points at which to effect the concentration.
- 2nd. Upon the direction to be given the movements of the forces, and upon the zones of march to be assigned.
- 3rd. Upon the general end to be attained, and the number of armies into which the forces should be divided.

In determining upon a defensive project, the points are according to Derrecagaix.

- 1st. Selection of a good zone of concentration as far as possi-

ble in rear of a good line of defense;

2nd. Selection of favorable positions for battles and organizations of their defense;

3rd. Selection of lines of retreat and successive positions in rear.

THE PRINCIPAL METHODS OF WAGING WAR.

After war has been declared and a plan of campaign has been adopted, we enter the active part of strategy, the operations. The operations are divided into offensive and defensive and these again into strategical and tactical offensive and defensive operations.

THE STRATEGICAL OFFENSIVE.

In adopting the strategical offensive, we take the lead as it were dictating to the other when and where the battles are to be fought. It gives us a moral advantage over our enemy. Raising our own power of success at the same time lowering his. We mould the whole course of events in the campaign, choose our objectives and move accordingly. The offensive is the only role for a general who wishes to conquer. There may be such a thing as the army that is looked upon as the defense winning the battle but if this happens they have at the right moment passed to the offensive. Both armies may adopt the offensive and fight accordingly but only for the one battle as one will be compelled to adopt the defensive at least temporarily.

TACTICAL OFFENSIVE.

After the armies have been moved to the theatre of battle, the strategical role is complete and the battle is operated by tactics. The tactical offense considers only the methods of attack upon a

particular point of the field of battle.

THE STRATIGICAL DEFENSE.

This considers only the general plan of defense. A passive defense can only result in a complete defeat; and even an active defense can never result in victory. It can only ward off the end or at most, conclude a peace which may ^{not} be advantageous.

THE TACTICAL DEFENSE.

The tactical defense is the resistance of an attack upon a certain point in the field of battle.

MOBILIZATION.

The first thing after war is declared, is the mobilizations of the army which means passing from a peace to a war footing. The advantages of a prompt mobilization as given by Derrecagaix are; - -

The belligerent that is ready first has the initiative of the movements. Consequently, he imposes his will upon the enemy.

With equal forces, he has more chances of enlisting the first success on his side, and of increasing thus the moral value of his army, the assurance of his troops, at the same time he ~~is~~ correspondingly diminishes the confidence of the enemy.

He will dictate the law instead of receiving it.

He will draw great advantage from the fact that the direction of the war rests principally with him, and he will be able to retain control of events for a considerable period.

CONCENTRATION.

By this is meant, the formation of the army.

The points of concentration are determined from the projects

of operations and the probable plans of the enemy.

The essential conditions of a good concentration are to protect the frontier against the attempts of the adversary and to cover the concentration. The first is accomplished by selecting good points of concentration and the second may be accomplished by sending out troops preferably cavalry for the protection of the movement.

Concentration comprises two periods. The Transport of troops and their Strategic deployment.

TRANSPORTATION.

In this age, the duration of concentration is of vital importance as a single hour may sometimes decide whether we take the offensive or defensive. The transportation of troops should be arranged for all the time. The rules for transportation as given by Derricagaix are as follows; - -

1st. The establishment during peace of tables of march corresponding to the different hypotheses of concentration;

2nd. Dispatch of the units as soon as their mobilization is finished;

3rd. Transport of the combatants before the material;

4th. Complete utilization of all means of communication ;

5th. Distribution of the disembarking stations at intervals upon the lines of concentration, the most distant points not being farther than a day's march apart.

STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT.

After the troops have reached the end of their route, it is necessary to make such disposition of them as will be of advantage to strategical manoeuvres. It is not enough that all be brought to-

gether; as in such form they would be in no shape for battle. Disposition of them must be made in view of a battle and in such manner that each branch may be the most effective.

The general principles for strategical deployment as stated by Derricagaix, are; - -

1st. Before the concentration, assemblment near the disembarking stations, of provisions sufficient to supply the army, at least during the entire period of transportation;

2nd. Protection of the frontier, from the day war is declared, by the first disposal troops;

3rd. Dispatch to the frontier of the first mobilized units, for the purpose of covering the strategic deployment;

4th. Distribution of the corps and divisions upon the zone of concentration, in order more or less close, according to the probable character of the first combats;

5th. Concentration of the armies upon angular fronts, when the circumstances are favorable for such a direction.