

THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS: COMBAT LEADERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

by

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B.A., Kennesaw State College, 1985

M.A., University of Georgia, 1996

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Abstract

This dissertation examines combat leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in infantry and machine gun units at the company level and below to highlight the linkages between the training and professional development of junior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and the army's overall military effectiveness in World War I. Between 1865 and 1918, the growing lethality of the battlefield had forced changes to tactics and formations that placed novel demands on small unit leaders. The proliferation of new weapons in infantry companies and the thinning and extension of formations required junior officers and NCOs able to exercise an unparalleled degree of initiative and independence while also mastering new tactical and technical skills. When the United States entered World War I, the Regular Army was still grappling with how to reconcile its traditional expectations of small unit leadership with the new "skill sets" required of junior leaders in modern warfare. Faced with the need to produce officers and NCOs to lead its rapidly expanding mass army, the regulars improvised a system for identifying, training, and assigning company-level leaders. Unfortunately, the Regular Army's unpreparedness to wage a modern war, and the host of systemic problems associated with raising a mass army, meant that much of the training of these key leaders was so ill-focused and incomplete that the new officers and NCOs were woefully unprepared to face the tactical challenges that awaited them in France. These problems were only compounded when unexpected casualties among officers and NCOs in the summer and fall of 1918 led to a further curtailment in leader training the U. S. Army. The end result of the U. S. Army's failure to adequately train and develop its junior leaders was that its combat units often lacked the flexibility and "know how" to fight without suffering prohibitively high casualties. When the junior leaders failed, faltered and bungled, the AEF's battles became confused and uncoordinated slugging matches that confounded the plans and expectations of the army's senior leaders. The heavy casualties that resulted from these slugging matches further undermined the AEF's effectiveness by reducing the morale and cohesion of the army's combat units and hindering the army's overall ability to learn from its mistakes due to the high turn-over of junior officers and NCOs.

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Chapter 1

Combat Leadership in the AEF: A Tale of Alvin and Charles

The day was not going well for the 82nd Division's 328th Infantry. As the regiment attempted to seize the Decauville railroad in the early morning of 8 October 1918, German riflemen, snipers, and machine gunners on Hill 233 and the Champrocher Ridge caught the Americans in a vicious crossfire that quickly halted the momentum of the assault as the doughboys sought shelter from the defenders' remorseless firepower. The assault itself had been rather clumsy and ill-coordinated. It was a frontal attack into an open valley and the attack had been preceded by little effort to suppress the German defenders with artillery or machine gun fire. The American attack degenerated into a confused effort by individuals and small clumps of doughboys to move forward by running from shell hole to shell hole. Part of the confusion was caused by a general shortage of leaders within the regiment. The two previous days of fighting had already taken a heavy toll on the regiment's commissioned and noncommissioned officers (NCOs). The loss of these key leaders meant that many of the unit's companies and platoons were being led by junior officers and NCOs with little or no experience at the levels of command into which they had been thrust. For example, although G Company was fortunate to have begun the 8 October attack with its long-standing commander, Captain E.C.B. Danforth, the company's 1st platoon was commanded only by a sergeant, and its squads were led by corporals hastily promoted to acting sergeants.¹

¹ Edward G. Buxton, ed. *Official History of the 82nd Division* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1919), 58-60. and Alvin C. York, *Sergeant York: His Own Life Story and War Diary*, ed. Tom Skeyhill (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), 236-44.

As the 328th Infantry's attack stalled, its casualties began to mount. Along with the rest of the 328th, G Company found itself bewildered by the enemy fire, heavy losses, and the inability of its officers to bring order to the chaos reigning on the valley floor. It was not that the company's leaders were not trying to reorganize the advance; in fact Second Lieutenant K.P. Stewart was killed by machine gun fire while exhorting his men to move forward, but the officers and NCOs faced a situation that little in their training or previous experience had prepared them to meet. Heavy enemy fire had isolated Danforth from much of his company and his span of control extended merely to those soldiers in adjoining shell holes that were within the range of his voice. G Company anchored the regiment's left flank, and its 1st platoon held the far left of the American line.

The 1st platoon leader, Sergeant (SGT) Harry M. Parson, realized that the regiment's position was precarious and that something had to be done to reduce the enemy's fire. He was out of contact with Captain Danforth, and thus, on his own initiative, ordered corporal-turned-acting sergeant Bernard Early to take three squads and attempt to flank the German position and silence their machine guns. Early's small command of three corporals and 13 privates succeeded in surprising and capturing a number of Germans, but a more alert group of enemy machine gunners discovered the American detachment and pinned it with accurate fires.

After the German fire killed one corporal and severely wounded Early and another corporal, the command of the detachment devolved onto Corporal Alvin York. York ordered the surviving squad members to remain under cover and guard their prisoners while he worked himself into a position where he could enfilade the German positions. York managed to kill 15 to 20 of the German defenders and then led his detachment back to the American lines, forcing the surrender of additional German units as they went. The American detachment ultimately

returned with 132 German prisoners, completing a mission that gained York the Medal of Honor and the distinction of being the American Expeditionary Forces' (AEF) most decorated soldier.²

While York was winning his honors on the morning of 8 October, a different drama was being played out a less than two kilometers away. Private Charles Clement, a scout with the 2nd Battalion, 328th Infantry's intelligence section, had been moving throughout the morning delivering messages from the battalion headquarters and reporting on the conditions of the unit's scattered companies. Clement repeatedly braved the enemy fire that had done such grave damage to G Company and the rest of the 328th Infantry. As Clement rushed forward from crater to crater with A Company, a German sniper on the ridge shot him in the forehead, killing him instantly.³

Although Clement was only one of several of the regiment's privates to die that day, his story was unique. This twenty six year old private had in fact previously been a captain in command of the battalion's E Company. Clement's fall from grace was a sad tale of the systemic problems associated with the nation's hasty mobilization and the pressures of command and leadership in modern war. On the surface, Clement was everything that the army wanted of its new officers. He was a 1912 graduate of Mercer University, a respected teacher at the Atlanta Boy's High School, and a man whose peacetime college athletics and work with the YMCA embodied "muscular Christianity" and adherence to Theodore Roosevelt's "strenuous life" that supposedly marked the "alpha male" of the Progressive Era. After the army established a series of Officer Training Camps (OTC) to provide officers for the new draftee divisions, Clement

² United States Department of War, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 229-30, and York, 240-55.

³ Ernesto Bisogno, "The Life and Death of Charles Clement," *The American Legion Magazine*, March 1938, 50-1. Bisogno was a close friend of Clement, he discovered and buried his body on the evening of 8 October, and compiled his account of Clement's death after interviewing those present at the event. Bisogno story of Clement's service was serialized in the January, February, and March 1937 editions of the *American Legion Magazine*.

signed up for the first iteration of the training in April 1917 to be held at Camp Gordon, Georgia. The Camp Gordon OTC was to provide the company grade officers for the nascent 82nd Division. After his assignment to the 2nd Battalion, 328th Infantry, his commander, Major (MAJ) Edward Buxton praised Clement as a “indefatigable student” of war, “one of the hardest working men in the regiment,” and a person marked by “his higher ideals of helpfulness toward military service.”⁴ Unfortunately, Clement’s hasty training and the burden of making the life and death decisions left him ill-prepared to exercise effective combat leadership.

In late June 1918, the 82nd Division’s regiments rotated into the trenches of the quiet Langney Sector of the French line to receive their first combat seasoning. On the night of 1-2 July, shortly after his company had occupied their section of trench line, Clement ordered a small ambush patrol to be established in “no man’s land.” Shortly before the patrol went out, Clement informed the patrol leader, SGT Cunningham, that he would accompany him on the mission. Cunningham noted that the captain was in “an intoxicated condition” and, with the aid of a lieutenant, tried to dissuade him from coming with the patrol. Despite their efforts, Clement insisted on going. The patrol was only in “no man’s land” for a short time before Cunningham returned to the American trenches, bodily carrying the stupefied captain. Cunningham reported that “Captain Clement made so much noise that he thought it was foolish to stay out there.”⁵ Because of his actions, Clement’s battalion commander felt that he had no other option but to bring the young captain before a courts martial for violation of the 85th Article of War: Officer found drunk on duty.

During his courts martial, Clement readily admitted his guilt. He noted that he normally abstained from alcohol (a fact supported by his fellow officers), and was unsure exactly why he

⁴ “Record of the Trial by General Courts-Martial of Captain Charles G. Clement, 328th Infantry” 15 July 1918, U.S. National Archives, RG 153, Box 5977, Docket no. 120515, 17.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

had drank heavily from a bottle of Scotch on the night of the patrol. In his last statement before the court Clement declared,

I am guilty, but if the verdict of this court be the death penalty, I have nothing to say. If it be, however, dismissal from the service, I have. In “No Man’s Land” I disgraced myself, my uniform, and my country, and in “No Man’s Land” I would like to have the opportunity of redeeming myself, at least partially. Take my commission away from me, but allow me to go to my own company as a private and allow me to serve there shoulder to shoulder with the men that I have commanded. Then, when this war is over let me serve any sentence out in a penitentiary.⁶

Although the board sentenced him to be dismissed from the service and to be confined at hard labor for five years, the members of the courts martial unanimously signed a plea for clemency for the disgraced captain. Ultimately, the appealing authority granted Clement’s request and he was allowed to enlist as a private in the 2nd battalion’s headquarters company.

One of Clement’s friends, Private Ernesto Bisogno, noted that the busted captain frequently maintained that the drinking incident was not due to cowardice, but he never went further in explaining the cause of the binge. Although he sometimes expressed bitterness at his fall, Private Clement remained true to his promise and repeatedly volunteered for patrols and other hazardous missions. When he was last seen alive, Clement was forward of one of the 328th Infantry’s lead companies apparently seeking a blood sacrifice to redeem his lost honor.⁷

The experiences of the officers, NCOs, and soldiers of the 328th Infantry on 8 October 1918 and the specific cases of Alvin York and Charles Clement offer an interesting window into the overall experiences of the AEF. In a microcosm, these events and people highlight one of the American military’s greatest challenges in World War I: how to build a cadre of combat leaders at the company level and below capable of fighting a modern industrial war without sustaining

⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷ Bisogno, “The Life and Death of Charles Clement,” *The American Legion Magazine*, January 1938, 52. and *American Legion Magazine*, March 1938, 51-2.

prohibitively high casualties. The 8 October attack reveals some of the realities that made combat leadership such a challenge for the U. S. Army in the First World War. These included inadequately and or inappropriately trained officers and NCOs, leader inexperience with the tools and techniques of modern war, the use of lumbering and ham-fisted tactics, organizations too ungainly to be controlled by novice leaders, the innate challenges of command and control in a pre-radio communications army, and the inability of units to learn from their mistakes due to heavy losses in their leader cadres.

In the actions of Sergeants Parsons and Early, themselves inexperienced and only partially-trained, we see a battlefield initiative born more of desperation and a sense of survival rather than the cool and deliberate actions of battle wise and professional NCOs. Parsons later admitted that, “It was an awful responsibility for a non-commissioned officer to order his men to go to what looked to be a certain death. But I figured it had to be done. I figured that they had a slight chance of getting the machine guns.”⁸ Of Parsons’ actions, York noted, “He didn’t know how many of them [the Germans] there were. He didn’t know for sure where they were hid. But he figured it was the only chance.”⁹ In York’s case, his actions reflected more of his individual pre-war marksman and stalking skills than of his strength as a leader. He admitted that during the battle, “I hadn’t time to give orders nohow” and that he limited his actions to targeting “them there Germans machine gunners and give them the best I had.”¹⁰

In the tragic case of Charles Clement we see the psychological toll that the burden of command took on individual leaders when the coping mechanisms of training and experience have not adequately prepared and armored them for the realities of combat. Clement was everything that the army sought in selecting its new officers, yet he clearly recognized his own

⁸ York, 241.

⁹ Ibid., 222.

¹⁰ Ibid., 226-7.

limitations and uncertainties and made a mistake that could have been costly to the men under his command.

Leadership is the bedrock of all armies. It is the leader who forms the discipline and cohesion of the unit and directs it towards a collective effort to achieve the unit's assigned mission. In many ways, combat leadership is a rather nebulous thing to classify. To paraphrase Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, it is difficult to define, but one knows it when one sees it. Perhaps the most simple and accurate definition of "combat leadership" is that it is the art of getting soldiers to do willingly what instinct and society has programmed them not to do: to place themselves at mortal risk and to kill others (with greater emphasis on the former concern) while engaged in battle. One of the best descriptions of the role and importance of combat leadership comes from the sociologists Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz. In their groundbreaking study of cohesion and military effectiveness in the Wehrmacht, they noted...

The non-commissioned officer and the junior officers are the agents on whom the individual soldier depends for his relationship with the rest of the army outside his immediate group, and in his relations with the outer world (the home front and the enemy). They have charge of his safety, and they are the channels through which flow food, equipment, and other types of supplies as well as chance symbolic gratifications such as decorations, promotions, leave, etc... [The leader] must look after his men's needs, and be able to do all the men's duties better than they themselves in training and under combat conditions. The men also must be sure that their officer is duly considerate of their lives: they must know that he does not squander his human resources, that the losses of life which occur under his command will be minimal and justified.¹¹

Thus, combat leadership is based on a social contract between the leader and the led. In return for their subordinates' obedience, battlefield leaders must show a genuine concern for their welfare and demonstrate a level of tactical competency that assures soldiers that their lives will not be placed at unnecessary risk.

¹¹ Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II" in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer, 1948), 297.

Ultimately, battlefield leadership rests on a foundation of mutual trust and confidence between the soldier and his superiors. The cornerstone of that confidence is the subordinates' faith that their leaders have mastered the technical and tactical aspects of their jobs and that the leader can provide the basic requirements of food, clothing, shelter, ammunition, and medical aid that hold together the body and soul. The last point should not be downplayed, for it is part of the social contract of leadership and a foundation of unit cohesion and effectiveness. The soldiers expected that their leaders could do these routine things routinely, and when leaders proved unable to produce those basic necessities, unit discipline and cohesion suffered.¹²

The study of American combat leadership during World War I is interesting and important because the conflict occurred against a backdrop of massive changes in warfare. These changes had their greatest impact on the tactical level of war and brought with them novel demands, requirements, and expectations for junior leaders. As Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox note in *The Dynamics of Military Revolution*, the First World War ushered in the greatest military revolution in the 20th century.¹³ The war melded the popular passions and nationalism that had been unleashed by the French Revolution, with the ability to field and sustain immense armies that resulted from the Industrial Revolution, and the ability to mobilize and direct these new titanic forces using the skills that derived from the managerial revolution.

The result of this “train wreck of revolutions” was a new form of mass industrial warfare that eclipsed all previous wars in its scope, breadth, and deadliness. The realities of this mass industrial war on the Western Front tended to erase the separation of the tactical, operational, and

¹² The idea of the need for officers to do “routine things routinely” comes from a series of discussions held between the author and Dr. Dennis Showalter while the later was a visiting professor at West Point in 1998. Showalter attributed this basic competency as one of the pillars of the German army's cohesion and effectiveness in World War II.

¹³ Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox, ed., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6-11.

strategic levels of war as military efforts focused on the key tactical question of how to “break in” to the enemy’s forward defenses and then how to transform the “break in” to a “break out” that would end the trench stalemate and return operational and strategic mobility to the battlefield. Both the Germans and the Allies tried to solve these tactical conundrums through a host of new technologies, doctrines, and tactics. However, the rock upon which all of these efforts were wrecked was the inability for commanders at all levels to gain an accurate situational awareness of battlefield events and exert effective command and control of their units to avoid unnecessary losses or to seize fleeting opportunities.

Given this lack of rapid and effective command and control at the regimental level and above, the First World War on the Western Front placed an unheralded degree of responsibility and initiative into the hands of junior officers and NCOs. It was these junior combat leaders that ultimately decided how, and even if, the orders of their superiors would be carried out. In 1914 the infantry companies of all of the major combatants were equipped purely with rifles. By 1917, however, the need to give junior leaders the ability to exercise their new-found initiative had forced all the combatants to equip their infantry companies with an arsenal of new weapons such as rifle grenades, light machine guns, and automatic rifles. The adoption of new weapons and tactics and the need for leaders to exercise sound tactical judgment at the lowest levels placed new demands and emphasis on the way that armies selected and trained their junior leaders.

With leadership so important to military effectiveness, the question of who would lead the legions was of paramount concern to the Regular Army’s leadership from the earliest days of World War I. When the United States declared war on Germany in April of 1917, the army immediately faced the problem of how to obtain, train, and develop a corps of officers and NCOs

for an expeditionary force to fight in France. By June the army was rapidly expanding from a peacetime strength of 209,000 officers and men (including the National Guard) to a force that would eventually reach four million men. Within weeks of the declaration of the war, army planners estimated that the nation would need to commission an additional 200,000 officers alone to fight Germany. To understand the magnitude of the problem, one should keep in mind that on 30 June 1916, the Regular Army had only 4,843 officers on its active rolls and could call on only 3,199 additional officers from the National Guard.¹⁴ The army could, in theory, produce adequately trained riflemen within a few months; officers and sergeants, however, usually required years to master the tactical, technical, and leadership responsibilities of their positions.

Under the stress of time, the army's short term solution to the leader shortage was to graduate the West Point Class of 1917 early, recall as many retired officers as possible, and federalize all fit and competent National Guard officers. The army's long-term solution was to establish three-month-long Officer Training Camps (OTCs) to commission new captains and lieutenants. The army also chose to select and promote sergeants directly from the ranks of the Regular Army and selected draftees. Although these solutions filled the required positions in the expanding National Army divisions, the company-level leaders' abilities remained questionable.

Although commentators in the army's professional journals had long stressed the need for the service to develop junior leaders able to cope with the demands of modern war, the Regular Army's own efforts to address this issue had been haphazard at best prior to World War I. While the United States pulled off a minor miracle by deploying a two million man army to France

¹⁴ United States Department of War, *War Department Annual Report* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 242. and Leonard Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), pp. 16- 21. By April 1917, the Regular Army officer corps had grown to 5,791, but the increase reflected the hasty commissioning of barely trained officers from the newly formed Officer's Reserve Corps.

within a period of nineteen months, this was accomplished only through a series of shortcuts and mistakes that ultimately carried severe consequences in terms of human life.

Unfortunately, the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) was a 1914 army trying to cope with the combat realities of a 1918 war. While one must not forget that no degree of military preparation was going to overcome the fact that World War I operated under an unsolvable attritional logic, the U. S. Army's own shortsightedness, institutional uncertainty, and administrative missteps contributed greatly to the AEF's costly and awkward tactical performance in the last six months of the war. To a large degree, this poor tactical showing stemmed from the failure of the army to field officers and NCOs able to operate efficiently and effectively on the modern battlefield.

The systemic problems associated with mass mobilization, poor personnel policies, and incomplete or ill-focused training meant that the AEF's combat companies were led by officers and NCOs that did not understand how to employ the new weapons introduced in the war, lacked basic skills such as map reading, and were largely unable to employ basic casualty-saving tactics. This lack of leader "know how" resulted in the formation of companies and battalions that often lacked a strong cohesiveness and were frequently incapable of executing offensive tactics beyond costly frontal attacks.

During the Meuse Argonne Campaign, America's largest battle of the war, the AEF was worn and blunted by its headlong attacks against a skillful German defense, hamstrung by a hopelessly tangled supply line, and slowly bled by unexpectedly high casualties and the loss of upwards of 100,000 soldiers straggling behind the lines. Although the AEF's tactical effectiveness in some units painfully improved by late October and early November 1918, this was largely due to its surviving junior leaders gaining battlefield wisdom through the battlefield

school of hard knocks rather than, or even in spite of, the army's efforts to rectify its previous mistakes in leadership development.

This dissertation will examine combat leadership in the AEF at the company level and below to illuminate the factors that influenced American military effectiveness in World War I and to broaden the body of knowledge of the nation's participation in the war. By focusing on leadership at the company-level this paper hopes to further the understanding of the American experience at "the sharp end" of the war. Leadership at that most basic level was one of the most important factors in determining how Americans fought their Great War.

While Pershing and his corps commanders could plan operations and order their execution, in the end, it was the sergeants, lieutenants, and captains, far removed from Chaumont, who determined what would be accomplished on the battlefield. When the junior leaders failed, faltered, and bungled, the AEF's battles became confused and uncoordinated slugging matches that confounded the plans and expectations of the army's senior leaders. To understand how junior combat leaders influenced the overall effectiveness of the AEF, the paper will explore seven main questions...

- What were the pre-war Regular Army's expectations of its junior officers and NCOs?
- How well did the army understand the realities of the "firepower revolution" of 1865-1914 and its new demands on junior leadership?
- After the United States entered World War I, what steps did the army take to raise, train, and develop its cadre of junior leaders?
- What systemic problems associated with mobilization influenced or hindered the development of a trained and effective junior leader cadre?
- What "course corrections" did the army make during the war to the way in procured, trained, and developed junior leaders due to the changing realities of the conflict?
- What was the AEF's mechanism for identifying, judging, and processing officers accused of incompetence or being unfit for combat duty, and how well did it work?

- How effective were the AEF's junior leaders at meeting the demands of combat in World War I?

This dissertation will also attempt to fill in some of the historiographical gaps of how the AEF prepared for, and performed in, combat. Of all the books and articles about the AEF none directly address the topic of junior leadership competency in the AEF. Historians in the last twenty-five years have explored the larger issues of the AEF's senior leadership and their attempts to build a tactical doctrine but have given scant attention to combat at the company-level and below.

Much of this scholarship has been critical of Pershing's leadership and the AEF's operational effectiveness. For example, James Rainey's "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I" (*Parameters*, 1983) notes that the AEF's problems on the battlefield resulted from Pershing's inability to transform his nebulous concept of "open warfare" into a sound doctrine that could be used by battlefield commanders. In a similar vein, David Trask's *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking* (Kansas, 1993) contends that Pershing's insistence on an independent American army, in spite of the AEF's glaring training and readiness problems, hindered the Allied war effort in 1918 and may have led to his relief from command had the war lasted. While these works are valuable in understanding the large overarching problems of the American war effort, they do not attempt to explain how these issues directly affected junior leaders and soldiers on the battlefield.

Timothy Nenner, the National Archives' military records archivist, has likewise taken a critical view of the AEF's performance. In "Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918" (*Military Review*, October 1987), he argues that the American disdain for "European" methods along with their own flawed training and personnel practices prevented the AEF from

becoming an effective fighting force. Nenner expands this argument in Allan Millett and Williamson Murray's *Military Effectiveness: The First World War*. In his chapter, "American Military Effectiveness in the First World War," Nenner concludes that while the United States was strong in the political-strategic arena, the nation's overall ill-readiness to fight a modern war, and its subsequent rapid mobilization, undermined the AEF's operational and tactical efficiency.

More recently, Mark Grotelueschen has expanded on Nenner and Rainey's arguments. In *The AEF Way of War* (Cambridge, 2007), he argues that while Nenner and Rainey were correct to note the bankruptcy of Pershing's "open warfare" doctrine, its true impact was much less dramatic than previous historians had maintained. By studying the training and actions of the 1st, 2nd, 26th, and 77th Divisions, Grotelueschen accurately argues that leaders at the division and brigade level disregarded the directives from the AEF's General Headquarters (GHQ), and took a more pragmatic approach to operations than those proscribed by Pershing. One of the key lessons that these divisions learned was to substitute the firepower of artillery and other supporting weapons for that of the individual rifleman. This embrace of a "firepower centric" doctrine ultimately allowed these divisions to achieve their missions without prohibitive casualties. He also maintains that the Americans' training with the Allies was much more effective in preparing the AEF for the realities of combat than the AEF GHQ admitted.

Although Nenner, Rainey, and Grotelueschen all examine the tactical level of war, they give little attention to small unit leadership or its pervasive affect on the AEF's operations and overall effectiveness. Although the doughboys perhaps picked up valuable pointers from their French and British counterparts, it should be noted that the initial training of any unit or individual becomes their basic "default setting" in combat, and is thus, very difficult to supplant

with different methods. By focusing on the division and brigade levels, Grotelueschen seems to have overlooked the pervasive influence of inadequate and poorly focused training on operations at the company level and below. The ill-coordinated and costly frontal attacks that continued to characterize American infantry operations from Soissons through much of the Meuse Argonne seem to belie Grotelueschen's assertions. Also, since the 1st, 2nd, and 26th Divisions were among the handful of units that completed their full course of training and had the dubious benefit of seeing more combat than the divisions that arrived in France in the spring and summer of 1918, they simply had a longer matriculation in the "school of hard knocks."

Other historians disagree with Rainey, Trask, and Nenninger's contention that the AEF was a flawed and ineffective combat force. Paul Braim, Edward Coffman, and Kenneth Hamburger argue that while the AEF had its problems, in the end the army was able to identify and correct its shortcomings and make significant contributions to the Allied war effort. For example, in *Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces* (CMH Pub 24-1, 1997), Hamburger maintains that Pershing and the AEF General Headquarters were well aware of the army's training deficiencies and took successful measures to correct them. Hamburger points to the AEF's school system and GHQ efforts to capture "lessons learned" as evidence that, as an institution, the AEF was able to correct its tactical imperfections by learning from its past battlefield mistakes. Unfortunately, Hamburger and the others often fail to see the high cost in casualties and unit cohesion associated with gaining "lessons learned." Hamburger also misses the point that the AEF's efforts to correct its training problems often resulted in unintended detrimental consequences. Thus, while the AEF school system had noble goals, it often took key junior leaders away from their units at the critical times when they could have been building unit cohesion and their own leadership abilities. Furthermore, extremely heavy casualties among

infantry and machine gun junior officers greatly hobbled the process of “learning lessons” at the battalion level and below. Too many junior leaders were killed or wounded before they could benefit from the “battlefield wisdom” of their combat experiences.

Although the historiography of the AEF offers slim pickings on junior leadership, other works examining the issue in other Allied armies are more plentiful. These studies allow us to compare American wartime practices of selecting and training officers and NCOs with those used in the British and French armies. This is particularly useful in the case of the British. As with the Americans, the British had to rapidly expand its miniscule peacetime regular and reserve forces, to include a precipitous expansion of its officer and NCO corps, to meet the demands of mass industrial warfare.

In many ways, the British endured the same systemic problems of mass mobilization and the expansion of the role of its junior leaders that would plague the Americans. The British and American regular officer corps moreover seemed to share similar attitudes and prejudices on junior leadership and citizen soldiers. Also, the studies of leadership in the other armies offers greater insight into how they attempted to solve one of the greatest tactical challenges of the war: maintaining effective command and control of small units in offense in the face of massive defensive firepower. The works of John Baynes, G.D. Sheffield, Martin Samuels, Michael Ramsay, Leonard Smith and Lord Moran all grapple with the issues of combat motivation, small group cohesion, and the influence of military culture on leadership and tactics in the Allied armies of the Great War, and will be useful in the dissertation’s examination of the same issues in the American army. Given their usefulness, it is important to devote some space to comparing their arguments.

John Baynes' 1967 work, *Morale*, was the first major historical attempt to examine the experience of the Great War from a sociological viewpoint. Baynes' focuses on uncovering the sources of morale and combat effectiveness by investigating the experiences of the Second Scottish Rifles Battalion from its posting in Malta in 1911 through its first major combat action at Neuve Chapelle in March of 1915. He does an excellent job of recreating the social milieu and military culture of this regular army unit and the aspects of leadership, cohesion, and regimental *esprit de corps* that influenced its performance during the early months of the Great War. Despite enduring the terrible conditions of trench warfare in the winter of 1914-1915 and its heavy losses at Neuve Chapelle, Baynes argues that the communal loyalty of the regimental system, excellent officer-enlisted relations, strong discipline (both imposed and internal), a highly developed sense of duty in all ranks, and efficient administration made the Second Scottish Rifles an effective and reliable fighting force.¹⁵

Although Baynes' work was path-breaking for its time, the work suffers from a host of serious flaws. One of the major issues is the author's lack of academic distance from his subject. Baynes' father had served in the unit in World War I and went on to command it in the 1930s. Having basically grown up in the regiment, Baynes himself served his own army career within its ranks. He took serious issue with those veterans and historians that had previously portrayed the British army of the Great War as an ill-led, poorly administered, and rather dim organization whose blind callousness resulted in the death of a generation of Britons. Although Baynes occasionally admits to there having been some tensions and discontentment in the ranks, he is quick to argue that the regimental system and the noblesse oblige of the officer corps kept most of the period's Tommies in a state of fraternal contentment. He often cites Lord Moran as a

¹⁵ John Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage: The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chappelle, 1915* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 153-4.

theoretical source for his ideas of morale and courage, and seems to have agreed with the doctor's Edwardian ideas of honor, bravery, and class. It is also interesting to note that Baynes chose to halt his investigation of the Second Scottish Rifles shortly after their decimation at Neuve Chapelle. Perhaps the unit's greatest test of morale, cohesion, and leadership was not getting its regular soldiers and officers to face their first major test of combat, but rather their subsequent reactions in repeatedly rebuilding the battalion after Aubers Ridge, the Somme, and Ypres.

Despite its flaws, *Morale* did show the possibility of viewing a military unit as a social organization capable of being dissected to uncover how well, or poorly, its separate parts functioned and interrelated. Baynes' path was quickly followed by a number of historians attempting to understand the key issues of how individuals and military organizations coped with the great military changes and the unprecedented carnage of World War I. In *Leadership in the Trenches*, for example, G.D. Sheffield examines how the realities of trench warfare influenced wartime British military culture. Sheffield argues that while the war somewhat loosened the army's harsh discipline and the upper classes' grip on the officer corps, the generally good wartime morale of the British army still rested on pre-war assumptions of officer paternalism and the social deference of the enlisted man. He notes that despite the large influx of new officers promoted from the ranks or appointed from the civilian middle class, regular officers were largely able to inculcate their public school ideas of noblesse oblige, self-sacrifice and paternalism on the hearts and minds of their "temporary gentlemen."¹⁶

Although the four week cadet courses that commissioned the rankers and civilians were woefully deficient in training critical combat leadership skills, Sheffield maintains that their

¹⁶ G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale, and Discipline in the British Army of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4-8, 38-40, 56-60, 68-83, 111-113 and 178.

focus on instilling the attributes and values of upper-class gentility within the candidates was perfectly suited to the military culture of the British army.¹⁷ Regardless of social background, officers able to provide for the physical needs of their soldiers, exhibit courage under fire, led from the front, and exercise a degree of tactical common sense met the “social contract” demanded of their men and thus buttressed the overall morale, discipline, and combat effectiveness of the army as a whole.

Not all historians agree with Sheffield’s rather favorable conclusions on the British officer corps and its relations with the average Tommy. Michael Ramsay argues that the class consciousness and social assumptions of the pre-war officer corps largely hindered efforts by reformers inside the army to adequately deal with the massive changes that occurred in warfare between 1870 and the Great War. In *Command and Cohesion*, Ramsay notes that the largely rural aristocratic and gentry-based officer corps believed that industrialization and urbanization had sapped the lower classes of their courage, manliness, and patriotism and had left behind dangerous strains of individualism and liberalism. These attitudes and prejudices greatly colored the British army’s approach to combat leadership and small unit tactics through the opening years of the Great War.¹⁸ The pre-war debate on small unit tactics centered on how to balance the need for obedience and discipline in what many officers saw as a flawed pool of potential recruits with the increased demand for soldiers able to exercise individual initiative and judgment due to the changing nature of warfare.

Unlike Sheffield, Ramsay argues that the regular officer corps was ill-prepared to solve this “paradigmatic crisis.” While Ramsay agrees that the officer corps was built upon the structure of gentility, he notes that it was also a group that consciously denigrated professional

¹⁷ Ibid., 54-5.

¹⁸ M.A. Ramsay, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army 1870-1918* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 56-73.

study and tended to concentrate decision-making at the highest possible level. Ramsay points out that the social distance between the ranks also limited the extent of officer paternalism. Using Darryl Henderson's model for the sources of leadership authority (see below), Ramsay maintains that the officer corps lacked both the "expert" and "referent" power needed to effectively lead in modern war.¹⁹

Ramsay also correctly identifies some of the major shortcomings in Sheffield's interpretations of the British wartime training of temporary officers. He notes that the profound lack of small unit training for both NCOs and officer candidates led to small units commanded by leaders who were unable and unwilling to act without the direct orders or supervision of their superiors. Although the British army tried to bridge this yawning gap in knowledge by establishing a host of tactical schools in France, the lack of a standardized training and tactical doctrine and a shortage of qualified instructors undermined the effectiveness of these efforts. When the poorly prepared temporary officers and NCOs failed to meet the "high standards" of the regular officer corps, senior leaders believed that their pre-war social assumptions were proven and responded with rigid lock-step and centrally controlled tactical plans.²⁰

Ramsay notes that it was only after the massive casualties of 1915 and 1916 that the senior army leadership was brought kicking and screaming to the conclusion that they had to reform their tactical doctrine. From 1917 to the end of the war, the British army continually pushed more heavy weapons to the platoon and squad level and also sought to promote unit cohesion and effectiveness by granting junior leaders more authority and initiative.²¹ While Sheffield's "paternalism" thesis is compelling, Ramsay's more critical interpretation provides a

¹⁹ Ibid., 38-41 and 58-60.

²⁰ Ibid., 159-171.

²¹ Ibid., 184-195.

far more objective and balanced view of how shortcomings in leadership, training, and tactics undercut the British army's combat effectiveness.

Many of Ramsay's findings on the problems of leadership and training within the British army are echoed by Martin Samuels. In *Command or Control*, Samuels argues that during World War I the German army was much more effective in combat than its British rival. The overriding difference between the two armies was in their basic assumptions about the nature of combat and the military culture of command, control, and training that was derived from these primary biases. Samuels maintains that the Germans viewed combat as an inherently chaotic endeavor and thus developed a culture of "directive control" that expected leaders to exercise their initiative within the overall intent of their superior commanders. The British, on the other hand, saw combat as an essentially structured activity that required commanders to exercise top-down "restrictive control" to keep subordinates from derailing the higher command's battle plans.²²

As with Ramsay, Samuels notes that British pre-war and wartime training of soldiers, NCOs, and junior officers was far too scripted and unrealistic to prepare them to face actual combat conditions or to exercise individual initiative or any decentralized plan. The Germans, however, sought to condition their officers and NCOs to act in the absence of orders when unexpected circumstances arose on the battlefield.²³ Unlike the British, the Germans also strove to strengthen small unit cohesion by returning recovered wounded soldiers back to the units from which they came.²⁴ Although Samuels downplays the difficulty the German army had in expanding their forces during the war and in maintaining the quality of their junior officers and

²² Martin Samuels, *Command or Control: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies: 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 3-5 and 289.

²³ *Ibid.*, 77-80, 94-101, 118-121, 226-7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 224-5.

NCOs, he is correct to note how an army's culture and social assumptions color its expectations of leadership, tactics, and its overall approach to war.

Issues of military culture are also the focus of Leonard Smith's *Between Mutiny and Obedience*. Smith examines the experiences of the French 5th Infantry Division to uncover how the social and military expectations of its soldiers influenced their response to the French mutinies of 1917. Drawing upon Michel Foucault's theory of "resistance and struggle" within power relationships, Smith argues that "from the first day of the war, a gray area existed between command expectations and what soldiers in the trenches determined what was possible."²⁵ To Smith, the relationship between the division's junior leaders and soldiers and their senior commanders was one of constant negotiation to set the unit's boundaries of command authority, soldier aggressiveness and allowable dissent. While the French soldier truly wanted to win the war, they still believed that they had a social contract with their officers that sought to mediate the proportionality of their aggressiveness based on a calculation of risk and gain.²⁶

Smith notes that while these tacit negotiations had buttressed unit morale and effectiveness through 1915, they quickly broke down under the relentless grinding of Verdun. The costly and protracted nature of fighting at Verdun left the division's soldiers with a growing sense of helplessness, despair, and fatalism.²⁷ Smith notes that after the bloody failure of the 1917 Nivelle Offensive extinguished any lingering hope that the French soldiers had of quickly ending both the war and their misery, they launched a "soldier strike" to force "management" to renegotiate the balance of proportionality. While Henri Pétain quickly moved to suppress the mutiny, he also worked to address the soldiers' grievances. Smith argues that Pétain was

²⁵ Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-73 and 90-6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 139-156.

ultimately able to restore order in the French army by tacitly accepting the social contract of proportionality and severely limiting the scope and duration of French operations.

Between Mutiny and Obedience is an exceptionally thought provoking work. Although Smith goes too far in his comparison of military organizations to labor unions, his concept of a military social contract of proportionality is perceptive and accurate. Although no professional military officer will readily admit it, the individual soldier has great individual agency in deciding the ferocity of combat. Thus, while a general may order an attack, it is the junior officers, noncommissioned officers and privates that actually decide the degree in which the order will be carried out. This being said, Smith is too quick to discount the coercive power that a nation grants its military to keep soldiers in line. The ability of a military to punish its members *pour encouragement des autres* remains a powerful tool for enforcing discipline and motivating soldiers to face the harsh realities of battle.

Although it is not a work on the Great War per say, Lord Moran's *Anatomy of Courage* is a critical exploration of the larger issue of why individuals and units fail to cope with the stress of combat. Moran served as a frontline military doctor in World War I and was Winston Churchill's personal physician during the Second World War. Based mostly on his experience in World War I, Moran postulated that each soldier had a reservoir of courage that was slowly drained by the experience of combat. The depth of the reservoir varied greatly from man to man, but once it was dry, the man was no longer an effective soldier.²⁸ He argued that soldiers go through phases of courage and effectiveness during their time in combat. After the first shock of battle, soldiers progress through a period where they feel themselves invulnerable to harm. However, as others around him fall, the soldier either descends into a state of fatalistic apathy or

²⁸ Lord Moran, *Anatomy of Courage* (London: Constable and Company, 1945), xvi and 61-5.

begins to slide into a pervasive sense of fear and foreboding that eventually ends his utility as a combatant.

Moran's assertions are also borne out in the research of Samuel Stouffer and seven other prominent sociologists and psychologists in *The American Soldier*, an examination of the overall motivations, effectiveness, attitudes, and experiences of the American soldier in World War II based on an unprecedented survey of soldiers conducted by the U.S. Army Research Branch during the war. They noted that the most effective period of combat performance in World War II infantrymen peaked at 3.5 to 3.9 months in combat for privates and at seven months for NCOs. After those peaks, the soldiers rapidly lost their combat edge and were then more likely to suffer combat fatigue or wounds.²⁹

Although Moran offers insightful observations on why soldiers stop fighting, there are fundamental problems with his work which limits its utility to the modern historian. While Moran accepted the view that all men exhibit fear to some degree in combat, he never truly defined the line between natural fear and cowardice. Many of his assumptions on the soldiers that were most likely to break under the strain of combat were too deeply rooted in Victorian and Edwardian class and racial assumptions. Moran argued that the Great War had been such a psychological shock to its participants because modern society had allowed them to become too sensitive and soft, and thus, lowered their "resistance to fear."³⁰ He maintained that men of "good stock" and race simply did not allow their fears to turn them into cowards and that courage was a moral quality that sprung from good character and willpower. His subtext was that the lower classes lacked the innate characteristics to promote prolonged courage. The masses needed officers of character and regimental culture to build up their resistance to fear and

²⁹ Samuel Stouffer, et al., *The American Soldier*, Vol. II, *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 286.

³⁰ Moran., 11.

to save them from falling prey to their animal instincts for survival.³¹ The greatest utility of Moran's work is that his beliefs and attitudes tend to mirror those of British and American officers in World War I.

Having examined the major historiographical works on the effectiveness of the AEF and leadership in the Great War, I will now discuss the parameters of the dissertation and the sources that have influenced my methodological approach for examining junior leadership in the AEF. Although the dissertation will touch on officers from a large array of commissioning sources, it will concentrate mainly on the officers commissioned through the OTCs. The OTCs graduates comprised over 74% of the officers commissioned during the war and over two-thirds of the army's line officers. National Guard officers comprised only nine percent of the commissioned ranks while those of the Regular Army accounted for only five percent of the officer corps during the war.³² Also, while the study will touch on the experiences of all the combat arms, it will focus mainly on the leadership in infantry and machine gun units. Infantry officers and soldiers constituted the bulk of the troops in the AEF, and the army leadership from Pershing downward considered the infantry the core element of the army. Leadership, both good and bad, is also generally more discernable in the historical records of infantry and machine gun officers and NCOs.

While the thesis will touch on the leadership of African American officers in the AEF, this discussion will be, of necessity, brief. African American officers faced problems in leadership training and professional development that were largely identical to those of their white peers, but the endemic racism of the period added a dimension of complexity to the

³¹ Ibid., 183-200.

³² Ayres., 22, 30. These percentages for OTC, Regular Army, and National Guard officers are based on recalculating the percentages shown in Diagram 6 on page 22 after subtracting the numbers given for physicians, chaplains, and technicians commissioned directly from civilian life. I omitted these officers because they were outside the realm of traditional staff and line officers.

subject that could not be adequately addressed in this paper. Without in any way slighting the contribution of African American officers in the war, it should be noted that they made up less than .07% of the wartime officer corps.³³ All of the caveats applied to the officer corps will also apply to the dissertation's examination of the AEF's NCOs. Throughout the dissertation, the term "junior leadership" is meant to encompass all ranks within a company from captain to a corporal squad leader.

Before beginning the study, it is also important to delineate or describe the attribute of sound leadership and its linkage to unit morale, individual motivation, cohesion, and effectiveness. These things are inextricably connected. War, at its heart, is about killing and dying. Military leaders must motivate or coerce their soldiers to do what instinct, common sense, and peacetime moral and legal stricture tells them not to do: place themselves in mortal danger and kill their fellow man. Although this reality is as old as warfare itself, the lethality of the twentieth century battlefield brought with it new leadership challenges. As military technology forced armies to spread and thin out their tactical formations and to seek protective cover, the traditional centralized *Kadavergehorsam* discipline of the muzzle-loading era was no longer possible. As the military sociologist Darryl Henderson notes,

Coercive motivation is based on the need of the individual to avoid severe physiological deprivation, hardship, or pain for himself or for someone he values. Such an approach is often termed negative motivation, and the individual is alienated from the organization. The limitation of this type of motivation for an army is obvious... No longer do soldiers enter combat in rigid formations under the watchful eye of noncommissioned officers who are behind them with swords drawn. Modern weapons and tactics have made direct control of troops in combat exceeding difficult if not impossible. The dispersion, confusion, chance, and danger that characterize modern battlefields have caused a significant historical shift downwards in the locus of control...³⁴

³³ Arthur F. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 58.

³⁴ William D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 22.

As previously noted, the modern battlefield that emerged during the First World War placed much greater demands on the initiative, aggressiveness, and motivation of the junior leader and the individual soldier than had been required of them in earlier times.³⁵

One of the first and most influential American theorists to explore the how changes in modern warfare altered the physical and psychological realities of men in combat was S.L.A. Marshall. In his seminal work, *Men Against Fire*, Marshall notes that “The battlefield is cold. It is the loneliest place which men share together,” and berated the Army for its failure to properly train and indoctrinate its infantrymen in World War II to meet the reality of the modern “empty battlefield.”³⁶ As a result of poor weapons and leadership training, a general breakdown in communications throughout all levels of command, and flawed replacement policies that undercut small unit cohesion, Marshall maintains that the average American soldier was a singularly ineffective combatant. After conducting post-battle interviews of soldiers in over 400 infantry companies, Marshall claims that only 15 to 20 percent of American infantrymen in World War II ever fired their weapons in combat.³⁷ To counter this inertia, and the fear and sense of isolation that caused it, he argued that the Army had to focus its attentions on creating competent junior leaders and tightly knit small units where each individual had an important “social identity” that contributed to the overall survival and effectiveness of the larger group. To Marshall, the squad was the most important level for building unit cohesion; it was at that basic level where the individual developed the trust and confidence to overcome the psychological stress of battle. With proper training in weapons and tactics, junior leaders and

³⁵ Peter Paret, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy*, “Men Against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914,” by Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 510-526.

³⁶ S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publishing, 1978), 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 53-4.

soldiers would be able to exercise the “thinking initiative” that he saw as key to winning modern wars by increasing ratios of fire and enabling effective battlefield communications.³⁸

Although Roger Spiller and John Whiteclay Chambers rightly take Marshall to task over his methodology and his conclusions, their criticism does not lessen the accuracy of his observations on small unit leadership and cohesion.³⁹ His focus on the importance of junior leaders in the building of the individual soldier’s “social identity” within the small unit is certainly valuable in understanding unit cohesion and combat motivation. Marshall accurately notes that leader competency, and the faith that members of a small unit have that each of their comrades can be counted on to contribute to the greater good of the group, are the major impetus for impelling soldiers to kill and risk death.

Marshall argues that effective leaders from the company to the squad level exercised diligence in the care of their soldiers, administered punishments and rewards by a “standard of resolute justice,” and demonstrated military bearing, courage, creative intelligence, and physical fitness. Good leaders also had “a basic understanding of the simple fact that soldiers wish to think of themselves as soldiers” and were thus not adolescents to be dealt with in a “classroom manner.” Lastly, Marshall maintains that sound leaders held an “innate respect for the dignity of the position and the work of other men.”⁴⁰

Marshall’s belief that good armies are fundamentally built upon a foundation of good squads, platoons, and companies is also shared by Darryl Henderson. In *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat*, Henderson compares the combat performance of American, North

³⁸ Ibid., 86-94, 108, 127, 135, and 144-4.

³⁹ Roger Spiller, “S.L.A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire,” *Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 133, No. 4 (Winter 1988), 63-71 and John Whiteclay Chambers III, “S.L.A. Marshall’s *Men Against Fire*: New Evidence Regarding Fire Ratios,” *Parameters*, Autumn 2003, 113-121. Spiller argued that Marshall’s “ratio of fire” argument was based on too small of a sample to be accurate. Both Spiller and Chambers noted that there was no evidence that Marshall approached the subject of ratios of fire in any systematic method and that it seemed to have been only a minor point in his combat interviews.

⁴⁰ Marshall, 163-4.

Vietnamese, Israeli, and Soviet units at the company-level and below to uncover the factors that have enabled small combat units to retain their focus on achieving their military missions in the face of privation, fear, and death. While the work was intended to support the author's contention that the United States needed to replace the All Volunteer Army with a system of conscription focused on creating American soldiers with enough civic virtue, ideological commitment, and group identity to face their Soviet enemies, he offers useful insights into the importance of leadership and the socialization of the primary group in the building of effective and cohesive units.

Henderson argues that the small unit level is the key crucible of cohesion because it is the primary point where "the organization [the larger Army], the individual soldier, and the leader [junior officer and mid-grade NCO] come together."⁴¹ In militarily effective units, the squad and platoon provide for its individual member's physical, security, and social needs by supplying the basics of life (food, water, etc), establishing norms of behavior to regulate the group's actions and relations with higher authority, giving the individual a sense that he has some control over his destiny, creating strong relationships with the unit's leaders, and by providing sources of self-esteem, group recognition, and mutual affection within the unit.⁴² To Henderson, the major sources of cohesion are leadership and the norms of behavior that the leader established within the small unit to regulate its day-to-day activities. The normative power of the unit creates the expected behavior of the soldier in, and out of, combat by establishing the "ground rules" for performance and rewarding or punishing unit members based on their actions according to the unit norm.

⁴¹ Henderson, 11-12.

⁴² Ibid., 13-21.

As with Marshall, Henderson places a premium on leadership in building unit cohesion and military effectiveness. However, Henderson delves much further than Marshall in identifying the characteristics of effective military leadership and the key roles that the leader must play in building and sustaining small unit morale and solidarity. Henderson decries the baleful influence of “managerial” and “bureaucratic” forms of leadership that sought to treat men as mere commodities to be profitably spent to attain the goals of the military “corporation.” To him, effective junior leaders had to emphasize the “personal, empathetic, and continuous face-to-face contact with all soldiers in the unit.”⁴³ This intimate contact between the soldier and the leader built within the unit the vital faith that the soldiers’ lives would not be risked needlessly and that the unit’s leadership earnestly cared about the well being of the individual. It also served to assure the individual that they were not simply replaceable cogs within the “corporation” but were in fact key components to the success of the small unit and the larger military.

Ultimately, Henderson maintains that the key role of the leader is to create and use the norms within the small group to achieve the goals of the higher military organization. The leader builds the internalized values that helps his soldiers cope with fear and thus achieve the mission, and also corrects any deviations by individuals of the unit’s norms.⁴⁴ Henderson notes that the leader must always reconcile the needs of the individual with the demands of the larger organization. This balancing act requires the leader to understand the ever changing limitations of the physical and mental needs of their soldiers and also his unit’s role within the missions of the higher organization.

⁴³ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 111.

One of the more useful aspects of Henderson's work is his model explaining the sources of a leader's influence within the unit. He notes that the leader's effectiveness and authority derives from his reward and coerce power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Reward and coercive power gives the leader the ability to build and direct group norms by giving the individual positive and negative incentives to conform to the unit's expected behavior. Rewards and punishment target the individual's self-esteem, sense of security, and acceptance within the framework of the unit as a whole, thus giving the leader a great source of authority while also reinforcing the unity and loyalty of the group. Legitimate power is derived from the culture, laws, and values of the larger society. It gives the leader the "official" and legal right to exercise the authority of their position. Referent power is the leader's ability to control others based on the respect and affection that he receives from his soldiers. The referent leader has built within his unit an "intense identification" between himself and his soldiers based on his intimate knowledge of his subordinates, his proven ability to deal with difficult situations, and his willingness to share the hardships of his men. Expert power is given to the leader when he is "perceived as having superior knowledge and ability important to the soldier and his unit" that improves the group's effectiveness or survival.⁴⁵ Although Henderson argues that units led by officers using referent power tended to be the most cohesive, all of the sources of influence were critical to linking the goals of the unit to those of the larger organization. Due to its clarity and completeness, Henderson's model of leadership and influence will be the primary analytical tool used in this dissertation for exploring the effectiveness of the NCOs and junior officers of the AEF in World War I.

As the dissertation will also study the link between junior leadership, morale, cohesion, and combat effectiveness, in addition to Henderson's model of leadership and influence, I will

⁴⁵ Ibid., 112-115.

also use John Lynn's model of combat effectiveness to help explain the strengths and weaknesses of the AEF's junior leaders and small units. In *Bayonets of the Republic*, Lynn's examination of the motivations and tactics in the armies of Revolutionary France, he argues that the relative combat effectiveness of military units derives from a complex interplay of individual interests, the unit's motivational system, and the nation's overarching military system. Lynn defines individual interests as the mixture of compliance (based on coercion, remuneration, and symbolic or psychological reward) with the soldier's self-interest in seeking his own well-being and survival.

The motivational system consists of morale created from societal attitudes, indoctrination, wartime opinions, conditions of the service, and *esprit de corps*; the group dynamics and shared values and attitudes that make up primary group cohesion; and the individual's initial, sustaining; and combat motivation. The overall military system consists of the disciplinary subsystem; the tactical system of weapons, doctrine, training, experience, and tactics; the administrative system of logistics, services, maintenance, and manpower policy (doing routine things routinely); the organizational system that establishes the size and composition of units; and the command system that controls the selection and promotion of leaders, command structure, and communications. Lynn maintains that "in combination the elements becomes a whole, and as a whole they contribute to combat effectiveness...the inherent ability of a military force to overcome its enemy in battle."⁴⁶ Henderson and Lynn's models are complementary and often overlapping. Lynn is most useful in examining the larger systemic issues that play upon military effectiveness while Henderson is best when exploring the small unit realities that foster or hinder cohesion and efficiency.

⁴⁶ John Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 38. Lynn explains his model of combat effectiveness on pages 21-40.

Marshall, Henderson, and Lynn all emphasize the importance of primary group cohesion, and the critical role that junior leaders play in its creation and maintenance in building combat effectiveness. Although Marshall describes a similar phenomenon in *Men Against Fire*, the notion of primary group cohesion originated with Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz. In their seminal 1948 study “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II”, they argued that the primary reason that German units maintained a greater degree of combat effectiveness over their Allied counterparts was the Wehrmacht’s deliberate policy of crafting and preserving a close-knit social identity within its squads and platoons. This primary group identity satisfied the individual’s physical and psychological needs, and thus created a built-in resistance to the innate stresses of combat. As they noted,

The ordinary German soldier...was likely to go on fighting, provided he had the necessary weapons, as long as the group possessed leadership with which he could identify himself, and as long as he gave affection to and received affection from the other members of his squad and platoon. In other words, as long as he felt himself to be a member of his primary group and therefore bound by the expectations and demands of its other members, his soldierly achievement was likely to be good.⁴⁷

It was only after casualties, especially among the unit’s leaders, began to erode the “face-to-face” familial relationship among the unit members, and the unit was increasingly unable to meet the individual’s demand for physical survival (in terms of obtaining the necessities of life) that the effectiveness of the German soldier began a precipitous decline. The importance of this study to the dissertation is that it offers a means for understanding how units function under the long-term duress of combat. Heavy losses of leadership, poor personnel policies, and logistical shortcomings proved to be as great of a detriment to the maintenance of primary group cohesion in the AEF as it was in the Wehrmacht.

⁴⁷ Shils and Janowitz, 284.

When combined together, Marshall, Henderson, Lynn, Shils and Janowitz provide a sound intellectual basis for evaluating the AEF's junior leadership and its influence on the army's cohesion and effectiveness. With the goals, parameters, and methodology of the dissertation now established, it is time to begin the examination of company-level leadership in the U. S. Army in the Great War.

Chapter 2

“To Be Instructed in the Dark Art and Mystery of Managing Men” Junior Officers in the Old Army

In his 1888 short story *Only a Subaltern*, Rudyard Kipling wrote of his young subject, “He became an officer *and* a gentleman, which is an enviable thing.” In the story Kipling also noted that the subaltern was expected to sit at the feet of his veteran captain “to be instructed in the dark art and mystery of managing men.”¹ To understand the First World War U. S. Army’s conception of company-level officership, we must first appreciate the pre-war Regular Army’s expectations for its junior officers: the roles, characteristics, skills and abilities that the Regular Army, as an institution, expected of those acting as “an officer *and* a gentleman.”

It is also important to understand the Regular Army’s systems and traditions for passing on to its young officers those leadership traits and skills -“the dark art and mystery of managing men”- that would allow them to command in combat. This is a good starting point for a discussion of combat leadership in the AEF, for the Regular Army attempted to impose its institutional culture of leadership upon the National Guard and National Army officers and NCOs that fought in World War I. Although its soldiers and officers were largely short-service conscripts and volunteers, the AEF was a child of the Regular Army. Given the fact that Regular Army officers dominated the senior command and staff positions in the wartime army, it is no surprise that the selection and training of the AEF’s junior leaders were shaped largely by the attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices of the pre-war regulars.

This chapter will examine these pre-war Regular Army leadership attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices as a point of departure for explaining its later efforts to raise a corps of junior leaders during World War I. To accomplish this goal, the chapter will examine several key

¹ Rudyard Kipling, “Only a Subaltern,” in *Soldiers Three: A Collection of Stories* (New York: John W. Lovell Company, 1890), 184.

questions. What leadership, tactical, and technical skills and abilities did the Regular Army expect from company-level leaders (captain through corporal) from 1900-1917? How did the Regular Army attempt to reform the training and professional development of junior leaders from 1900-1917? How effective were these reforms? What issues of junior leadership remained unresolved prior to World War I? How did the Regular Army view the junior leaders of the National Guard and other reserve forces? What efforts had the reserve forces made in reforming the training and professional development of its junior leaders from 1900-1917? How effective were these reforms? The answers to these questions will provide the background and context for understanding the wartime army's comprehension and expectations of its junior leaders.

The Regular Army that entered World War I was the product of thirty years of professional and operational ferment. In the time between the Spanish American War and the American entry into World War I, the army was rocked by a series of shock waves that had changed the composition, direction, and culture of the institution. The changes to the army's structure caused by the war with Spain and the Philippine Insurrection were so great that the army was still coping with the repercussions of its expansion up to the eve of the Great War. The expansion of the army between 1898 and 1902 allowed it to accomplish its new imperial constabulary mission, but it also fundamentally changed the complexion of the military's officer and NCO corps.

The army of the early and mid 1890s was a relatively pastoral organization led by long service officers and NCOs. As late as 1897, Civil War veterans still composed over 46 percent of all infantry captains.² Although Civil War era volunteer officers and wartime veterans

² This figure comes from my analysis of the captains in the army's 25 infantry regiments drawn from the 1897 edition of the *Army Register*. The *Register* provides the birth dates, source of commission, and assignment history of every Regular Army soldier of the year in question. See Adjutant General's Office, *Official Army Register for 1897* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1896), 104-178.

promoted from the enlisted ranks accounted for nearly half of all captains, graduates of the United States Military Academy (hereafter referred to as West Point or USMA) had finally begun to reassert their dominance within the ranks of the army's lieutenants. In 1897, for example, West Point graduates accounted for over 67 percent of all infantry first lieutenants and 73 percent of all infantry second lieutenants.³

Between the Civil War and the Spanish American War, it became increasingly difficult for enlisted soldiers and civilians to enter the officer corps. Congress tried to overturn this drift toward exclusivity in June of 1878 by passing an act that allowed for the "promotion of meritorious non-commissioned officers" to fill any annual second lieutenant vacancies remaining after the commissioning of the year's West Point class. To qualify for the position, the NCO had to be unmarried, between the ages of 21 and 30, be nominated by an officer, and pass an examination that judged his knowledge of English, arithmetic (to include algebra, logarithms, and geometry), American geography, American history, the Constitution, and the American governmental system. The candidate also had to pass a physical examination and prove to a local board of officers that he had a "sound mental condition, excellent moral character, a good character for sobriety and fidelity," and had previously exhibited "intelligent, energetic, judicious, and faithful performance as may have devolved upon him in the Army."⁴

On 30 July 1892, Congress amended the act of 1879 by expanding the pool of those enlisted men seeking commissions to include any soldier who had at least two years of honorable service (thus making privates eligible), by giving the soldier himself, rather than his officer the power to initiate the proceedings, and by mandating that the army establish local or departmental preliminary examining boards to certify the candidates' mental, moral, and physical

³ Ibid.

⁴ Adjutant General's Office, *General Order No. 62*, August 26, 1878.

qualifications, and an annual central competitive examination board that would test all candidates each September. These new directives were codified in the army's General Order No. 76 in November of 1892.⁵

Throughout the period, civilians could also compete for commissions to fill any second lieutenant positions still vacant after the commissioning of the year's West Point cadets and enlisted candidates. The only major difference between the enlisted and civilian examinations for commission was that the enlisted soldiers received an additional test of the knowledge of army and drill regulations and that the civilians only had to pass one examination board. For both enlisted men and civilian candidates, these examining boards were far from being easy. One officer who had been too nearsighted to enter West Point but still managed to work his way into a Regular Army commission by serving in the National Guard and the U.S. Volunteers remarked, "Those examinations, to a college graduate, would seem trivial. They were trivial in scope but in thoroughness they were alarming." In the end, the subjects of the examination "made a list that had taken months of work to properly prepare."⁶ The practical part of the exam, where the candidates demonstrated their ability to command actual soldiers in the regulation infantry drill, was also daunting. As George Rodney remembered, "I saw men whom I had seen in action, turn nervous and embarrassed when they had to raise their voice in command. It seems laughable now. It did not seem so then."⁷

Although the army and Congress periodically made slight revisions of the 1892 General Order No. 76, it remained the basis for commissioning enlisted soldiers up to the Great War. Although Congress had intended to offer an avenue for promotion by merit to the army's enlisted men, few were actually able to make the leap to the officer ranks prior to 1898. Between 1879

⁵ Adjutant General's Office, *General Order No. 79*, November 26, 1892.

⁶ George B. Rodney, *As a Cavalryman Remembers* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1944), 84-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

and 1898, only 171 enlisted men received commissions. During the same period, the army commissioned 1042 West Point graduates and 113 civilians with no prior military service. Although historian Jack Foner maintains that the changes greatly increased the enlisted soldiers' opportunity for obtaining a commission, for the most part, the officer corps of the 1880s and 1890s remained an insular organization.⁸

This rather stable and exclusive arrangement was shattered by the war of 1898 and the army's lingering counterinsurgency in the Philippines. The War with Spain forced the army to immediately raise three volunteer regiments of cavalry, three of engineers, and ten of infantry. Although the government quickly disbanded these units following the peace with Spain, the ongoing pacification of the Philippines resulted in Congress raising 24 new U.S. Volunteer Infantry Regiments between 1899 and 1900. Additionally, Congress permanently expanded the Regular Army by five infantry and five cavalry regiments.

These organizational changes had a dramatic effect on the army's junior leaders. Within a space of seven years, the number of infantry captains, lieutenants and sergeants doubled. To fill the commissioned ranks of the volunteer and new permanent regiments, the army was forced to commission civilians in numbers that had not been seen since the Civil War. This caused the army, as an institution, to recruit, train, assimilate, and acculturate large numbers of officers with little or no military experience, education, or training. As there was no standard method for accomplishing these tasks, the absorption of these "outside" people into the heretofore closed ranks of the officer corps was ad hoc and, at times, painful.

The army's greatest problem was certifying that their new officers had the proper intellectual, moral, and professional attributes for the positions that they held. The army further

⁸ John J. Lenney, *Rankers* (New York: Greenberg Publishers, 1950), 122-135. and Jack Foner, *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), 69-72.

exacerbated its leadership challenges by rapidly commissioning a large number of sergeants and other enlisted men. This basically “robbed Peter to pay Paul” and caused a void of NCO leadership within its small combat units as experienced, talented, and educated corporals and sergeants left the ranks to become lieutenants. The massive change that overtook the officer corps become apparent when one examines the commissioning sources of the army’s company-grade leaders in 1897, 1905, and 1915 (Tables 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3).⁹

Table 2-1: Source of Commission for Regular Army Infantry Captains

Source of commission	USMA Grad and %	Enlisted To RA and %	National Guard officer to RA and %	Enlisted to volunteer officer to RA and %	Volunteer officer to RA and %	College Grad direct to RA and %	Civilian appointment to RA and %	Total
Year								
1897	86 (34.4 %)	37 (1) (14.8%)	N/A	42 (2) (16.8%)	43 (2) (17.2%)	Not specified in <i>Army Register</i>	42 (16.8%)	250
1905	291 (64.5%)	86 (19%)	7 (1.5%)	6 (3) (1.3%)	7 (3) (1.5%)	30 (6.7 %)	24 (5.4%)	451
1915	125 (25.7%)	135 (27.8%)	34 (7.0%)	45 (3) (9.2%)	77 (3) (15.8%)	26 (5.3%)	45 (9.2)	485

(1) 31 of 37 were Civil War veterans. (2) All officers were Civil War veterans. After adding the officers listed in (1) and (2), 46.4 % of RA captains in 1897 were Civil War veterans. (3) All served as officers in U.S. Volunteer units raised for the Philippine Insurrection.

⁹ These tables are based on information drawn from the following, Adjutant General’s Office, *Official Army Register for 1897* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1896), 104-178., The Military Secretary’s Office, *Official Army Register for 1905* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1904), 215-346., The Adjutant General’s Office, *Official Army Register for 1915* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1914), 292-436 and 440-458. These figures do not include the officers assigned to the Porto Rican Infantry Regiment or the Philippine Scouts. In both cases, the Army considered these units to be a separate category of the regular establishment with set rules governing their employment. The choice of these three years is intended to present “snapshots” of the Regular Army’s infantry junior officer corps before the changes of the War with Spain and Philippine Insurrection (1897), after the changes caused by those conflicts had occurred (1905), and before the changes to the officer ranks caused by the Great War (1915).

Table 2-2: Source of Commission for Regular Army Infantry First Lieutenants

Source of commission Year	USMA Grad and %	Enlisted To RA and %	National Guard officer to RA and %	Enlisted to volunteer officer to RA and %	Volunteer officer to RA and %	College Grad direct to RA and %	Civilian appointment to RA and %	Total
1897	194 (67.3 %)	50 (1) (17 %)	N/A	1 (2) (.03%)	0	Not specified in <i>Army Register</i>	46 (15.7%)	294
1905	29 (6.5%)	119 (26.6 %)	45 (10.2 %)	80 (3) (17.9 %)	95 (3) (21.4 %)	26 (5.8 %)	51 (11.5%)	445
1915	198 (41.4 %)	189 (29.5 %)	8 (1.6 %)	17 (3) (3.5 %)	4 (3) (.8%)	38 (7.9 %)	25 (5.3 %)	479

- (1) 2 of 50 were Civil War veterans. (2) Officer was a Civil War veteran.
 (3) All served as officers in U.S. Volunteer units raised for the Philippine Insurrection

Table 2-3: Source of Commission for Regular Army Infantry Second Lieutenants

Source of commission Year	USMA Grad and %	Enlisted to RA and %	National Guard officer to RA and %	Enlisted to volunteer officer to RA and %	Volunteer officer to RA and %	College Grad direct to RA and %	Civilian appointment to RA and %	Total
1897	157 (73 %)	46 (21.3 %)	N/A	0	0	Not specified in <i>Army Register</i>	12 (5.6 %)	215
1905	108 (26 %)	222 (53.6 %)	4 (1 %)	9 (1) (2.1 %)	2 (1) (.5%)	42 (10 %)	27 (6.5 %)	414
1915	232 (52.4 %)	48 (10.8%)	0	1 (1) (.2%)	1 (1) (.2 %)	90 (20.4 %)	70 (15.8%)	442

- (1) All served as officers in U.S. Volunteer units raised for the Philippine Insurrection.

The figures illustrate that between 1897 and 1905 the expansion of the company-grade officer corps was accomplished mostly through the commissioning of enlisted soldiers and the

transfer of U.S. Volunteer Infantry officers to the Regular Army. This also included those enlisted soldiers from the Regular Army or National Guard who were commissioned to fill positions within volunteer units and then later filled officer vacancies in the regular establishment. The figures also show the long term effects of these commissioning practices over time. The fact that there were only 29 West Point infantry first lieutenants on the rolls in 1905 was due to their rapid promotion to captain between 1898 and 1904. This was also demonstrated in the large number of West Point captains on the rolls for the same year. As the 1905 non-West Point first lieutenants were promoted, their “bow wave” was reflected in the fact that they comprised over 52 percent of the infantry captains in 1915. These massive changes in the officer corps accelerated the Regular Army’s on-going drive for professionalization and the linked reform of its educational system. These chaotic years also influenced the army’s attitudes and expectations when confronting the need to expand the force in 1917.

As with other public institutions of the progressive era, the army was buffeted by internal and external demands for increased professionalism, efficiency, and modernization. With the closing of its major campaigns against the Native Americans in 1890, the expansion of the nation’s overseas empire, the on-going militarization of Europe, and the Mexican Revolution, the army also faced the competing and contradictory demands of being an imperial constabulary, an internal guard of the reservation-confined Indians, a hedge against domestic social unrest, a border security force, and a military capable of waging full scale war against potential European enemies.

Given these conflicting demands and pressures, it is little surprise that the army’s world view was a complex mixture of long-held attitudes and assumptions and more recent and novel ideas about the military profession and its place in American society. This was most apparent in

the Regular Army's often contradictory attitudes and assumptions of its junior leaders. On one hand, the army continued to follow eighteenth century ideas of leadership that focused on gentility, *noblesse oblige*, paternalism, a tradesman apprenticeship approach to war, the privileges of seniority, and deference to one's superiors. On the other hand, the army that entered the twentieth century also embraced professionalism and specialist education, meritocracy, and a drive for scientific management and efficiency. To place this with the context of Darryl Henderson's model of military leadership and cohesion, the Regular Army officer corps was attempting to reconcile the traditional coercive, legitimate and referent sources of leadership power with the emerging source of professional expert power.

It was from this conflicted crucible that the officers and NCOs of the Regular Army developed their expectations of the attributes, proper background, and experiences needed for its wartime junior leaders, and the role that the army expected them to play in combat in World War I. This milieu also forged Regular Army officers' attitudes toward the greater American society and the nation's National Guard and volunteer soldiers.

The army of the World War I era had no set doctrine to define, codify, or explain the organization's views on leadership. In fact, the *Field Service Regulations of 1913*, the army's definitive doctrinal work at the beginning of World War I, made only vague and passing references to the command and management of soldiers in combat.¹⁰ This oversight was not lost on certain members of the officer corps. In 1911, Robert Bullard, the future commander of the AEF's 2nd Army, noted, "As far as I know, hardly a suggestion is contained in the whole West

¹⁰ U.S. Department of War, *Field Service Regulations of the United States Army, With Corrections to May 21, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 51, 62, 161.

Point curriculum of the need or value to a young officer of knowing or understanding either his soldiers or his fellow countrymen.”¹¹ Another regular officer bemoaned:

We have lectures and manuals and treatises and textbooks on all sorts of technical subjects. On the subject of how to manage men, the most important subject of all, the young officer will find pretty nearly a barren field. A few paragraphs in Army Regulations, a few scattered magazine articles, and a general order or two compose the literature available. Neither at West Point, or our service schools, has this subject received the attention that it deserves.¹²

To a great extent, these officers exaggerated the want of leadership training and indoctrination of the officer corps.

Although the pre-war army lacked a set leadership doctrine, it still understood the centrality of leadership to combat operations and had developed its own institutional norms to define its expectations of officers and NCOs. While they lived in a world of massive technological, economic, and social change, it is interesting to note the degree to which the Regular Army’s pre-war junior officers and NCOs were shaped by concepts of leadership based on paternalism, *noblesse oblige*, and social deference that dated back to the founding of the Republic. Baron Fredrick von Steuben’s 1778 *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States* enjoined George Washington’s continental officers and NCOs to practice forms of duty, social obligation, and obedience that their early twentieth century counterparts clearly understood and practiced. Von Steuben maintained that,

A Captain cannot be too careful of the company the state has committed

¹¹ Colonel Robert L. Bullard, “The Military Study of Men,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (November-December 1911), 327.

¹² Major General David C. Shanks, *Management of the American Soldier* (New York: Booklet published by Thomas F. Ryan, circa 1917-1918), 4-5. MG Shanks, a veteran of the Philippine Insurrection with 33 years of service in 1917, commanded the Army embarkation port at Hoboken, NJ at the time of the booklet’s publication. The booklet itself was given free to officers departing Hoboken for France. The material in the booklet was largely compiled from a set of articles that Shanks had written in the *Infantry Journal* from November 1916 through March 1917. See Colonel David Shanks, “Administration and the Management of Men,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (November-December 1916), 276-289.

to his charge. He must pay the greatest attention to the health of his men, their discipline, arms, accouterments, ammunition, clothes and necessities. His first object should be to gain the love of his men by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, enquiring into their complaints, and when well founded, seeing them redressed...he must keep a strict eye over the conduct of his non-commissioned officers; oblige them to do their duty with the greatest exactness; and use every possible means to keep up proper subordination between them and the soldiers: for which reason he must never rudely reprimand them in presence of the men.¹³

The Prussian drill master demanded that lieutenants,

...must be perfectly acquainted with the duties of the non-commissioned officers and soldiers, and see them performed with great exactness. He should endeavor to gain the love of his men, by his attention to every thing which may contribute to their health and convenience. He should often visit them at different hours; inspect into their manner of living; see that their provisions are good and well cooked, and as far as possible oblige them to take their meals at regulated hours. He should pay attention to their complaints, and when well founded, endeavor to get them redressed; but discourage them from complaining on every frivolous occasion.¹⁴

While not officially codified in doctrine, von Steuben's pre-industrial concepts of duty, responsibility, proper deportment, deference, and the correct social interaction between the leader and the led had been passed down and enshrined in the early twentieth century Regular Army's conception of good leadership.

At all turns, junior leaders were bombarded with hoary maxims such as "familiarity builds contempt" and "always look after the needs and comfort of the men." In September of 1900, General Order 125 reminded members of the Regular Army that, "Officers will always be exemplary in deportment and will exercise justice and impartiality and be considerate in their conduct toward all subordinates."¹⁵ Frank McCoy, who would rise to command a brigade

¹³ Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Baron von Steuben's Revolutionary War Drill Manual* (New York: Dover Publications, 1985), 135-6. This edition is an exact copy of the 1794 edition of *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁵ Adjutant General's Office, *General Order No. 125*, September 29, 1900.

during World War I, reminded young lieutenants that “by law an officer is set down as an officer and a gentleman and with that high privilege there goes *noblesse oblige*.”¹⁶ In a similar vein, a captain writing into the *Infantry Journal* in 1909 observed, “Contentment among the men must be one of the aims of a company commander” and that an officer’s paternalistic care of their soldiers “indicates to the men in a convincing manner that the company commander is keenly interested in their welfare.”¹⁷

One also finds these institutional norms of paternalism and deference propagated in the semi-official manuals for NCOs and junior officers written by veteran Regular Army officers for commercial sale. Since the army lacked its own doctrinal guides and manuals to instruct its company level leaders in the art of leadership, these books became a key source for passing on the military’s culture and institutional wisdom to its corporals, sergeants, and lieutenants. Works, such as James A. Moss’ *Officer’s Manual*, O. O. Ellis and E. B. Garey’s *The Plattsburg Manual*, M. B. Stewart’s *Handbook for Noncommissioned Officers of Infantry*, and the *Collier’s National Service Library*, transmitted the army’s internalized, if somewhat officially unspecified, views of “correct” leadership and subordination to the generation of regulars who would raise, train, and lead the soldiers of the Great War. These works also guided the war’s nascent volunteer officers in their quest for understanding the mysteries of combat leadership. For example, Ellis and Garey maintained that while an officer must look after the needs of his subordinates, the leaders should not, “be too intimate with your men. Experience has shown that you cannot fraternize with an enlisted man one minute and then punish him for misconduct the

¹⁶ Major Charles E. Kilbourne, ed. *The National Service Library*, Vol. 3. *Principles of Training*, by Major Frank R. McCoy (New York: F.P. Collier and Son, 1917), 144-5.

¹⁷ Captain George Haltzell, “The Proper Training of an Infantry Company,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. V, No. 5 (March, 1909), 640.

next.”¹⁸ The prolific military writer, James Moss also reflected the Regular Army’s social and leadership norms when he noted,

Treat your soldiers with proper consideration, dignity, and justice...
[however] In dealing with enlisted men, do not use the same standard of
intellect and morals that apply in the case of officers. And remember, too,
that a thing that may appear small and trivial to an officer may mean a great
deal to an enlisted man ...¹⁹

Although some of the paternalism indicated in the writings of Moss, McCoy, Ellis, and Garey are perhaps timeless truisms that have always governed military leadership, their underlying presumption of the moral superiority and obligations required of officers reflect eighteenth century social assumptions that would surely have warmed the heart of the Prussian of Valley Forge.

Lingering eighteenth century notions of *noblesse oblige* and paternalism were also reflected in the Regular Army’s notions of good command climate and unit cohesion. The bastions of tradition in the old Army maintained that a good and effective company was one modeled on a happy family where the commander and first sergeant were stern but benevolent parents. In a 1903 article in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Colonel J. W. Powell argued that a good captain should be a “Company Father” whose “high moral tone and behavior” and “absolute and unselfish attention to duty on his own part, and the care, comfort, and instruction of his men in their military duties” set the example for his soldiers.²⁰ In 1908, Army Chief of Staff James Franklin Bell remarked, “The captain stands in the position of father to the enlisted men of his company, who look to him for everything connected with their comfort and

¹⁸ O. O. Ellis and E. B. Garey, *The Plattsburg Manual* (New York: The Century Company, 1917), 217.

¹⁹ James A. Moss, *Officer’s Manual* (Menasha: George Banta Publishing Co, 1917), 50-1. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Regular Army officers seemed to have made a cottage industry of passing on the army’s collective wisdom. Moss, for example, published over 33 military books, and his *Officer’s Manual* went through seven editions between 1906 and 1929.

²⁰ Colonel J.W. Powell, a “Comment and Criticisms” response to Robert Bullard’s “Moral Preparation of the Soldier,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Vol. XXXII (1903), 123.

well-being.”²¹ James Moss took this analogy even further by noting,

With regard to his company the Captain stands in the same light as a father of a large family of children. It is his duty to provide for their comfort, sustenance, and pleasure; enforce strict rules of obedience, punish the refractory and reward the deserving...He should by word and act make every man in the company feel that the Captain is his protector.²²

This comparison of the company to a family was also used by the army in 1907 to argue for an increase in the pay and benefits of its first sergeants and other NCOs. The army General Staff maintained the pay raise was important because it would retain long-service NCOs and thus continue to promulgate the desired command climate where the first sergeant was “the ‘mother’ of the company as the captain is the ‘father.’”²³ In the end, army officers believed that the officer and NCO’s paternalism would be reciprocated in the loyalty and *esprit de corps* of their soldiers. Thus, paternalism mixed both idealism and pragmatism. Not only was it morally right to care for those under ones command, the officer corps also understood that healthy, trained, contented, and disciplined soldiers were critical to the army’s effectiveness on campaign.

In *Fundamentals of Military Service*, Captain Lincoln Andrews advised young officers that “soldiers are like children” and relayed an incident he observed during the Spanish American War to illustrate his views of proper leadership. He noted,

On the battlefield of Santiago I saw a young second lieutenant put his hand on the shoulder of a grey-haired old soldier and call him boy, and there was confidence in the old man as he started alone on his mission. This feeling of mutual sympathy and confidence will spring from thoughtful leadership, and you should aspire to it, and make yourself worthy of it.²⁴

²¹ *War Department Annual Report, 1908*, Vol. 1, 212.

²² Moss, 185.

²³ U.S. Department of War, *The Army as a Life Occupation for Enlisted Men* (Washington D.C.: War Department, 1907), 92.

²⁴ CPT Lincoln Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1916), 19.

However, the army also sent its junior officers a mixed message. While veteran officers such as Moss, Andrews, and Powell demanded that young officers act like a father to their soldiers, they also stipulated that their subordinates should be treated as adult men. Powell, for example, warned against treating soldiers as “immature youths struggling for light,” while Moss’ Jove-like pronouncement was to “Treat your men like men.”²⁵ While pre-war Regular Army lieutenants had the benefit of experienced veterans and time to reconcile these conflicting visions of company leadership, those officers commissioned during the crush of 1917 and 1918 were later left to iron out these inconsistencies and nuances for themselves.

Closely linked to notions of *noblesse oblige* and paternalism, was the pre-war officers’ underlying assumption that all units eventually took on the attributes of its leaders. If the commander was sloppy, indolent, and disobedient, those traits would be mirrored in the soldiers of his company. If, on the other hand, the leader was brave, confident, dedicated, and loyal, the soldiers would do likewise. An officer writing in the *Infantry Journal* in 1912 noted,

The first object for which the company officer must strive is the unquestioned leadership and confidence of his men, and his success in that matter will depend largely upon the degree of care and interest which he devotes to all matters affecting the material welfare of the men in his company. His hold on the men is very dependent on his zeal and personal examples in all military virtues of obedience, industry, initiative, studiousness, cleanliness, sobriety, truthfulness, fairness, honor, morality, and military courtesy.²⁶

In *The Plattsburg Manual*, Ellis and Garey informed their prospective officers that an American soldier, “wants his officers to be efficient and high-toned leaders. It thrills him to have their actions pitched in a high key...He wants them to be neat, to dress immaculately, and to be

²⁵ Powell, 123, and Moss, 371.

²⁶ Lieutenant William E. Parker, “The Company Officer and His Work,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (July-August 1912), 72.

military in bearing.” They also warned, “When there is peace and harmony and efficiency in your organization, you are responsible for it. When there are grumblings, lack of enthusiasm and *esprit-de-corps*, be honest and sensible and see if you are also not responsible for it.”²⁷

In a peacetime army where an officer could expect to serve at a post and at the same grade of rank for long periods of times, these beliefs in command personality and responsibility made perfect sense. The army, as an institution, expected young (and not so young) lieutenants to serve an extended apprenticeship under a seasoned captain and commander long before they would actually be allowed to command a company for themselves. An army study in 1908 estimated that an officer would spend nearly seven years as a second lieutenant and nine years as a first lieutenant before being promoted to captain.²⁸ Given the massive influx of enlisted men, civilians, and citizen soldiers into the Regular Army’s commissioned ranks between 1898 and 1905, this reliance on “on the job training” also served as a means for inculcating these non-West Point “others” into the institutional culture of officership. Also, for better or worse, these were the concepts of command responsibility that Regular Army officers carried with them into World War I, and to some extent, governed their expectations of the volunteer officers that they eventually commanded.

The army culture that advocated *noblesse oblige* and the need to retain the “proper subordination” of its members to their superiors had long placed the regular military at odds with the egalitarian tenor and rampant individualism of the larger society. For example, politicians in the Jacksonian Era frequently lambasted the officer corps’ aristocratic manners, dangerous

²⁷ Ellis and Garey, 216-7.

²⁸ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army 1898-1941* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 151.

political conservatism, and un-republican treatment of their soldiers.²⁹ During the Gilded Age, Civil War era veterans, such as John “Black Jack” Logan, often criticized West Point for being a nursery of traitors while also propounding the natural superiority of citizen soldiers and officers.³⁰

Senior army officers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century frequently tried to bridge the gap between the rigidly hierarchical and paternalistic army and the larger individualistic society by reminding their junior officers that during any large scale war the army’s ranks would be filled with citizen soldiers. Usually, however, these efforts merely placed a republican veneer on the army’s long-standing norms of leadership. While serving as the commandant of West Point, John Schofield used an address designed to stop the hazing of plebes by first classmen to also remind his cadets of the proper form of discipline and leadership required of officers of the Republic. Schofield repeated to his would-be officers that,

The very foundation of civil society is mutual respect for individual rights. And nowhere is such mutual respect more strictly enjoined and rigidly enforced than in military organizations. Without it, tyranny on one hand and disaffection and mutiny on the other must destroy the efficiency of an army. Those who wantonly inflict insult and abuse on their inferiors and those who tamely submit to such treatment from those who may be placed over them, are alike unworthy to be soldiers of a free country....

The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army. It is possible to impart instruction and to give commands in a manner and in such a tone of voice as to inspire in the soldier no feeling but an intense desire to obey, while the opposite manner and tone of voice cannot fail to excite strong resentment and a desire to disobey. The one mode or the other of dealing with subordinates springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of the commander. He who feels the respect

²⁹ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1957), 156-7, 203-8.

³⁰ In Logan’s case, the criticism of the Regular Army rested on his accurate belief that the West Point monopoly on senior leadership had thwarted his promotion during the Civil War. Logan, a very talented volunteer officer, was bypassed for promotion to corps command upon the death of James McPherson during the Atlanta Campaign, because William Sherman preferred to have a Regular Army West Pointer in command of the unit.

which is due to others cannot fail to inspire in them regard for himself, while he who feels, and hence manifests, disrespect toward others, especially his inferiors, cannot fail to inspire hatred against himself.³¹

Ever since the general's address, West Point plebes have been required to recite the second paragraph of the quote (commonly known as Schofield's Definition of Leadership) from memory.

Although Schofield intended to make his cadets mindful of the subtleties of leadership demanded by American soldiers, in the end, the message for junior officers was to watch one's "Ps and Qs" and be mindful of their paternalistic obligations when working with the "inferior" hired help. The great irony was that the influx of non-West Pointers into the officer ranks during the War with Spain and the Philippine Insurrection had made the junior commissioned ranks as democratic and inclusive as any period since the Civil War. This fact, however, did not change, and perhaps even reinforced and solidified the army's paternalistic ethos.

While Schofield and other senior officers tried to reconcile army leadership norms with the social realities of a free society, some turn of the century members of the officer corps began to argue that it was actually the larger society that was in need of reform using military methods. As with many of their European peers, several American officers argued that modern industrial society had made American manhood indolent, unruly, immoral, weak, and effeminate. Officers pointed to the twin sins of narcissism and greed as the source of the nation's decline. On the brink of the Great War, one cavalry officer maintained, "Our country is in danger of being swallowed up in the maelstrom of materialism. Prosperity has decentralized our thoughts from

³¹ John M. Schofield, "An Address Delivered by Maj Gen J. M. Schofield to the Corps of Cadets, U.S.M.A., West Point, N.Y. Monday, August 11th, 1879" Box 91, Lot C, 1-10, No. 10, John M. Schofield Papers, Library of Congress and Donald Connelly, *John M. Schofield and the Politics of Generalship* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 232. I thank Dr. Connelly for providing me a copy of the original address. It is also interesting to note that the second paragraph of the quoted excerpt was also included in the World War I era *Manual for Noncommissioned Officer and Privates of Infantry* (Washington D.C: War Department, 1917), 12.

consideration of the greatest good to the country to the greatest good of the individual.”³² An article in the September- October 1913 edition of the *Infantry Journal* lamented,

We are rapidly reaching the state where it will be the United States and not China that will be held up to ridicule and derision by other nations as an example of how patriotism can be subordinated to the scramble for the almighty dollar. While the ordinary citizen is absorbed in the struggle for wealth, the peace societies are carrying on their fight against the bugaboo of militarism hand in hand with the socialists, trade unionists, and educational bodies... They also fall into the fallacy of assuming that general peace can be brought about by the suppression of military training and preparation; that the neglect of the art of war will induce peaceful intentions and hasten the millennium.³³

These opinions reached all levels of the officer corps. In fact, Hugh Scott, who served as Army Chief of Staff from November 1914 to September 1917, noted that “The better informed officers of the old army had long been aware of the physical deterioration of the race in modern times.” He hoped that the periodic military instruction of the nation’s youth, of course being overseen by the Regular Army, would enable the “Americanization and amalgamation of our foreign population” and would be “worth-while alone for the discipline enforced, with consequent respect for the law and the diminution of crime.”³⁴ Scott’s vision did not stop at uplifting and Americanizing immigrants. He also commented that “one of the greatest evils in modern American life” was that “children are no longer disciplined at home and grow up without knowledge of what the word means... [and a] lack of discipline is the foundation of our notorious disrespect for the law.”³⁵ These sentiments were echoed by an officer who, after denouncing the popular “hair-brained talk about eternal peace,” decried, “Our millions are untaught, not only in the arts of war but [also] in the art of taking care of themselves. Fifty

³² Editorial Staff, “The Soldier at School” *Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (January, 1917), 417.

³³ Albert S. Jones, “The Decline in Patriotism in the United States- the Cause and Ultimate Effect” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. X, No.2 (September-October, 1913), 230-1.

³⁴ Hugh L. Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928),560-1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 444-5.

percent of them could not go fishing without endangering their lives through ignorance.” As with Scott, he urged the nation to embrace universal military service as the only sure means for the country’s males to truly achieve “the dignity of manhood.”³⁶ In 1910, the editor of the *Infantry Journal* went as far as to argue,

The dreamer looks to universal peace to cure us from the ills of war, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that in this world of struggle war has not infrequently been necessary as a cure for the ills of peace. Peace is not a natural condition of the world. It is an artificial condition entirely in opposition to all human or animal instinct.³⁷

In many ways, the beliefs of these officers mirrored the social Darwinism, Anglo-Saxonism, and bumptious patriotism that was so popular among some segments of the civilian middle and upper classes of the early 1900s. Theodore Roosevelt, for example, shared the officers’ belief that war and military service were the cure for the nation’s societal ills. The bellicose Rough Rider maintained that “no triumph of peace is quite so great as the supreme triumph of war” and concluded that serving in the ranks would end the threat of class warfare, turn the nation’s youth from the path of physical and moral decay, and reinvigorate democracy.³⁸ Although the shared passion for the “strenuous life” and belief that superior education and social standing brought with it great obligations united both military and civilian elites, it also heightened the Regular Army officers’ smug sense of their own moral superiority and righteousness. These attitudes later shaped the regulars’ actions when it came to wartime selection and training of volunteer officers and its relations with the National Guard.

³⁶ S.M.C., “The Present Problem,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VI., No.2 (September, 1909), 250 and 255.

³⁷ Editorial in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VII., No. 1 (July, 1910),138.

³⁸ Quoted in Edward J. Reneham, Jr., *The Lion’s Pride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 25. also see, Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), 330-2 and H.W. Brands, *TR: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 752-3 and 812-5.

Given the importance that the Regular Army officer corps placed on the tone that its members set within their units, its self-imposed mantle as the protectors of American civic and moral virtues, and its need to retain its precarious social status in American society, it is no surprise that they developed fixed ideas of the personal characteristics that an individual needed to possess to gain entry into its ranks. The most important of these characteristics were gentility, education, and an impeccable record of moral behavior. Within the army's culture, these characteristics were inextricably linked and mutually supporting. In his *Officer's Manual*, James Moss went as far as to enumerate the expected behaviors of a gentleman officer. In doing so, he deliberately mimicked the British army's viewpoint on gentility. In the chapter "The Young Officer's Don'ts," Moss wrote,

- DON'T, on joining your regiment, lose sight that you are now a young officer and not an old cadet.
- DON'T assert yourself or your accomplishments.
- DON'T affect superiority over your brother officers, either as regards knowledge or ignorance.
- DON'T, however poor you may be, dress shabbily.
- DON'T affect any singularity of dress.
- DON'T, if you are well off, perpetually boast about the largeness of your purchases.
- DON'T sneer at anybody, either openly or behind their backs.
- DON'T be captious. Your elders always think they know better than you...it is graceful to be silent rather than to contradict them flatly.
- DON'T forget small debts.
- DON'T openly despise a man, of your own or other standing, whom you feel to be your inferior.
- DON'T recite your personal experiences too frequently, or with wearying detail.
- DON'T do nothing because there is nothing to do.
- DON'T parade a want of interest in things which may be engaging the attention of your brother officers.
- DON'T allow yourself to have tricks of manner, or habit; if you can help it.
- DON'T set to undervalue on pedigree or family connections. Noblesse oblige should be your patrician's motto.
- DON'T, as you value your existence, give men a handle to call you a toady.
- DON'T rely upon what is termed "pull" for promotion or advancement.
- DON'T be over-anxious to kick down the ladder by which you may have climbed.
- DON'T talk loud at mess, or monopolize the conversation.

DON'T, by any chance, mention a lady's name at mess.
DON'T use strong language at mess. Rudeness from a boy's lips becomes an
insult from a man's and its consequences are proportionately serious.³⁹

As Moss was the premiere disseminator of the Regular Army's customs and collected wisdom to junior officers (as noted by the multiple printings and sales of his works), this list of "Don'ts" is a good reflection of the institution's overall expectations of the proper deportment and character of its officer corps.⁴⁰

Closely related to gentility, the army also expected its officers to possess the proper character as preconditions for holding their positions. In 1916 Captain Richard Stockton wrote that a man "cannot be a good soldier unless he has certain essential characteristics as a foundation. This foundation must be courage rather than cowardice, physical fitness in place of a lack of development, patriotism rather than self-interest, constraint rather than license, discipline rather than lawlessness, quick initiative rather than dullness, courtesy in place of boorishness."⁴¹ The prominence that Moss gave these maxims in the various editions of the *Officer's Manual* that he published between 1906 and 1918, and the fact that Stockton's article was the Reeve Memorial Prize award winning essay for 1916, reflected both the Regular Army's concern for acculturating the non-West Point "others" that entered the officer corps in the wake of the Spanish-American War, and its desire to stamp its modes of behavior on the would-be officers of 1917 and 1918.

³⁹ Moss, *Officer's Manual*, 55-57. The list of "Young Officer's Don'ts" appeared in the 1906 first edition of the work. It was printed in all subsequent editions through 1918. It is interesting to note that he chose to omit this list from the last edition of 1929. Given the Regular Army's return to West Point dominated "normalcy" in the 1920s, perhaps he did not believe that officers of that period needed to be schooled on gentility.

⁴⁰ Between 1906 and 1918, Moss' *Officer's Manual* went through six editions, and sold over 145,000 copies: 2,000 in 1906, 3,000 in 1907, 5,000 in 1913, 65,000 in 1917, and 70,000 in 1918. This information is found on the front page of the 1929 edition of the work.

⁴¹ CPT Richard Stockton, "Military Training- Valuable and Valueless" in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. 59, No. 202 (July-Aug 1916), 6.

In addition to gentility, the Regular Army also used education as a discriminator for commissioning. To the regulars, the proper education for officers generally meant attendance or graduation from a college or university. As General John Schofield noted of this predilection for college men, “It is a feeling, and a very strong one, in favor of *education* (original emphasis), of qualification in all respects for the service which may be required.”⁴²

The Regular Army’s emphasis on college education stemmed both from the preeminence of the Military Academy at West Point in providing much of the pre-war army’s officer corps and of West Point’s underlying assumption that the best approach to warfare was one grounded in scientific examination and problem solving. Schofield, in fact, had made the statement above to address those who criticized West Point’s near monopoly on new commissions in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In his opinion, it was the college education provided at West Point, rather than its privileged position, that made its graduates the best source for the army’s officers. Brigadier General J.P. Farley also reflected the regular’s assumptions on the importance of higher education when he noted, “in all walks of life the leaders are men from the educated class, at least men who have been trained to reason logically, men who must determine for themselves and for their subordinates the proper course of action in any special case.”⁴³

Army leaders also believed that college graduates possessed the proper attributes required for good combat leadership. As Captain Ira Reeves wrote in his influential *Military Education in the United States*,

The college young man makes the ideal officer. His mental equipment is usually such as desired, he is ordinarily a man of sufficient physical development to meet the physical demands of an officer, and he is necessarily a man of more than usual ambition and energy, otherwise he would not be in college. The time of life when he is in college is the very best not only to instill habits

⁴² John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York: Century Publishing Company, 1897), 535-6.

⁴³ Brigadier General J. P. Farley, “Military Service for College Men,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Vol. L (1912), 114.

of discipline, respect and obedience toward others, but to demand them for himself where he has been placed in a position of authority.⁴⁴

In a nation that periodically blasted its officer corps for being a bastion of “aristocratic privilege” and touted the virtue and effectiveness of its citizen soldiers, the Regular Army’s insistence on college educated officers also provided a convenient shield to retain its monopoly on military leadership against the braying of populist politicians.⁴⁵

The pre-war army’s built-in educational biases were also bolstered by progressive era beliefs that college schooling provided the expert knowledge required of all true professions and that education, in and of itself, was the key to solving the nation’s social ills by providing the middle class with the moral armor and know-how to address the problems of a rapidly modernizing society.⁴⁶ Reflecting this progressive era reverence of college education, one officer noted, “The art of war has reached the point where college men or men specially trained are required to master it.” He succinctly concluded, “When college men take hold of things they go.”⁴⁷ The army’s desire for its officers to be college educated also stemmed from social prejudices and a desire to keep “the wrong sort” from obtaining commissions and undermining the efficiency and exclusivity of the officer corps.

Reacting to the flood of “low standard” outsiders who had joined the officer corps since 1898, one engineer major noted in 1903, “the standard of education required for men appointed to commissions in the United States Army from the ranks and from civil life is distinctly lower than the general education of the youth of the country warrants.” He went on to note that their lack of higher education “may fit them for the lower commissioned grades, but will not

⁴⁴ Captain Ira Reeves, *Military Education in the United States* (Burlington: Free Press Printing Company, 1914), 106.

⁴⁵ Huntington, 156-7, 198-9, and 204-5.

⁴⁶ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 113-121.

⁴⁷ S.M.C., “The Present Problem,” *Infantry Journal*, 256.

enable them to fill advantageously the higher grades to which if they live long enough they will necessarily attain, under the present system.”⁴⁸ An examination of the civilian educational levels of infantry company-grade officers in 1897, 1905, and 1915, demonstrates a constant or growing army prejudice in favor of college educated officers (Tables 2-4, 2-5, and 2-6) .⁴⁹

Table 2-4: Regular Army Infantry Captains College Education

College attendance Year	Non-USMA grad Officers with college	% of non-USMA Grad officers with college	USMA Graduates	Total officers with college education	% of total officers with college education
1897	Not specified	Not specified	86	Not specified	At least 34.4 %
1905	61 (1)	38.7 %	291	353	At least 78.2 %
1915	76 (2)	21.9 %	125	204	At least 42 %

(1) Includes 8 officers who attended the USMA but failed to graduate

(2) Includes 17 officers who attended the USMA but failed to graduate

Table 2-5: Regular Army Infantry First Lieutenants College Education

College Attendance Year	Non-USMA graduate officers with college	% of non-USMA graduate officers with college	USMA Graduates	Total officers with college education	% of total officers with college education
1897	Not specified	Not specified	194	Not specified	At least 67.3 %
1905	106(1)	25.4 %	29	135	At least 30.6 %
1915	60(2)	21.3 %	198	258	At least 53.8 %

⁴⁸ MAJ William Black, “The Education and Training of Army Officers” in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. XXXII (1903), 31-2.

⁴⁹ These tables are based on information drawn from the following: *Official Army Register for 1897*, *Official Army Register for 1905* and *Official Army Register for 1915*. These figures do not include the officers assigned to the Porto Rican Infantry Regiment or the Philippine Scouts. In both cases, the Army considered these units to be a separate category of the regular establishment with set rules governing their employment. The definition of college education used in these tables are any officer known to have received a degree from a West Point or another college or university, or an officer whose record shows that he attended at least a year of college prior to commissioning. The *Official Army Register for 1897* did not list non-USMA graduates’ previous college attendance, as was the case with the registers of 1905 and 1915. As the later registers only noted the degree and college of those non-West Point officers that actually graduated from college, the actual college attendance of all non-West Point officers was probably higher. The list of non-West Point college graduates is also not complete as given in the registers. For example, the registers do not list Hugh Drum as a college graduate, even though he graduated from Boston College prior to his entry into the army.

(1) Includes 17 officers who attended the USMA but failed to graduate

(2) Includes 12 officers who attended the USMA but failed to graduate

Table 2-6: Regular Army Infantry Second Lieutenants College Education

College Attendance Year	Non-USMA grad officers with college	% of non-USMA grad officers with college	USMA Graduates	Total officers with college education	% of total officers with college education
1897	Not specified	Not specified	157	Not specified	At least 73 %
1905	88(1)	28.7 %	108	196	At least 43.3 %
1915	96(2)	45.7 %	232	328	At least 74 %

(1) Includes 8 officers who attended the USMA but failed to graduate

(2) Includes 17 officers who attended the USMA but failed to graduate

Although the expansion of the officer corps between 1898 and 1905 disrupted the general trend toward commissioning the college educated, it also seems to have strengthened the army's educational prejudices in selecting its junior officers. In his annual reports to Congress in 1901, Secretary of War Elihu Root lamented the general decline of both civil and military education in the officer corps. He noted,

The imperative demand for the service of all officers since the spring of 1898 has caused a practical cessation of all systematic education of commissioned officers for nearly four years. In the meantime, the ordinary additions to the number of second lieutenants have been, roughly speaking, about one-third from West Point and about two-thirds from the ranks and civil life. In the reorganization to enlarge the Army about 1,000 new officers have been added to the volunteer force, so that more than one-third of all the officers of the Army have been without any opportunity what[so]ever for systematic study of the science of war. On the other hand, the rapid advance of military science... the wide range of responsibilities which we have devolved upon officers charged with civil government of occupied territory; the delicate relations which constantly arise between the military and civil authorities; the manifest necessity that the soldier, above all others, should be familiar with the history and imbued with the spirit of our institutions- *all indicate the great importance of thorough and broad education for military officers* (emphasis added).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1901*, Vol. 1, "Report of the Secretary of War" (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 20.

The Secretary also noted, “all other things being equal, the officer who keeps his mind alert by intellectual exercise, and who systematically studies the reasons of action and the materials and conditions and difficulties with which he may have to deal, will be the stronger practical man and the better soldier.”⁵¹

Root’s progressive faith that education was a prerequisite for dealing with the problems of an increasingly complex world neatly nested with the officer corps’ own growing desire to use education as a prerequisite for commissioning. To reverse the decline in college educated officers that had accompanied the army expansion of 1898-1903, the War Department embarked on a number of changes to its commissioning procedures designed to lure civilian college graduates into the Regular Army’s ranks.

With the backing of President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1903 the army established a system for attracting more college men by rewarding the civilian or military colleges that maintained the best military training programs for the year. Those colleges with military programs under the supervision of Regular Army Professors of Military Science and Tactics that performed the best in their annual army inspections would be designated “distinguished institutions” or “honor schools.” The year’s six “honor school” colleges were allowed to have one of their top military training program graduates commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Regular Army without having to go through the examinations required of other civilians.⁵² Prior to World War I, the War Department raised the number of “distinguished institutions” to ten. Not surprisingly, those colleges that most closely resembled West Point, (Norwich University, the Virginia Military Institute, and The Citadel), tended to head the list of “distinguished institutions” each year.

The army’s preference for college education was also demonstrated by alterations that the

⁵¹ Ibid., 21.

⁵² General Order 6, 24 August 1903.

War Department made in its commissioning procedures in 1911. Army Chief of Staff Leonard Wood admitted that the army changed its regulations for commissioning candidates from civilian life in order to “hold out special inducements to graduates of colleges and universities [and] at the same time extending special privileges to graduates of military schools and colleges of the several States.”⁵³ In General Order 53 the army waived the requirement for “graduates of recognized colleges or universities” to take the “preliminary mental examination” that had previously been required of all civilian and enlisted applicants for commission.⁵⁴ This waiver gave college graduates a marked advantage over other civilians and enlisted men seeking to become second lieutenants.

The linkage of college education and officership was far from new. In the midst of the Civil War, Congressman Justin Morrill proposed a bill offering federal land grants to colleges and universities that offered education in “scientific and classical studies...and agriculture and mechanical arts.” In return for the federal government’s largess the colleges would have to provide their students some training in “military tactics.”⁵⁵ Morrill envisioned the Land-Grant colleges as a more democratic, cost effective, and reliable source of wartime officers than the “treason tainted” Military Academy.

The 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act unfortunately left many questions and issues of military training in the colleges unanswered. The legislation was open to interpretation on whether or not the instruction was compulsory for the students and on the governmental organization that held ultimate oversight for the program’s implementation. While the War

⁵³ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1911*, Vol. 1, “Report of the Chief of Staff” (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 156.

⁵⁴ General Order 53, 28 April 1911. The “preliminary mental examination” was an evaluation of the candidate’s knowledge of English grammar and orthography, mathematics, history, and geography.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Gene M. Lyons and John W. Massland, “The Origins of the ROTC,” *Military Affairs* Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Spring 1959), 3.

Department was responsible for providing instructors and equipment to support military training, the Interior Department was responsible for overseeing land grant funding and the overall administration of the program. Faced with these ambiguities, and the realities of low post-Civil War budgets, the War Department did little to standardize or support military training in the Land-Grant colleges between 1865 and 1904.⁵⁶

The Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection had demonstrated how unprepared the nation was to expand the existing officer corps. To prevent a reoccurrence of the ad hoc method of obtaining junior leaders in those conflicts, Root and his Chiefs of Staff were determined to transform the Land Grant Colleges into a viable source for officers. The Army Appropriations Act of 1904 required the War Department to provide 100 Regular Army officers to support civilian educational institutions. To qualify for the assignment of a Regular Army instructor, military colleges had to have 100 students over the age of 15 enrolled in their military programs. Non-military institutions were required to have 150 students enrolled in their military programs.⁵⁷ While these changes were intended mostly to build a cadre of reserve officers for any national military emergency, the regulars hoped to siphon-off the best graduates of these institutions to fill its “tainted” junior officer ranks.

Although these steps were clearly in line with the Regular Army’s educational prejudices, it was never able to provide the officer-instructors required of the Appropriations Act of 1904 or subsequent legislation. In 1904, only 36 regular officers were on duty at civilian educational institutions. This number grew to 65 in 1908, but fell to 61 in 1911 and remained around that number until 1915. The War Department tried to offset these shortages by asking regular officers on the retired list to serve as professors of Military Science and Tactics. In 1911, for

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3-5. and *War Department Annual Report, 1913*, Vol. 1., 189.

⁵⁷ Reeves, 68.

example, 27 retirees were on duty at colleges and universities.⁵⁸ Despite the army's desire for college educated officers, in the first 15 years of the twentieth century it was constantly plagued by increasing demands for officers to fill important, but un-resourced, detached service assignments (see below). The assignment of officers at educational institutions was only one of a host of competing demands. In 1905 the army Inspector General went so far as to note that college details, "may be in the general interest of the advancement of military knowledge throughout the country; yet the teaching of boys is not what the officer is commissioned for, and his detachment for such work is a distinct loss in the line of efficiency of the regular military establishment."⁵⁹ Like so much of the pre-World War army, the issue of college education and officership reflected the deeply schizophrenic nature of the military in this period of massive change.

It also should be noted that while the officer corps viewed college education as a desirable attribute for a commission and sought college men for its ranks, it still retained a built-in prejudice in favor of West Point graduates. One infantry captain maintained, "it may as well be admitted at the onset that we obtain, as a rule, a better class of officers from West Point than we do from other sources."⁶⁰ This faith in the superiority of West Point education and culture even captured the imagination of Secretary Root. In his efforts to increase the education and efficiency of the new officers that filled the army's ranks in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, he stated that one of his goals was to give the novices "some degree of the educational advantages which the West Point men get before they are commissioned."⁶¹

⁵⁸ *War Department Annual Report, 1911*, Vol. 1., 206. also, *War Department Annual Report, 1904*, Vol. 1., 2; *War Department Annual Report 1908*, Vol. 1., 9., and *War Department Annual Report 1915*, Vol. 1., 142.

⁵⁹ *War Department Annual Report, 1905*, Vol. 1, 445.

⁶⁰ Rhees Jackson, "Revision of Our System of Military Education," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (November-December, 1911), 375.

⁶¹ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1902*, Vol. 1, "Report of the Secretary of War" (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 30. Although Congress allowed the army to increase

This predilection for West Pointers can also be glimpsed by noting who were selected to serve as senior officers during World War I. After subtracting 15 officers who reached the rank of general because of their medical credentials and the four civilian experts who gained wartime direct commissions, 454 officers served as generals during the war. Of these, 355 (79 percent) were West Point graduates. Of the remaining 99 generals, 46 were commissioned from the National Guard; 18 were commissioned from the ranks; four were officers who had transferred to the regulars from the National Guard prior to 1917; 12 had been commissioned into the regulars after serving as officers in the U.S. Volunteers during the Philippine Insurrection; 17 were commissioned into the regulars directly from civilian colleges, and two were officers who were commissioned into the regulars after dropping out of West Point.⁶² Both the growing number of college graduates and the preference for West Point graduates reflected the existence of deeply held and intertwined class and education-based prejudices and assumptions which would later guide the army's initial approach to selecting officers for the World War.

Although many army officers viewed a college education as a virtual precondition for commissioning, they did not deem that this education alone was all that was required of the practitioners of the art of war. In a prize-winning 1889 article in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Lieutenant William Burnham argued, "For infantry or cavalry an officer should possess a good average brain, an eye for localities, a mind that takes in a situation at a glance, and, most important and essential of all, good common sense. A line officer devoid of

the number of cadets at West Point in the years leading up to World War I, the increases added only a handful more of USMA graduates into the junior officer ranks prior to 1917.

⁶² These figures are based on the analysis of the biographies of World War I general officers drawn from, Henry B. Davis, Jr., *Generals in Khaki* (Raleigh, NC: Pentland Press, 1998). Although Leonard Wood and Alexander Tuthill entered the army by way of the medical branch, both officers eventually transferred to the line army, and are thus captured in the officers who entered the regulars by the college route. The four officers who entered the ranks of general officer by direct wartime commission were William Atterbury, Charles Dawes, Samuel McRoberts, and Guy Tripp. These men all had civilian experience running rail roads or other large businesses prior to their military service.

good practical judgment would be quite as much a failure as an engineer officer devoid of a knowledge of mathematics.”⁶³

The pre-war Regular Army expected that a budding junior officer would truly gain knowledge of soldiering, leadership, and “good common sense” through a hands-on apprenticeship conducted in his first unit. This belief even applied to West Pointers. Leonard Wood, the Army Chief of Staff from 1910 to 1914, noted,

West Point does not claim to turn out finished officers any more than a great law school claims to turn out finished lawyers. It does turn out, however, men who have the discipline, training, and education to take up and follow the profession of arms successfully. It does teach its graduates to apply their minds to any problem which may confront them.⁶⁴

Thus, while a college education provided the personal discipline and mental conditioning that trained new officers how to learn, their basic professional development and knowledge would be fostered and expanded through experience and the mentorship of their veteran superiors. As Army Chief of Staff James Franklin Bell remarked in 1908, “A young officer needs to be taught his duty in the company by actual service under an experienced company commander.”⁶⁵ Bell’s remarks were echoed by Major General David Shanks. In 1917 Shanks observed,

Before our entry into the present war promotion in our army was relatively slow. A second lieutenant was assigned to a company, and he had the benefit of learning by observation and experience. His captain was generally an officer who had received a certain amount of seasoning. The green subaltern had abundant opportunity to become acquainted with his profession gradually.⁶⁶

Writing on the brink of the American entry into the Great War, another officer suggested that while civil and military education was important, the overall “theoretical” focus of this schooling

⁶³ 1LT William Burnham, “Military Training of the Regular Army of the United States,” in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. X (1889), 625-6. It is not surprising that Burnham perhaps favored “good common sense” over education; he failed out of West Point in his first year, and received his commission from the ranks. During World War I, he rose to command the 82nd Division.

⁶⁴ Major Charles E. Kilbourne, ed. *The National Service Library*, Vol. 1. *Universal Military Training*, by Major General Leonard Wood (New York: F.P. Collier and Son, 1917), 142.

⁶⁵ *War Department Annual Report, 1908*, Vol. 1, 363.

⁶⁶ Shanks, 20.

was “not conducive to the proper practical application of the principles studied.” He recommended that “lieutenants should be permanently commissioned only after a satisfactory demonstration of their abilities covering a probationary period of sufficient length to determine not only [their] previous education but [also their] general efficiency and particular fitness requisite for the qualities of an officer.”⁶⁷

Unfortunately, these concepts of apprenticeship were increasingly at odds with the emerging professional ethos that materialized in the army in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This tension between “book learning” and “muddy boot” experience was never reconciled prior to the American entry into World War I and led to confusion over the best means of training the war’s junior officers. It also assumed that there would be a sufficient number of experienced officers and NCOs to mentor and develop the army’s “seed corn,” as well as having the time available for young officers to complete their apprenticeship in the art of military leadership.

Along with trying to increase the education level and the quality of the “on the job training” of its junior officers, the army also worked to improve and codify its professional standards. To answer Congressional concerns that the Army’s seniority system promoted officers regardless of individual physical ability and professional competency, the Army instituted a requirement in 1890 that all lieutenants and captains eligible for promotion first had to pass a rigorous series of physical and professional examinations.

The examination boards for infantry and cavalry officers consisted of five members: two medical officers and three line officers of superior rank to the officer being examined. In the February 1903 General Order 17, the board was instructed that “examinations will be conducted

⁶⁷ 1LT Dale McDonald, “Training and Promotion of Second Lieutenants” in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. LIX (1916), 208.

in a sufficiently exhaustive manner to determine not only that the subject is thoroughly comprehended but the degree of proficiency of the officer being examined, and until the board is positively satisfied as to his ability to impart instruction in the various subjects.”⁶⁸ This highlighted the importance that the army placed on its officers being able to not only gain and retain professional knowledge, but also, to use that knowledge to train those under him. This skill was of vital importance in an army that expected its captains and majors to aid junior officers in completing their apprenticeship within their units.

The professional examinations tested the officer’s tactical and technical competency through both a written exam and their “hands-on” ability to maneuver or employ a company of soldiers.⁶⁹ Each branch or specialty of service required different examinations. For example, the examinations for engineer and artillery officers were heavy on mathematics, ballistics, and topography. The examination boards for company-grade infantry and cavalry officers focused on the officer’s knowledge of administration and *Army Regulations*, drill and *Field Service Regulations*, fire discipline, basic military field engineering, military law, minor tactics, and basic topography.⁷⁰ It was not unusual for the officers being examined to write over 100 pages in answering the questions posed by the board.⁷¹

The examination board also certified that the officer being tested was morally and physically fit for the promotion. The main moral failing that the boards seemed to have most watched for was the officer’s drinking habits. Also, the memory of the morbidly obese William Shafter’s flailing attempts to command the Cuban expedition in 1898, and the logjam of old and

⁶⁸ General Order 17, 20 February 1903.

⁶⁹ See General Order 116, 1890 and General Order 57, 1892.

⁷⁰ General Order 17, 20 February 1903. Every year the General Orders specified the parameters of the examination boards and the subjects which they would test. Thus it was no secret to an officer appearing before the board what exactly they would be tested on.

⁷¹ Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 281.

infirm officers slowing promotions in the seniority-ridden military, had forced the War Department to be increasingly rigid in its physical examinations in the years prior to the Great War. This trend was accelerated by pressure from the president. In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to Secretary of War William Taft,

As I have personally observed some field officers who were physically unable to ride even a few miles at an increased gait, and I deem it essential that field grade officers of the line of the Army should be at all times physically fit and able to perform the duties pertaining to their positions, especially in the field, and as I believe that such physical fitness can only be demonstrated by actual physical tests. I desire that you give necessary directions to have the physical condition of all officers of the line who come up for examination for the promotion to the grade of field officer actually tested for skill and endurance in riding, this in addition to the physical examination now required by law.⁷²

This focus on moral and physical fitness later influenced the AEF's perceptions and expectations of the characteristics of an effective and proper officer. John J. Pershing was a stickler for the physical fitness of his senior officers, and his attitudes eventually permeated his whole command.

The institutional process for ensuring the leadership abilities and professional competency of the officer corps was also furthered by Secretary of War's 1891 order that all officers below the rank of colonel be given efficiency reports by their superiors. The combined effects of these moves allowed the officer corps to establish the oversight and internal self-regulating process that was beginning to guide all emerging professions during the era. The efficiency reports consisted of two parts. In the first, the officer himself enumerated his professional reading, publications, and the special skills he brought to the profession. In the second, his commanders offered their evaluations of the officer's "professional zeal and abilities

⁷² General Order 111, 21 May 1907.

[and]...capacity for command” and the morale, welfare, and training of the soldiers under his command.⁷³

The efficiency report system was codified into Army Regulations at the turn of the century. The Army Regulations of 1913 (those in effect throughout World War I) required that all officers (generals and colonels included) be given a yearly evaluation by their immediate superior to establish a “true estimate of standing, ability, and special fitness for any military duty.”⁷⁴ The regulation continued the requirement for the rated officer to submit a personal report of their professional attainments. The examinations and efficiency reports did much to standardize the Army’s unwritten norms for leadership and professionalism. Pershing later attempted to keep this system of professional oversight working in the AEF. The pace of mobilization and operations prevented the AEF from continuing promotion exams, but a modified efficiency report system continued during the war. The 11 March 1918 AEF General Order 39 required efficiency reports for all AEF majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels, and the maintenance by all lieutenants and captains of an “officer’s record book” that recorded their superior’s estimation of their physical abilities, intelligence, leadership, personal qualities, and general value to the Army.⁷⁵

As with other professions in the progressive era, the army also tried to systematize its institutional process for ensuring competency and mastery of specialty knowledge through a

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of War, *U.S. Army Regulations, 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 169-172.

⁷⁵ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *The United States Army in the World War 1917-1919*, Volume 16, *General Orders, GHQ, AEF* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 240-241. Hereafter these volumes will be referred to as *U.S. Army in the World War*. Examples of the Officer Efficiency Report form used by the AEF are found in U.S. National Archives, RG 120, Entry 796, Box 3. An example of the Officer’s Qualification Report (the ultimate form of the “officer’s record book) is found in NA, RG 120, Entry 541, Box 2286. For an overview of the wartime officer evaluation system see, Joseph Whitehorne, *The Inspectors General of the United States Army 1903-1939* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), 145-148.

structure of post-graduate education. Beginning in the 1880s, the army began to improve professionalism in the service through a system of post, branch, and advanced tactical schools. In 1881, William T. Sherman established the Infantry and Cavalry School of Application at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Sherman envisioned that the school would enhance the existing system of officer apprenticeship by providing a course that would serve as the army's primary means of instilling its junior officers with a common tactical doctrine and professional ethos.

The officers chiefly targeted for the course were those non-West Point lieutenants with little background in military art and science. Despite Sherman's support, the School of Application had a long and painful birth. As historian Timothy Nenner noted, the poor selection of students, lack of qualified instructors, and the elementary nature of the course materials prevented the school from achieving Sherman's vision.⁷⁶ Although it took time for the School of Application to work through its teething problems, for the most part the educational reforms were welcomed by the officer corps. The officer corps' growing belief that the army was on the brink of great change and faced irrelevancy provided an added impetus for reform. As Hugh Scott noted of his thoughts in the late 1880s,

Formerly most all my studies had gone toward warfare with the Indian, which I used to think, at one time, would last during my lifetime, but conditions on the Plains were rapidly changing. Instead of protecting the white man from the Indian, it was now the soldiers that protected the Indian from the white man, and my military ideas had been changed by the maneuvers at Chilocco in 1889. I began to study civilized warfare intensively, perceiving that the day of the Indian on the Plains was over. While I was too busy with something important to go to school at Fort Leavenworth, I studied its textbooks and began to fit myself for war with a foreign country, although no sign of such a war could yet be seen.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Timothy Nenner, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 22-8. This work remains the best source chronicling the early evolution of the army's education system.

⁷⁷ Scott, 145.

Scott's comments are intriguing. They reflect not only the belief that the army was facing a challenge to its primary and historic *raison d' être*, but also the initial ambiguous place of the Leavenworth school and professional education within the army's culture.

In the 1890s the army attempted to expand the pool of officers and NCOs receiving professional education by mandating that all posts establish lyceums for officers and schools for NCOs and privates. The officer lyceums were basically an extension of the "on the job" apprenticeship for junior officers and were to serve as a cheap and easily enacted stop-gap measure to further professionalism while the army established a coherent educational system.

Captain Eben Swift, one of the early proponents of professionalization, argued of the lyceums,

Its aim is to make each battery, troop and company a school, and each garrison a university for the study of the duties of our profession...One of the results of such a course would be to improve the curricula of our schools of application and enable them to be turned into veritable war colleges and staff schools... The Germans have utterly dispelled the fallacy that "*War alone teaches war.*" Under a careful system of peacetime training, they have been able to develop safe leaders for great armies in the field.⁷⁸

While the army codified the establishment of lyceums in General Order 125 in September 1900, Swift's glowing hopes for the schools fell far short of his vision.⁷⁹ When it came to teaching junior officer 1LT William Birkhimer noted of his seniors, "With a modesty that for once is *not* worthy of all praise, the veterans shrank to the back ground, leaving to their juniors, the mere youngsters of yesterday, and today" to educate themselves.⁸⁰

Upon becoming Secretary of War, Root acknowledged, "The great body of officers were confined to the advantages offered by post schools called 'lyceums,' which were, in general, unsatisfactory and futile. There was no effective method by which the individual excellence

⁷⁸ CPT Eben Swift, "The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. XX, No. LXXXVI (March 1897), 276-7.

⁷⁹ General Order 125, 29 September 1900 and General Order 155, 27 November 1901.

⁸⁰ 1LT William Birkhimer, "Comment and Criticism of The Lyceum at Fort Agawam," in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. XX, No. LXXXIV (May 1897), 635.

demonstrated could be recognized, or the result attained be utilized.”⁸¹ With the support of uniformed reformers such as Swift, William Harding Carter, Arthur L. Wagner, and Franklin Bell, Root instituted a coherent and hierarchical professional education system designed to progressively instruct officers over the course of their careers. In November 1901, Root issued General Order 155 to implement a system of schools that would educate and professionalize an officer from his pre-commissioning training to his ascension to senior field-grade rank.

Root recast the Infantry and Cavalry School of Application (which became the School of the Line in 1904) as a tactical “finishing school” for company-grade officers and required all second and first lieutenants and captains with less than ten years of service (excepting those who had previously graduated from the School of Application) to attend post schools that would focus on minor tactics and company administration. To give the post schools uniformity and importance, Root held post commanders directly responsible for the instruction and made Department Commanders responsible to the overall administration and conduct of the schools. Root also required the Department Commanders to comment on the post schools in their annual reports to the War Department.

To emphasize the new-found importance that the army held education, General Order 155 warned junior officers that the failing of the post course would require them to retake the course, and that “in the event of a second failure special report will be made by the commanding officer with a view to its consideration by the board which may be thereafter designated to examine the officer as to his fitness for promotion.”⁸² While the order was stated in the silted and turgid prose that only government bureaucracies can produce, the message to young officers was clear: study your profession or suffer the consequences.

⁸¹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1901*, Vol. 1, 21.

⁸² General Order 155, 27 November 1901. The army expanded its guidance for the administration and curriculum for the post schools the following year on General Order 102, 22 September 1902.

The urgency with which Root approached educational reform reflected both the army's lackluster performance in administration and mobilization during the Spanish American War and his concern over the changing complexion of the officer corps. In his annual report to Congress in 1902, he noted,

Of the 2,900 officers of the line army, 1,818 have been appointed since the war with Spain. Of these 1,818 but 276 were supplied by the West Point Academy: the remaining 1,542 have come- 414 from the ranks, 512 from civil life, and 616 from the volunteers from the war with Spain and in the Philippines. The volunteers and enlisted men have of course acquired useful experience, and were all selected on the ground of their military conduct and intelligence. Yet it is generally true of the whole 1,542, constituting more than one-half of all the officers of the line, that they have had no systematic military education. They constitute nearly the entire body of first and second lieutenants. After some years, when their seniors have passed off the stage, they will have to supply our generals and colonels and chief staff officers charged with the instruction, discipline, and command of our forces. Unless the theory of military education under which we have maintained the Academy at West Point for a century is a mistake, it is very important to give this class of young officers, now that they are in the Army, some degree of the educational advantages which the West Point men get before they are commissioned.⁸³

Root's agenda was to launch a war on two fronts: first reform education, and then purge the army of the unqualified and inept officers that had flocked to the force since 1898.

Unfortunately, Root found that instituting his agenda was far more difficult than he had anticipated. For one, operational requirements, shortages of good instructors, and the reality of life on small and scattered posts continued to undercut his, and his successor's, attempts to reform professional education at the local level. Despite Root's best efforts to make the education system uniform and progressive, its administration at the local level remained haphazard and idiosyncratic. In 1907 the commander of the Southwestern Division, Brigadier General Albert Meyer, remarked of the practical work conducted in his post schools, "in some instances the report of post commanders show that considerable interest was taken, while in

⁸³ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1902*, Vol. 1, "Report of the Secretary of War," 30.

others but little time was devoted to that part of the course.”⁸⁴ Three years later the commander of the Department of Colorado argued that the education of officers was “giving undue weight to theory as opposed to applied instruction” and was undermining “the esprit of the Army and the spirit of subordination of the commanded to the commander.”⁸⁵ Another general lamented, “officers of the old army of a quarter of a century ago had much hard field service, but in garrison theirs was a life of idleness and ease compared to the incessant rounds of garrison schools, target practice, maneuvers, etc, of the present day.”⁸⁶ One officer went so far as to grumble that the high education standards that the reformers strived for, “might in the past have excluded some of our greatest generals, who have been so eminent in strategy and the masterly handling of armies in the field.”⁸⁷

The reform-minded officers were well aware of the effect that these shellback officers had on their efforts to professionalize the army. Hugh Scott observed, “older officers train the younger in their ways as they come on, generation after generation, and it is very difficult to change the habit of a regiment.”⁸⁸ Addressing the issue of both post and other army schools, the commandant of the Leavenworth schools observed, “Too often a young lieutenant, returning to his regiment...and wishing to do things as he had been taught, has been suppressed and discouraged by his superior officers who had little knowledge of or sympathy with these schools.”⁸⁹ Although their efforts were largely successful in professionalizing the military, the Secretaries of War and their uniformed reformers never truly resolved the tension between the desire for uniformity in education and training, and the prerogatives and idiosyncratic desires of

⁸⁴ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. III, 145-6.

⁸⁵ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1910*, Vol. III, 130.

⁸⁶ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1906*, Vol. III, 93.

⁸⁷ MAJ John Bigelow, “Comments and Criticism” of “The Moral Training of the Soldier,” in *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Vol. XXXII (1903), 396.

⁸⁸ Scott, 478.

⁸⁹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. III, 236.

local commanders. This legacy of conflict would continue to plague the army's efforts to standardize officer and NCO training during the First World War.

Although Root, his successors, and their military reformers faced an uphill battle to change the army's institutional culture, by 1910 they had succeeded in both creating a progressive military education system and in producing a generation of young officers dedicated to the professional ethos that they propounded. This change is reflected in the increasing number of company-grade infantry officers attending army schools between 1897 and 1915 (Tables 2-7, 2-8, and 2-9).⁹⁰

Table 2-7: Military Education of Regular Army Infantry Captains

YEAR	Infantry & Cavalry School or The School of the Line Graduates			Army Staff College Graduates			Army War College Graduates		
	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs
1897	4	14	7.2 %	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1905	34	73	23.7 %	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1915	48	177	43.6 %	33	40	15 %	6	8	2.8 %

Table 2-8: Military Education of Regular Army Infantry First Lieutenants

YEAR	Infantry & Cavalry School or The School of the Line Graduates			Army Staff College Graduates			Army War College Graduates		
	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs
1897	29	49	26.5 %	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1905	3	62	14.6 %	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1915	1	33	7 %	0	6	1.2 %	0	0	0

⁹⁰ These tables are based on information drawn from the following: Adjutant General's Office, *Official Army Register for 1897* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1896), 104-178., The Military Secretary's Office, *Official Army Register for 1905* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1904), 215-346., The Adjutant General's Office, *Official Army Register for 1915* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1, 1914), 292-436 and 440-458.

Table 2-9: Military Education of Regular Army Infantry Second Lieutenants

YEAR	Infantry & Cavalry School or The School of the Line Graduates			Army Staff College Graduates			Army War College Graduates		
	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs	USMA Grad	Non-USMA officer	% of all INF CPTs
1897	2	17	8.8 %	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1905	0	6	1.4 %	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1915	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

As was the case with the earlier examination of the level of civil education, the decline in the number of first lieutenants and the dramatic increase in the number of captains who graduated from the School of Application or the School of the Line reflected the rapid promotion of regular officers during the Spanish American War.

It is interesting to note that non-West Point officers were over-represented in these schools. This was perhaps a legacy of the belief that West Point offered a superior foundation in the art and science of war that was simply lacking in other sources of commission. Thus, these courses remained tactical “finishing schools” up to the Great War. The fact that few second lieutenants had attended the schools by 1915 also points to the continuing legacy of the apprenticeship system. These officers needed practical seasoning before sending them off for more theoretical training and education. Despite these issues, the statistics still show a steady and marked increase in the professional education of junior officers.

Although their educational reforms never overcame the systemic problems associated with instruction at post schools, nor reached as many officers as they had hoped, the civilian and military reformers were able to instill a deep and abiding professional ethos within the army’s culture. It is little surprise that this “cult of professionalism” arose. By embracing the educational foundations and exclusivity that came with professionalization, the Regular Army

hoped to end over a century of political bickering over respective virtues of citizen and regular soldiers. Professionalization would cement the regulars' position as the nation's preeminent source of military leadership and "know how." The emphasis on education and professionalism would also give officers what Darryl Henderson termed "expert power" when it came to leading the nation's professional and citizen soldiers.

This emphasis on professional "know how" was bolstered the rapid changes in weapons and tactics that was occurring during the period. As early as 1889, one officer argued that, "It is now impossible for the ordinary man in civil life to give this matter sufficient attention, and it therefore becomes doubly necessary that the officers of the Regular Army should devote their entire time to their profession, that they may be 'equal to the occasion' at all times and in all places."⁹¹ Fourteen years later, Major William Black noted,

In civil life those professions which deal with life and death, such as medicine, surgery and pharmacy, are safeguarded by law from practice by the untrained... When it is a question, not of the life of one man, but of hundreds, not of the well-being of a community, but of a nation, how much greater is the necessity for legal protection against ignorant practice, no matter how patriotic or well meaning the individual... But the tradition remains... that a commission, a uniform, and plenty of good will, with or without some knowledge of drill regulations, are all that are required to fit a man to be a soldier in any grade. The lessons of a war seem necessary to teach the American people the direful distinction between an amateur and a professional soldier. It seems absurd to state such a truism, and in no other of the great nations of the world would an argument be required to establish the belief that arms is a profession demanding for its higher ranks the long training of the mind and body, the special aptitude, and the experience which are conceded necessary for the professions of civil life.⁹²

In the same vein, another acolyte of the "cult of professionalism" remarked, "An officer can no more cease to study than can a lawyer or doctor. The art of war is being constantly elaborated

⁹¹ Burnham, "Military Training of the Regular Army of the United States," 624.

⁹² MAJ William Black, "Education of Army Officers," 7-8.

and improved and the best officers, like the best doctors, are those that who are first thoroughly grounded and then keep abreast of the times.”⁹³

As was the case in other professions in the progressive era, the new military professional ethos produced both a drive for “efficiency” and intolerance for any internal or external opposition. One indication of the seriousness with which the army viewed education and professionalism was the fact that officers were liable for courts martial if they neglected their studies. In May 1903, for example, First Lieutenant Leonard Baker was charged with a violation of the 62nd Article of War (neglect of duty to the prejudice of good order and military discipline) for a “lack of proper diligence and application” and failure “to prepare himself in a suitable manner” for the recitations and examinations required by his attendance at the General Service Staff College at Fort Leavenworth.⁹⁴

The reformers were intent upon overcoming all obstacles in the path of professionalization. This is evidenced in a 1913 article in the *Infantry Journal* by Captain W. B. Burtt,

Our officers in the main are not fond of hard and intensive study, and in general, the outer and more visible signs of the profession of arms appeal to the average man more than the inner mental development...[To older officers] the Service Schools are in their eyes kindergartens and thorough and exhaustive study is something for cadets or college professors... Their commanders had been taught in the greatest school-War, and as a consequence, younger officers were made to feel that the only military education and the only valuable knowledge was to be obtained in that one seminary. We find these officers a hindrance rather than help for any system [of professional development] adopted, because they are unfitted by a lack of education, training and experience for the position of instructor which they should occupy.⁹⁵

⁹³ CPT Bernard Sharp, “The Post Graduate Course for Line Officers,” in *The Infantry Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (Sept 1909), 234.

⁹⁴ General Order 106, 18 July 1903. It is interesting to note that by 1905, Baker was no longer listed on the rolls of the 1st Infantry regiment.

⁹⁵ CPT W. B. Burtt, “Tactical Instruction of Officers,” in *The Infantry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 2 (Sept-Oct 1913), 180-1.

In the “cult of professionalism” specialist knowledge, attained through education and honed during an apprenticeship overseen by other expert practitioners, was the true and only path to professional enlightenment and salvation.

As the Great War waged in Europe, the missionaries of professionalism grew even more strident and scolding in their message. In *Leadership and Military Training*, Lincoln Andrews warned the young officers, “Do not assume that in putting on your uniform you have clothed yourself with any particular omniscience.” As Andrews pointed out, “To attain the confidence and respect of your men, the first requisite is superior knowledge. That will give you self-confidence to appear as a leader, and will justify your men in following you.”⁹⁶ He also warned would-be leaders in 1916, “You are a sorry object pretending to lead when there are men in [the] ranks who know your part better than you do.”⁹⁷

The zeal and intolerance of the uniformed reformers were also reflected in their attempts to purge the ranks of the officer corps of those officers that did not live up to their high expectations. In his farewell address as the Commandant of the Leavenworth schools before proceeding to Washington to assume the position of Army Chief of Staff in 1906, the arch-reformer James Franklin Bell maintained, “With the passing away of unreasoning automatons and the feudal social system of servile submission has also passed the possibility of success along the old lines. Large business enterprises learned this long ago, and subordinates not gifted with intelligence, interest, and enterprise are promptly gotten rid of.”⁹⁸ One of Bell’s successors as Chief of Staff, Leonard Wood commented of the existing seniority promotion system, “Under the present conditions our officers are too old when they reach field rank. They are retained too

⁹⁶ Lincoln C. Andrews, *Leadership and Military Training* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1918), 26, 51.

⁹⁷ Lincoln Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1916), 13.

⁹⁸ GEN J. Franklin Bell, “Reflections and Suggestions: An Address by General J. Franklin Bell” 17 March 1906, From the CARL archives, FT Leavenworth, KS.

long in the subordinate grades, and too many of them reach command rank at a time of life when they have lost all initiative, and, only too often, the physical ability to take up the work.”⁹⁹ In 1909 the commander of the Department of the East recommended, “If a procedure could be established under which officers who have failed to bring their troops up to a high standard of efficiency could be suspended from promotion for a year, and on a second failure be gotten rid of, we should have made a really substantial advance toward securing and maintaining a high degree of efficiency.”¹⁰⁰ In the same spirit an infantry major wrote in 1910, “we should ask [for the] power to weed out the inefficient...Let us set the standard of infantry officers so high that none but the physically active and mentally alert will stay in the corps.”¹⁰¹

As previously noted, Root, Taft, and military reformers such as Bell and Wood, had been concerned by what they had seen as the dilution of the officer corps by those “outsiders” commissioned during the Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection. While serving as the commander of the Philippines Division in 1906, Leonard Wood remarked,

In the line and staff there is a considerable number of officers who have entered the service as a result of the war with Spain and subsequent disturbances in these islands who, now that a condition of peace is established, are found to be of a type which is not desirable to continue in the regular service...The class of officer referred to is made up of men who find the hard and serious work of an officer’s career different from what they expected. This, combined with the lack of excitement, has rendered them indifferent to improvement and in some instances to the discharge of duty...With our small Army, there is no excuse for carrying a heavy load of inferior personnel in any class...it is for this reason, and for the further reason that our little army should retain only the best material, that some searching system of elimination is necessary to get rid of those who are indifferent or worthless, either through lack of aptitude, physical or mental infirmity or weakness...¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1911*, Vol. I, 177-8.

¹⁰⁰ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1909*, Vol. III, 16.

¹⁰¹ MAJ William Johnson, “A Lesson from Manchuria: What would Kuropatkin Say To Us?” in *The Infantry Journal*, Vol. VI, No.6 (May 1910), 789.

¹⁰² *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1906*, Vol. III, 212-214.

In his annual report to Congress in 1908, Taft echoed Wood's sentiments and stated,

There is another and very necessary way of increasing the efficiency of the army in respect to its officered personnel, without increasing the number, and that is by the process of elimination of officers who are not the best. There are a number of officers in the army who do not take an interest in the service that is demanded, and while they keep to the letter of the law and regulations it is impossible to get rid of them and fill their places with more efficient officers... Since 1890 we have had on our statute books a law contemplating this elimination in the case of officers below the rank of major who fail to pass satisfactorily examinations prescribed for promotion... This law while calculated by its terms to produce the desired effect of weeding out incompetent and unworthy officers, has utterly failed to accomplish this result except in the case of physical disability... in the case of incompetence or unfitness for other causes only an insignificant number have been gotten rid of under this law... On an average only one officer a year has been retired under this law for any reason other than physical disability.¹⁰³

While various civil and military leaders attempted to improve the general standards of the officer corps, they found the task to be an uphill battle.

Root failed twice during his term as Secretary of War to have Congress pass a bill that would provide for the quick elimination of unfit and incompetent officers. Taft also met with little success. Upon becoming president, Taft had his Secretary of War, Jacob Dickinson again propose an elimination bill. Dickinson argued, "after more than 20 years' trial of the present system of elimination for unfitness, there is much deadwood in the Army and many backwards tendencies evident." He went on to note, "I am also hopeful that proper correction of our administrative system and of our larger military policies will so change life and work of the Army that such deadwood will not accumulate and that the progressive, ambitious officers will be so worked and trained that they will keep up their high standards."¹⁰⁴ Although the War Department's civil and military leaders failed to significantly change the army's ability to remove incompetent officers, it fueled the "cult of professionalism" and made regular officers

¹⁰³ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1908*, Vol. I, 15-16.

¹⁰⁴ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1911*, Vol. I, 8-9.

ready, willing, and able to remove the World War I volunteer and National Guard officers who did not appear to live up to the regulars' exacting standards of competency and deportment.

One of the main reasons the War Department failed to sway Congress to pass a more stringent elimination bill was because at the same time the army was seeking to purge its ranks, it was also begging for a dramatic increase in the officer corps. The army had gored itself on the horns of a dilemma. Those reforms that the army had long sought, such as creation of the general staff, expansion of the professional education system, and its ability to regulate the National Guard and the military education at Land Grant colleges, were requiring more officers than the service could afford to give. From 1904 through 1916 every Secretary of War and Army Chief of Staff maintained a steady drum beat in their annual reports to Congress lamenting the shortage of officers due to the explosion of detached service requirements the army had to fill yearly. To gage the depth the problem of detailed officers, Table 2-10 shows the number and percentage of infantry officers not with their units from 1908 through 1916.

Table 2-10: Infantry Officers Absent from their Commands¹⁰⁵

Year	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916
Number	289	289	303	313	301	270	275	336	288
Detailed And %	19.8 %	19.6%	20.3%	21.2 %	19.5%	16.4%	16.7%	20.9%	17.9%

In the decade prior to the American entry into World War I, one-fifth of the infantry officers were absent from their commands due to details, staff assignments, and attendance at army schools. During the same time period, up to one-quarter of cavalry and field artillery officers were absent from their commands for similar reasons. In all of the years between 1908 and 1916, the vast majority of those officers on detached service were company-grade officers.

¹⁰⁵ Information drawn from the Adjutant General Reports of the *Annual Reports of the War Department* from 1908-1916.

In 1910, for example, 85.4% of detached officers were captains or lieutenants.¹⁰⁶ The dramatic decline in detailed officers in 1913 and 1914 was due to provisions in the Army Appropriations Bill of 1912 that severely curtailed “the detachment of officers below the rank of major from duties with their companies, troops or batteries, unless they shall have been present for duty with such organizations for at least two out of the proceeding six years.”¹⁰⁷

Although the so-called “Manchu Law” temporarily shook up army assignments, the Congress failed to reduce the number of requirements for officers that it itself had imposed on the army. In 1911, for example, the Congress finally responded to the army’s call for an increase in its number of company-grade officers by funding an additional 200 officers. The same year, the Congress mandated that the army provide at least one regular officer to serve with each National Guard infantry, cavalry, and artillery battalion or squadron as trainers and advisors. Ironically, this act forced the army to detail an additional 200 officers for this new duty.¹⁰⁸

Senior army leaders rightly feared the effects of the officer shortage on the efficiency and readiness of their units. As early as 1904, the commander of the Department of the Gulf argued “The demands on the time of officers for their own instruction at post and service schools is so great that the organization is apt to suffer accordingly.”¹⁰⁹ Four years later, the Army Chief of Staff warned, “A young officer needs to be taught his duty in the company by actual service under an experienced company commander. Yet today many companies are commanded by

¹⁰⁶ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1910*, Vol. I, 160. This rate was slightly higher among infantry officers. Company-grade officers accounted for 86.7% of detached infantry officers in 1910. The complete breakdown of detached officers was one colonel, nine LTCs , 30 MAJs , 154 CPTs , 92 1LTs, and 17 2LTs .

¹⁰⁷ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1912*, Vol. I, 23-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1911*, Vol. I, 155.

¹⁰⁹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1904*, Vol. III, 29.

young, inexperienced officers from civil life who have had no time to learn their company duty before they are placed in command.”¹¹⁰

This situation did not improve prior to World War I and the Inspector General reports of maneuver and field training in 1912 highlighted the doleful influence of the lack of officers on the field army. Colonel George Chase, the Inspector General for the Department of the East, stated, “I believe that standards of efficiency in instruction and discipline and the general field efficiency [of units] could be raised if officers of all organizations were required to be with their organizations during periods of instruction, especially in target practice and field training.” He found particularly alarming the rapid turnover of company commanders and the break down of the system for mentoring junior officers. He noted,

Many organizations (companies and troops) are commanded by young, inexperienced officers who are continually changing...Many of the best officers of the service are detached from their commands, leaving the instruction of the line in the hands of officers who lack experience in controlling men. I am convinced that the general efficiency of all troops...may be improved by placing officers in command of troops, batteries, and companies who will retain command for a considerable period of time.¹¹¹

These deficiencies were not limited to the Department of the East. The inspector of field training in the Department of Dakota also noted, “The exercises were as satisfactory as could be expected under present conditions in the infantry and cavalry of the regular service, where units are always suffering from shortages of officers, especially in the grade of captain.”¹¹² The Inspector General of the Philippine Division simply termed the absence of officers from their units the “professional disease in the line of the Army.”¹¹³ In 1905 the Army Inspector General chided “the young cavalry officer who is willing to abandon and thus subject his troops to the

¹¹⁰ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1908*, Vol. I, 363-4.

¹¹¹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1912*, Vol. I, 266 and 271.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 267.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 271.

resulting injury that such organization invariably receives by shifting control from one lieutenant to another” to take a non-troop assignment. He suggested that an officer “who will seek details...should give way to one who is willing to take charge of the high office vacated by him and who will esteem it an honor and a pleasure to have such an important command.”¹¹⁴

The situation was so grave that Brigadier General Earl Thomas feared that the opening of opportunities to attend schools or to fill non-troop assignments was undercutting the army’s leadership ethos. He argued, “service with troops does not impress one as being honored and respected as it formerly was” and that the army could not “accomplish the best results when any form of service is viewed as more important or more creditable than the training and the leading of the troops.”¹¹⁵

Despite these concerns, the reformers were not going to backslide on their commitments to establish coherent education and staff systems. Secretary of War William Taft rebuked those in the army who grumbled over the number of officers on detailed service. In 1905 he noted, “The remark is sometimes heard in the Army that an officer’s time now is completely taken up in going to school. With due allowance for exaggeration in this statement, it is well for the Army and for the country if it be true.”¹¹⁶ While senior officers continued to lament the overall shortage of officers due to service away from troops, the tapering off of criticism of the educational and staff systems between 1908 and 1916 reflected the army’s general acceptance of the “cult of professionalism.” Even as events of the Mexican border exacerbated the shortage of officers in 1916, the editor of the *Infantry Journal* maintained that the army should not let “the present situation to divert our energies entirely to one phase of the military development of the country.” After noting how Germany “found it to her profit to continue her military schools in

¹¹⁴ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1905*, Vol. I, 446.

¹¹⁵ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1910*, Vol. III, 129.

¹¹⁶ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1905*, Vol. I, 17.

operation while engaged in the greatest war in history,” he pointed out that while there “might possibly be some advantage to the immediate training to the troops now on the border...it is fairly certain that such a course [the closing the army’s schools] would be an eventual loss.”¹¹⁷

Thus, as the U. S. Army entered World War I, its institutional culture had been overtaken by the “cult of professionalism.” This culture accepted the fact that professional education was the key to attaining tactical excellence and overcoming inexperience. It also accepted the premise that it was tolerable for junior leaders to be gone from their units for long periods of time to achieve this required education and that the frequent rotation of officers from positions of command was an unfortunate, but necessary, effect of this policy. This belief would later have a baleful influence on combat leadership in the AEF.

In conclusion, when the Regular Army entered World War I, its unwritten and off times contradictory expectations of the proper characteristics and department of junior officers guided its approach to the selection and training of wartime junior officers. The regulars expected the expanding officer corps to exhibit the same sense of gentility, paternalism, *noblesse oblige*, and professionalism that defined its approach to leadership in the two decades prior to the war. The regulars’ preference for West Point graduates and college education, their attitudes toward the larger American society, and a sense of professional superiority over citizen soldiers, negatively colored its attitudes and perceptions of the soldiers and officers who joined the ranks of the army

¹¹⁷ Editorial Staff, “Shortages of Officers on the Border” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (September-October 1916), 231-3. On 10 May 1916, the Chief of Staff of the Army, MG Hugh Scott, ordered the Staff College of Fort Leavenworth be closed in order to send the college’s students and faculty back to their regiments in order to support the Army’s punitive expedition in Mexico. Despite the editor’s concerns, the school did not reopen until after World War I. However, the editor’s concerns were later validated. It is clear that their experiences in France convinced Pershing and many of the Army’s other senior leaders that the wartime closing of the Leavenworth schools had been a grave mistake. As Col. Leroy Eltinge, the Assistant Commandant of the General Service Schools, argued after the reopening of the Leavenworth Staff College in 1919, “The policy of closing these Schools, adopted by the War Department in all national emergencies, is believed to be wrong...It seems improper to close it at just the time when it could perform the greatest service” (*Annual Report of the Commandant of the Army Service School, 1920* at <http://www-gsc.army.mil/carl/download/reports/rep1920.pdf>).

in 1917 and 1918. The Regular Army officer corps' "cult of professionalism" not only made it intolerant of what it saw as incompetence and a lack of professional zeal, ability, and efficiency, but also inculcated a reverence for professional schools that would later hinder its wartime efforts to build cohesive and effective small units. Ultimately, during World War I the Regular Army sometimes created its own systemic problems within its attempts to instruct its wartime officers in the "dark art and mystery of managing men."

Chapter 3 “Sergeant John McCafferty and Corp’ral Donahue”: NCO Leadership in the Regular Army 1900-1917

One of the enduring songs of the “Old Army” was *The Regular Army ‘O* (sometimes called *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay*). In the song the soldiers both praised and lamented the leadership of...

Sergeant John McCafferty and Corp’ral Donahue,
Who made us march and toe the mark,
In gallant Company Q,¹

As with officers, to understand the AEF’s approach to the leadership of its corporals and sergeants, we must first appreciate the pre-war Regular Army’s expectations for its NCOs; those roles, characteristics, skills and abilities that the army expected of “Sergeant John McCafferty and Corp’ral Donahues.” Unfortunately, the Regular Army paid much less attention to the education, selection, training, and development of its NCOs as it had lavished on its pre-war officers. Thus, while James Moss would state “the noncommissioned officers are the backbone of an army,” and declare that “experience has shown that the efficiency, discipline, and reputation of a command depend to a great extent on its noncommissioned officers,” those truisms were based more on tradition and serendipity rather than a concerted effort to professionalize the Regular Army’s NCO corps from 1900 to 1917.²

As an institution, the Regular Army had long understood the correlation between having a strong cadre of NCOs and the smooth running of its units. It expected the NCO corps to train new recruits, administer the routine details of army life, oversee the “good order and discipline” of its soldiers, and assist its officers in the command and direction of its soldiers in combat. As

¹ The song was written in 1879 by Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart for vaudeville. Despite, or perhaps because of, its ridicule of the numerous Irish soldiers that filled the ranks of the Regular Army, it was a popular soldier tune from the 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century.

² James Moss, *Noncommissioned Officers’ Manual* (Menasha, George Banta Publishing Co., 1917), 17.

with the officer corps, these expectations reached back to the very founding of the Republic. In his “Blue Book,” von Steuben noted of company first sergeants,

The soldier having acquired that degree of confidence of his officers as to be appointed first sergeant of the company should consider the importance of his office; that the discipline of the company, the conduct of the men, their exactness in obeying orders, and the regularity of their manners, will in a great measure depend on his vigilance. He should be intimately acquainted with the character of every soldier of the company, and should take great pains to impress upon their minds the indispensable necessity of their strictest obedience, as a foundation of order and regularity.³

For other sergeants and corporals, the Prussian drill master required,

It being on the non-commissioned officers that the discipline and order of the company in a great measure depend, they cannot be too circumspect in their behavior towards the men, by treating them with mildness, and at the same time obliging every one to do his duty. By avoiding too great familiarity with the men, they will not only gain their love and confidence, but be treated with a proper respect; whereas by a contrary conduct they forfeit all regard, and their authority becomes despised. Each sergeant and corporal will be in a particular manner answerable for the squad committed to their care.⁴

To a great extent, von Steuben expected NCOs to mirror the paternalistic leadership of their officers. In fact, since corporals and sergeants lived among their soldiers and were ultimately responsible for their day-to-day supervision, the army viewed NCOs as the first link in the army’s paternalistic system of leadership.

Company and regimental commanders generally expected their NCOs to identify and solve most of their soldier’s everyday problems or lapses in discipline before they were even aware that such issues existed. In 1916 one officer lectured an audience of NCOs that, “non-commissioned officers are valuable in their capacity as instructors, as disseminators of technical information, but they are doubly valuable as leaders, to whom the men look for moral, social, and intellectual inspiration.” He further noted, “No non-commissioned officer can hope to

³ Ibid., 141-2.

⁴ Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Baron von Steuben’s Revolutionary War Drill Manual* (New York: Dover Publications, 1985), 144-5.

measure up fully to the requirements of his office who is not something of a leader, and who has not learned how to gain the confidence and respect, and the regard of the men under him.”⁵ The way to gaining this confidence, respect, and regard was to look after the soldiers’ needs and to be firm, but fair, in their leadership. Given this outlook, it is not surprising that enlisted men in this period had to gain the permission of their first sergeants before even speaking to their company commanders.⁶

Against this backdrop of traditional paternalism there also existed emerging concepts of NCO leadership which drew on the management ideas of the contemporary industrial society. In 1907, the War Department published *The Army as a Life Occupation for Enlisted Men*, a report on enlisted life in the Regular Army that was intended to bolster the army’s efforts to gain pay raises for its NCOs. Breaking with the traditional paternalistic view that NCOs served as the “mothers” of their company families, one officer noted in the report, “The noncommissioned officers are men who in civil life would be skilled workmen, foremen, chief clerks, and subordinate officials.” He went on to argue that,

These [NCOs] are as important to the Army as foreman to factories; as section bosses to railroads; as skilled workmen and subordinate officials are to every commercial enterprise; or as petty and warrant officers are to the Navy. The same knowledge of their trade, the same abilities, the same qualities of mind, and the same force of character are as essential in one case as in the others. Qualified leaders, successful drivers of men are everywhere in demand. Men who can make other men work have a recognized value above their fellows in the industrial world.⁷

Even James Moss, a leading proponent of the patriarchal ethos noted that in small units, “the Captain is the proprietor of the company and the First Sergeant is the foreman.”⁸ The leading

⁵ CPT Frank Tebbetts, “Leadership,” *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXVII, No. 111 (July 1916), 19.

⁶ Don Rickey, *Forty Miles and Day on Beans and Hay* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 58.

⁷ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. 1, 82-3. Secretary of War Howard Taft believed that *The Army as a Life Occupation for Enlisted Men* was so important that he included it verbatim into his annual report to Congress.

military reformer, General J. Franklin Bell, went so far as to inform one audience of junior officers,

Large business enterprises...learned long ago [that] subordinates not gifted with intelligence, interest, and enterprise are promptly gotten rid of... Though differing in many important respects, there is a certain parallelism between the management of armies and the management of large business enterprises. The management of an army, and each of its units, should, as far as practicable, resemble that of any large, highly organized business undertaking. We need to study common sense business methods, which have demonstrated their soundness beyond cavil.⁹

Although the traditional view of the NCO as a paternalistic leader continued to dominate the Regular Army's expectations of its sergeants, it is interesting to note how deep the larger industrial society's notions of management had begun to creep into the military's culture of leadership.

Whether the NCO was a paternalistic leader or an industrial foreman and "driver of men," the army's officers still expected them to assist the commander in the operation of the company. For example, by the turn of the twentieth century, the practice of allowing company NCOs to oversee the routine operation of the unit while in garrison was well established. Historian Don Rickey went as far as to note that in the late nineteenth century, "The first sergeant actually ran the company, and was expected to do so by the company officers. Many privates had little contact with their officers, beyond formal exchanges of military courtesies."¹⁰ This reality was also satirized in the song "*The Regular Army 'O*." In one verse, the soldier observes,

The best of all the officers is Second Lieutenant McDuff;
Of smoking cigarettes and sleep he never gets enough.

⁸ Moss, *Noncommissioned Officer's Manual*, 40.

⁹ Bell, "Reflections and Suggestions," 5-6.

¹⁰ Rickey, 58-9. In the *Officer's Manual*, Moss states that this practice was not universal, but that it tended to be customary in most companies. James A. Moss, *Officer's Manual* (Menasha: George Banta Publishing Co, 1917), 189.

Says the Captain, "All we want of you is to go to Reveille,
And we'll let the first sergeant run the company."

Without a doubt, the company first sergeant was the lynchpin that tied together a company's officers and enlisted men.

It is interesting to note that the Regular Army's expectations of the "top sergeant" had changed very little from those expressed by von Steuben in 1778. For example, in Captain M. B. Stewart's 1903 *Handbook for Noncommissioned Officers*, he notes that the first sergeant was "selected by the company commander for his excellence of character, capacity to command the respect and obedience of the enlisted men, intelligence, efficiency, and military bearing." He maintained that the first sergeant's main role was to "assist the company commander and commissioned officers of the company in the discipline, instruction, and administration of the company."¹¹ In his *Noncommissioned Officer's Manual*, James Moss informed burgeoning NCOs that,

His position is, indeed, one of importance and responsibility. Through his speech, manners and action he must leave no doubt in the minds of each and every member of the company, noncommissioned officers and privates, that next to the commissioned officers he is the head of the company and that during the absence of all officers he is the company commander's personal representative in the company and must be obeyed and respected accordingly.¹²

Due to their importance within their companies, first sergeants tended to be long service NCOs with sound records of performance and discipline, and generally had enough education to handle the paperwork and other administrative requirements of their units. By and large, the first sergeants rose to their positions through time and merit. Private Sam Woodfill, who later gained both a commission and a Medal of Honor in the Great War, described his first sergeant as a "rattlin' good soldier." He went on to note, "The top kick was one of the gang of old-timers in

¹¹ CPT E. M. Stewart, *Handbook for Noncommissioned Officers of Infantry* (Kansas City, Mo: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1903), 65.

¹² Moss, *Noncommissioned Officer's Manual*, 40.

our company. What those fellows didn't know about soldiering, neither did nobody else."¹³

Unfortunately, as with much of the regular's approach to its NCOs, the selection and development of pre-World War I first sergeants was based around a peacetime system that could not be replicated during any major expansion of the army.

Despite the recognized importance of NCOs to the "good order and discipline" of its companies, from 1865 through 1916 the Regular Army had no formalized method for selecting NCOs for its infantry and cavalry units. As historian Earnest Fisher noted, all NCOs within the company were "commander's men" who were selected by, and served at the pleasure of, their company commanders.¹⁴ This system of the company commander "owning" their NCOs was enshrined in Article XXX of Army Regulations. The article stated, "Company noncommissioned officers are appointed by the regimental commander, or temporally appointed by battalion commanders...on the recommendation of their company commanders."¹⁵ The goal of these regulations was to build harmonious units where company commanders selected NCOs who would best complement the captains' leadership style and agenda. As Captain William Carpenter noted, "Naturally the personality of the captain enters largely into the selection [of NCOs], and some give greater weight to one qualification than do others. Generally the characteristics of the company commander are reflected very truly by his noncommissioned officers, and his own peculiarities and efficiency are indicated by the quality of these men."¹⁶

Although NCOs were given their warrants from the regimental commanders, their company commanders still managed to exercise a great deal of control over their NCOs by their

¹³ Lowell Thomas, *Woodfill of the Regulars* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1929), 38.

¹⁴ Ernest Fisher, Jr., *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Non Commissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 178.

¹⁵ *The Regulations for the United States Army 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917*, 71.

¹⁶ MAJ Charles E. Kilbourne, ed. *The Collier National Service Library*, Vol. 4, *Rudiments of Drill- Mobile Army Troops*, by CPT William T. Carpenter (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1917), 20.

power to demote those corporals and sergeants that failed to live up to their expectations. Article XXX directed that “A noncommissioned officer may be reduced to the ranks by sentence of courts martial, or, on the recommendation of the company commander, by the order of the commander having final authority to appoint such noncommissioned officer.”¹⁷ In other words, those who the company commander promoted, he could just as quickly demote. C. C. Lyon, a journalist who went through basic training in 1916 to write a story on army life for his newspaper, noted the “here today gone tomorrow” reality of being a “commander’s man” after one old soldier remarked, “I’ve been a sergeant several times and a first sergeant once, but I didn’t behave myself and here I am back with the privates.”¹⁸

Some officers recognized the drawbacks to this system. In 1908 the Commander of the Department of the Columbia remarked in his report to the Secretary of War,

There now exists no system of governing these promotions. There are restrictions, of course, such as a private cannot be made a first sergeant, etc., but, strange to note, a private can be made a sergeant-major by the stroke of a pen. There is no carefully thought out system of promotion for noncommissioned officers. In one regiment it is done one way, in the next another, and even in the same regiment there may be a dozen ways of appointing and promoting noncommissioned officers, depending on the ideas of individual company commanders. In the interest of fairness and discipline, and to increase the efficiency of the army, a uniform system of promotion should be clearly defined by the War Department.¹⁹

Notwithstanding these identified problems, this ad hoc and company commander centric, system continued to govern the selection and promotion of NCOs during World War I.

Despite their official oversight of NCO promotion, few regimental commanders seemed willing to encroach on what the regulars had come to view as a traditional prerogative of their

¹⁷ Ibid., 72.

¹⁸ C.C. Lyon, *Experience of a Recruit in the United States Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 15. Lyons was a writer for the Columbus, Ohio newspaper the *Columbus Citizen*. He attended basic training at Columbus Barracks in March and April 1916. The War Department was so impressed with the up-beat tone of his articles that it decided to print them as a recruiting pamphlet.

¹⁹ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1908*, Vol. III, 178.

company commanders. Although Army Regulations warned that “Noncommissioned officers will be carefully selected and instructed, and always supported by company commanders in the proper performance of their duties,” there were no further guidelines for company-grade officers to use in determining who among their soldiers would make the best corporals and sergeants.²⁰ In the pre-Spanish American War regulars, this lack of formal guidance in selecting NCOs was not a great hindrance. Company commanders were usually mature veterans with a large degree of experience and command time within their units. This allowed the long-service captains to gain a deeper appreciation for the abilities of their soldiers and to develop a discerning eye for nascent leadership talent in their pool of potential NCOs.

It should also be noted that in selecting his cadre of sergeants and corporals, the company commanders of this period could also draw upon the advice of his existing body of long-service NCOs. C. C. Lyon quoted an officer as remarking, “If a young fellow hasn’t the stuff in him to justify us in promoting him to the noncommissioned ranks, he’d better quit the Army after his first enlistment.” Lyon observed,

It doesn’t take the commanders long to spot the “comers.” Out of the 60 who enlisted the day I myself went into the Army, I thought I could pick at least 10 who would be corporals before their enlistments expired. They were the chaps who showed the most aptitude in drill, appeared the neatest and trimmest in uniform, and put “punch” into everything they did, whether in the barracks, on the drill grounds, or at play.²¹

Army Regulations also aided commanders in selecting NCOs by allowing them to “test the capacity of privates for the duties of noncommissioned officers” by appointing select enlisted men to the position of “lance corporal.” While holding this position, the private-turned-lance corporal would be “obeyed and respected as corporals” and be evaluated by his officers and

²⁰ *The Regulations for the United States Army 1913, Corrected to April 15, 1917.*, 71.

²¹ Lyon, 15.

sergeants in their ability to lead soldiers.²² James Moss admitted that this system deliberately set out to throw the newly-minted NCO “into deep water” to find out if they would “sink or...swim,” but believed that it was still the best way to determine if the soldier would “make good” as an enlisted leader.²³

This view seems to have been quite common among officers. In a 1913 article in the *Cavalry Journal*, First Lieutenant William Edwards noted, “There is no military training so good as personal responsibility. The test of a non-commissioned officer should be to place him in command of a squad. If he cannot command a squad, he is unfit to wear chevrons.”²⁴ Edwards went on to declare,

Very often a man is entirely underestimated until he is tested by putting him in authority. Opportunities of this sort tend to bring out what there is in a non-commissioned officer, especially his ability to command men. No squad can possibly be made proficient unless the head of it first sets the example by being himself proficient, and therefore every non-commissioned officer should be chosen with the idea constantly in mind of his fitness for filling that office. If he shows himself unfit, a recommendation to have him relieved should not be delayed.²⁵

Not all officers were content with this “trial by doing” model of identifying potential NCOs. In 1908 Major William Burnham recommended that the army establish a three-year course of instruction for all NCOs and that “appointment to the grade of corporal be made after a written competitive examination by a board of officers composed of the battalion commander, the company commander, and one other officer.”²⁶ Burnham also suggested the same procedure govern the promotions of corporals to sergeants. Unfortunately, despite the support of the

²² Kilbourne, ed. *The Collier National Service Library*, Vol. 4, *Rudiments of Drill- Mobile Army Troops*, 71.

²³ Moss, *Noncommissioned Officer's Manual*, 18.

²⁴ 1LT William Edwards, “The Squad Leader and His Squad,” *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (January 1913), 776.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 778.

²⁶ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1909*, Vol. III, 143.

commander of the Department of the Columbia, the War Department failed to implement Burnham's recommendations prior to World War I. In a peacetime army with the time and command experience to conduct the leadership experiment of "trial by doing," the system seemed to have identified and promoted the right privates to the ranks of NCOs. However, as will later be seen, it was not a system that was well suited to wartime conditions requiring a rapid expansion of the army and its NCO corps.

As there was no set system of promotion boards, examinations, or NCO academies for identifying and developing promising privates for promotion to NCO, the pre-World War I regulars fell back on unofficial "rules of thumb" for selecting its sergeants. Captain William Carpenter warned new officers, "One of the most important duties of a company commander is the selection of his noncommissioned officers." He went on to note, "In selecting privates for promotion many things must be considered, such as character, past service and conduct, training, ability, probable efficiency, age, personality, ect." After giving these rather nebulous criteria, Carpenter sheepishly admitted that when it came to selecting NCOs, "there is no fixed standard, and indeed a man would have to be a perfect soldier to meet all the desirable qualifications."²⁷

Carpenter was not alone in giving officers sweeping and general advice for selecting privates for promotion. The perennial manual writer James Moss counseled officers that when selecting NCOs they should pick, "men possessing such soldierly qualities as a high sense of duty, cheerful obedience to orders, force of character, honesty, sobriety, and steadiness, together with an intelligent knowledge of drills, regulations, and orders."²⁸ In his *Handbook for Noncommissioned Officers of Infantry*, Captain Stewart stated, "The noncommissioned officer is selected from the enlisted men of the company for his character, intelligence, efficiency, and

²⁷ Carpenter, *Rudiments of Drill- Mobile Army Troops*, 20.

²⁸ Moss, *Officer's Manual*, 190.

soldierly bearing to assist the commissioned officers in the instruction, discipline, and care of the other enlisted men.”²⁹ Carpenter, Moss, and Stewart’s standards of behavior and expertise for potential NCOs were certainly not off the mark, but again, they all presuppose that the company commander would have the time, experience, and advice from senior officers and NCOs to aid him in settling this weighty matter.

Moss and other military writers were somewhat more effective in describing the army’s expectations of its NCOs once they attained the august rank of corporal and sergeant. As was the case with so many leadership subjects between 1890 and 1916, these authors filled a void that the War Department itself had failed to address or codify. For example, the *Field Service Regulation* (Hereafter *FSR*), the army’s only definitive prewar doctrinal source, only mentions the duty of NCOs three times within its pages: in preventing straggling during marches, their commanding of combat trains when no officers are available, and when serving as the senior member of a train car during rail movement.³⁰

In his *Noncommissioned Officer’s Manual*, Moss maintained that the role of the company NCO was to correct errors, prevent the commission of offenses, enforce quiet and order in quarters, suppress disorderly conduct, ensure the respect and obedience of his soldiers to officers and fellow NCOs, and to “assist company commanders in carrying out orders.”³¹ He noted that in order to “make good” on these expectations, a young NCO must “make himself useful to his superiors and he must command the respect and inspire the confidence of his comrades.”³² To accomplish this Moss argued that the NCO must exhibit efficiency, initiative, promptness, obedience, loyalty, punctuality, and perseverance. He defined efficiency as the NCO’s ability to

²⁹ Stewart, 7.

³⁰ *Field Service Regulations, with Corrections to May 21, 1913* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 99, 151, and 156.

³¹ Moss, *Noncommissioned Officer’s Manual*, 34-5.

³² *Ibid.*, 18.

lead due to his recognized superior tactical and technical skills and abilities. Moss viewed this as the cornerstone of all NCO leadership, and noted that “no man... who is ignorant (to) what he is supposed to know, can command respect or inspire confidence. In any walk of life such a man is not taken seriously. He is either looked upon with pity, ridicule or contempt. People call him a ‘boob,’ a ‘mutt’ (‘mutton head’)”³³ To place this within Darryl Henderson’s leadership model, Moss expected his NCOs to exert “expert power” where the sergeant maintained their position in the unit based on “having superior knowledge and ability important to the soldier and his unit” that would thus improve the group’s effectiveness or survival in combat.³⁴

An examination of Moss’ definitions of initiative and obedience reveals the Regular Army’s somewhat ambiguous expectations of its NCOs. Moss defined initiative as doing things without being told to, and obedience as obeying “promptly and fully all orders and instructions received from superiors.”³⁵ In these definitions, Moss seems to wrestle with the acceptable limits of NCO leadership. To Moss, initiative rested upon the NCO understanding the wishes of his superiors and acting within those limits without constant supervision. In explaining obedience, Moss warned, “Whether or not you like the order is neither here nor there. Your business as a soldier...is to obey all orders, and to do so willingly, faithfully and promptly, *without excuses or explanations* (original emphasis).”³⁶ He went on to scold, “Remember that nine times out of ten the superior giving the order knows more about the matter than you do and is probably in possession of information that you know nothing about. If a superior makes a mistake in giving an order, it is his lookout, not yours.”³⁷ Moss makes clear that while the NCO

³³ Ibid., 19.

³⁴ William D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 114.

³⁵ Moss, *Noncommissioned Officer’s Manual*, 20.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

was a critical member of the unit, his officers expected him to be a “doer” rather than a “thinker.” This attitude certainly rankled some NCOs. Color Sergeant R. W. Lewis, for example, despondently noted, “The thought that the enlisted man has no need of ambition, energy, and initiative is sad to say, a very prevalent one, though none the less erroneous. Indeed, it is so prevalent that the mere fact alone has almost convinced the average enlisted man that these qualities are undesirable in a soldier.”³⁸

If Lewis was correct, and Moss’ views of the duties and expectations of NCOs were reflective of the attitudes of his peers, then the regular officers of the period believed that all NCO actions were to be strictly proscribed and delineated. Although the officer corps certainly understood the importance of having a strong and reliable cadre of NCOs, their attitudes and actions were thus often at odds with achieving this goal. As will be seen in the next chapter, the officer corps efforts to set strict parameters on the NCOs’ scope of action was increasingly at odds with the tactical realities emerging on the modern battlefield.

The ambivalent attitude of officers toward the NCO corps was also reflected in their lukewarm support of efforts to improve the professional education and development of their corporals and sergeants. While there was a great proliferation of officer schools between 1885 and 1910, with the exception of the signal corps, artillery, coast artillery, and other of the more technically oriented branches, the “cult of professionalism” never truly reached the bulk of the army’s NCOs serving in the infantry and cavalry. This lapse in professional education did not result from a failure to recognize the problem. In September 1888, Major General George Crook, the commander of the Department of the Missouri, wrote to the Secretary of War, “While

³⁸ Color SGT R. W. Lewis, “The Soldier Verses Energy, Ambition, and Initiative,” *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXV, No. 4 (October 1914), 254. Unfortunately, SGT Lewis was one of the very few NCOs who tried to take part in the professional discourse of the era by writing essays for publication in professional military journals.

we have many good non-commissioned officers in the service, it is incontestable that the average intelligence and efficiency is very far below what it should be.” Crook remarked,

Non-commissioned officers, properly to perform the duties of their positions, require, and should receive, a special education...I recommend that a school for non-commissioned officers of infantry and cavalry be established at Fort Leavenworth, on a plan similar to that now in operation at Fort Monroe for the benefit of the artillery.³⁹

Despite Crook’s exhortations, and the constant drumbeat for reform that echoed in the pages of professional military journals and the *War Department Annual Reports*, the Regular Army took only small and halting steps toward educating the corporals and sergeants of its combat units. In fact, in 1910, 22 years after Crook’s recommendations, another Commander of the Department of the Missouri wrote, “In order to produce greater uniformity [in training and doctrine], it is believed that it would be in the interest of the service for the War Department to inaugurate a prescribed course of instruction for noncommissioned officers similar to that now prescribed for officers.”⁴⁰

As tensions rose between the United States and Germany the editors of the *Infantry Journal* made one last plea for the establishment of a system for education NCOs. They noted presciently that “Noncommissioned officers cannot be called into existence by legislation alone,” and that in time of war, “Noncommissioned officers will be called for in large numbers to fill positions imposing considerable responsibility and independence of action.” The officer argued that a central NCO school would not only allow the army to meet this challenge, but also would, “raise the level of respect which the noncommissioned officer enjoy in the eyes of the privates under his direction, much as is now the case in the German army in which in time of peace

³⁹ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1888*, Vol. 1, 142-3.

⁴⁰ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1910*, Vol. III, 76.

noncommissioned officers are required to receive a course of instruction in a special school preliminary to appointment.”⁴¹

Following the Philippine Insurrection, the army had good reasons for increasing their focus on the education and development of its NCO corps. As with its officers, the expansion of the army between 1898 and 1903 had forced the Regular Army to greatly enlarge its cadre of NCOs. Few of these “jumped-up” noncoms had any experience in either soldiering or leadership. In the 1907 War Department study, *The Army as a Life Occupation for Enlisted Men*, Captain Shelton noted that “Previous to 1898...All the higher noncommissioned officers and many of the lower were men of long service. The character of the personnel of the Army was perhaps the highest ever reached.” He lamented that “with the passing of the old noncommissioned officer,” and his replacement by “men in their first enlistment,” the army was sliding toward the “last stage of demoralization.”⁴²

Since the NCOs had served as the primary trainers of new soldiers and were largely responsible for the routine running of the army’s small units, the expansion of the NCO corps by the rapid promotion of relatively green privates exacerbated other systemic problems within the institutional army. As Shelton pointed out, “Today the average noncommissioned officer of line organizations is as ignorant of his duties as the recruit from which he is drawn, and lacks both the force of character necessary for discipline and the abilities essential for efficiency.”⁴³ Just at the time that the army’s companies were being buffeted by a general shortage of officers, the junior and inexperienced officers that remained were being forced to perform many of the duties and responsibilities that had previously been done by experienced NCOs. As Captain S. E.

⁴¹ Editorial Department, “A School for Noncommissioned Officers,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 8 (April 1916), 955.

⁴² Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. 1, 79. Shelton’s point on the radical change within the NCO corps is also noted in Fisher, 150-152.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 80.

Kilbourne observed that units now “require constant supervision [by] its officers” and such close management “was not [a] marked characteristic of the army officer in the old days.”⁴⁴ Kilbourne and Shelton were only two of many officer voices that longed for the stability of “the old army,” and their critique of the post-Philippine War NCO corps was perhaps the source of some of the officers’ ambivalence toward their sergeants and corporals. As officers assumed some of the duties of their NCOs, it also set a trend of micromanagement and officer-centered leadership that would later haunt the AEF.

The concern of the regular officers of the perceived deterioration of the NCO corps was reflected in the heated debate within their ranks over a 1911 Congressional bill that would raise the enlistment term from three to five years. Much of this internal debate revolved around the effects that the legislation would have on the army’s ability to repair its battered NCO corps. For example, Captains Kirby Walker and William Littebrandt argued that the longer term of enlistment would strengthen the NCO corps by giving potential sergeants more practical experience before pinning on their chevrons. They maintained that the five year enlistment would build up the NCO corps by allowing commanders more time to assess and develop promising privates prior to their promotion. To Littebrandt, the need for change was vital to the overall health of the institution. He noted,

While in the Eleventh Cavalry in Cuba there was not a man available and suitable for a first sergeant, and the same condition occurred in my present troop. I offered to make any man who would be recommended to me by his Captain from any organization in the post my first sergeant- [but] none in the troop [were] suitable. The period of enlistment is too short to instruct or develop men for the positions of noncommissioned officers. It has been several years since a condition existed where it was necessary for a man of any parts at all to serve longer than one year to be a sergeant.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Department of War, *Three Year Enlistment for the Army* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

In a backhand swipe at the existing NCO corps, one supporter of the three year enlistment, Major Carl Reichmann, argued, “Three years will not make a man a professional soldier, so disassociated from and disqualified for civil life as to make his reincorporation hard for himself and for the civil body.” The officer went on to remark, “At time of enlistment most men are in that period when the main foundations of their life’s career is laid. Five years will make a man a professional soldier; he becomes set in military thought and habit, in the vices and tendencies of the professional soldier.”⁴⁶

Littebrandt and Reichmann’s statements are revealing. They reflected both the ambiguous perceptions that officers had of their NCOs, and also the dire problems that the army faced in selecting and retaining quality enlisted leaders in the aftermath of its expansion. Unfortunately, these tensions were not resolved prior to 1917. Even as the nation entered World War I, James Moss still bemoaned the fact that in the post-Philippine War regulars, “The average noncommissioned officer does not full realize the importance and responsibility of his position.”⁴⁷

It is interesting to examine why, in the face of such glaring need for the education of it enlisted leaders, the army failed to develop a systematic method for professionally developing the NCO corps. Ironically, the War Department had taken a number of steps to increase the professional education of its NCOs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As early as September 1866, the War Department had compelled local commanders to establish post schools to provide all soldiers with an opportunity to receive a basic grade school education in reading, writing, and mathematics.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷ Moss, *Noncommissioned Officer Manual*, 1.

⁴⁸ Jack Foner, *The United States Soldier Between Two Wars* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), 25.

The General Order 125 of 1900 demanded that “Careful attention will be given to the instruction and practical training of noncommissioned officers.”⁴⁹ Four years later, General Order 155 codified the existing guidance for NCO education by requiring division commanders to establish, “schools for noncommissioned officers in each battalion” where the unit’s officers were to instruct the NCOs in the school of the battalion, estimation of distance and intervals, basic tactics, sketching, and reconnaissance.⁵⁰ The NCOs were even supposed to be given “certificates of proficiency” from their company commanders to document their educational progress.⁵¹ Despite these official mandates, local commanders frequently violated both the letter and the spirit of the orders.

One of the greatest reasons for these lapses was the defused and localized nature of command during the period. The General Orders made clear that the, “Responsibility for the military instruction of company noncommissioned officers rests with the company commanders, battalion and higher commanders such supervision as may be necessary.”⁵² Thus, part of the problem was the War Department’s failure to delineate clearly the command responsibility for NCO education. How could the War Department demand that regiments establish central battalion-level NCO schools while also holding the company commanders ultimately responsible for their overall “military instruction?”

As was the case in NCO selection and promotion, senior leaders often abrogated their oversight of NCO training and allowed their company commanders to educate their NCOs as they saw fit. In 1902, the commander of the Department of the Missouri went so far as to “wash

⁴⁹ Adjutant General’s Office, *General Order No. 125*, September, 29, 1900.

⁵⁰ Adjutant General’s Office, *General Order No. 115*, June 27, 1904.

⁵¹ Captain Ira Reeves, *Military Education in the United States* (Burlington: Free Press Printing Company, 1914), 317.

⁵² For example, see, Adjutant General’s Office, *General Order No. 70*, April 20, 1910. Ira Reeves reinforced this point in his 1914 study, *Military Education in the United States*, 316.

his hands” of the whole process of enlisted education by discounting the utility of the post schools. In his report to the Secretary of War he argued, “I recommend their discontinuance and the substitution of more thorough theoretical military education of the soldier under the immediate supervision of his company commander.”⁵³ As could be expected, this abrogation of their responsibility to supervise the military education of enlisted subordinates by senior leaders had a negative effect on the professional development of the army’s NCO corps. Although he favored leaving the instruction of NCOs in the hands of their company commanders, in 1906 the Inspector General reported that,

The inspections indicated that the present orders covering the schools for noncommissioned officers are far from satisfactory. Hardly any two posts were found to have the same system or course of instruction, and scarcely any two company commanders at the same post entirely agreed to the limits of the instruction to be given. At one post inspected the instruction covered three subjects, while at another it covered eleven. At nearly every station theoretical and practical work were mixed to such an extent that it is evident that more definite orders should be issued, so that the course of instruction may be defined and limited...It is believed that such provisions would stimulate in the noncommissioned officers an interest similar to that now figuring so favorably among the student officers and do away with the present more or less chaotic and hopeless condition.⁵⁴

Despite these recommendations, the War Department did little to truly improve the scope or quality of NCO education.

Time and time again from 1904 to 1916 the army’s division and department commanders provided a steady string of excuses for the lackluster results of their NCO schools. For example, in 1904 the commander of the Department of the Gulf reported that “the duties of the men interfere too much with their regular attendance” at school, but where “the post schools have

⁵³ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1902*, Vol. III, 81.

⁵⁴ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1906*, Vol. III, 169.

been vigorously prosecuted the results have been very satisfactory.”⁵⁵ Others pointed to the lack of competent teachers, the shortage of company officers, the small size of garrisons, and the frequent movement of units as the reasons for the failure of their NCO development programs.⁵⁶ Some commanders even objected to holding post schools for the general education of their enlisted soldiers. The commander of the Department of Texas argued,

No man should be enlisted who cannot read and write understandingly. Instruction should be of a military character and not of schoolboy methods. These schools do not justify the time and expense so applied. Compulsory attendance is a source of discontent, and in some cases, full duty soldiers may feel their military duties of fatigue, etc. are increased so others may attend school.⁵⁷

Another general pointed out, “These schools instruct less than 5 percent of the enlisted men and are practically of no advantage except to a few men desiring mental advancement. The results obtained are disproportionately small to the time and labor involved.”⁵⁸

In the face of such high ranking foot-dragging and log-rolling, it is no surprise that the army’s NCO schools languished. Even when commanders held the NCO schools the results were far from promising. Since junior officers were generally saddled with the responsibility to teach the NCOs within their companies or in post schools, the problems of the officer corps reverberated down through the ranks.

As was noted in Chapter II, the shortage of experienced company-grade officers in infantry and cavalry companies and troops often meant that the instruction of their NCOs was rather lackluster and basic. A number of officers recognized this problem. For example, Lieutenant William Parker chided his fellow officers,

⁵⁵ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1904*, Vol. III, 30.

⁵⁶ See *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. III, 146; *Annual Reports of the War Annual Reports of the War Department for 1904*, Vol. III Department for 1908, Vol. III, 140; *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1914*, Vol. III, 21.

⁵⁷ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1905*, Vol. III, 145.

⁵⁸ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. III, 66.

We have all seen non-commissioned officers catechized week in and week out in one or two drill books or manuals, covering over and over again the most elementary matters with which they are, or should be quite familiar before being warranted. This does more harm than good for it gives them the impression that the instruction is only a matter of form to fill in the report on drills and instruction; it fails to excite their interest, which should be done by every possible means.⁵⁹

In 1916 another officer wrote in a similar vein, “Their instruction is very frequently rather desultory in character and tends to run into the rut of catechismal rote.”⁶⁰ The commander of the Northern Division deplored what he viewed as “a tendency to over-education by books” in his post schools and recommended that the instruction should be changed to “stimulate the practical education of the Army by suitable practice marches, exercises, tactical problems, etc.”⁶¹ Thus, even the halting steps that the Regular Army took towards educating its NCOs between 1900 and 1916 were all too often undercut by systemic problems within the institution, by the idiosyncratic nature of its command structures, and by the ambivalent attitudes of its officers toward the NCO corps.

It is somewhat ironic that the commander of the Northern Division criticized the “overeducation by books” of his NCOs. The War Department issued no guides or manuals to aid in the education or professional development of its NCOs. The closest that the War Department came to publishing a work to be used to instruct any of its enlisted soldiers was the *Soldier's Handbook*. Unfortunately from the time of their first issue in 1900 through World War I, the content of the *Soldier's Handbooks* was focused merely on training the raw recruit in the fundamentals of service. The 1913 edition of the *Soldier's Handbook*, for example, covered only extracts from army regulations and the articles of war, guard duty, the care of arms, clothing, and

⁵⁹ LT William Parker, “The Company Officer and His Work,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (July-August 1912), 73.

⁶⁰ “A School for Noncommissioned Officers,” 955.

⁶¹ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. III, 66.

equipment, and the basics of hygiene, first aid, and the Morse code.⁶² Nowhere in any of these manuals did the army address the official duties, expectations, or the technical skills required of an NCO. Although manual writers such as Moss and Stewart attempted to fill this void in texts suitable for the education of NCOs, the lack of official publications further hindered the smooth operation of post NCO schools while also adding to the idiosyncratic nature of the unit-level instruction of corporals and sergeants.

Although the Regular Army compiled a rather poor record for training and educating its NCOs, some army reformers did try to increase the professionalism and quality of the NCO corps by pushing Congress to increase the pay and status of its sergeants. As early as 1889 William Burnham wrote in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution* that “in our service one of the main causes which is detrimental to the early discipline of the men is the fact that the line between the private and non-commissioned officer is not sufficiently marked.”⁶³ As Burnham was well aware, in pay, mess arrangement, billeting, and the conditions of service, there were few tangible differences between the lower enlisted men and their NCOs.

This lack of differentiation between the ranks undermined the NCOs authority and gave truth to the old army adage that “familiarity breeds contempt.” This problem was further exacerbated by the army’s expansion. In 1905 the commander of the Department of Mindanao reported to Secretary of War Taft that,

There should be a very marked distinction between the pay of noncommissioned officers ...than that of the private, and even the corporal, as an incentive for the later to strive for promotion. At present there is not sufficient difference in pay of the higher noncommissioned officer and the other enlisted men to emphasize the importance of the position of these noncommissioned officers, and the salary paid noncommissioned officers of this grade is in no way

⁶² Department of War, *Soldier’s Hand Book, Revised 1913* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1913).

⁶³ 1LT William Burnham, “Military Training of the Regular Army of the United States,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution*, Vol. X (1889), 616.

commensurate with the duties which they are called upon to perform and the responsibilities which they must thereby assume.⁶⁴

As this officer realized, the only way for the regulars to rebuild a corps of experienced and reliable NCOs was to invest in those things, such as pay and separate billeting, that would induce talented and reliable men to make service as an NCO a promising career opportunity.

In 1907 the Regular Army began to press the Congress for a substantial increase in the pay of sergeants and corporals. In the War Department report, *The Army as a Life Occupation for Enlisted Men*, the General Staff pointed out that the army had not been given a substantial pay raise since 1870. In fact, a private in the first two years of his enlistment actually made three dollars less per month than that of a private during the last two years of the Civil War.⁶⁵

While seeking an across the board pay raise, the army particularly targeted NCOs for a greater financial reward. Captain Shelton argued that while love of the service and a desire for adventure motivated some soldiers to reenlist, the primary inducement was self-interest and “a desire to improve [their] condition.”⁶⁶ He went on to note that the lack of a meaningful increase in pay when the private was raised to sergeant was a disincentive to promotion. For example, a private with six to ten years in service was paid \$19 a month, while a corporal and sergeant with the same years of service made only \$21 and \$24 dollars respectively. During the same period, a first sergeant or battalion sergeant major (there was no differentiation in pay between the two positions) made only \$32 a month with 16 to 20 years of service, and only a dollar more a month upon reaching 21 through 25 years of service.⁶⁷ Ultimately, Shelton maintained,

It is plain that this reward is not sufficient to tempt men to remain in the service, else vacancies could not so frequently occur. The capable man is not willing to assume the additional responsibilities incident to

⁶⁴ *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1905*, Vol. III, 309.

⁶⁵ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1907*, Vol. 1, 68.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

noncommissioned rank for the insignificant increases in pay. There is nothing beyond pay. He has neither greater dignity nor more privileges. He is still a common soldier, no different from the men from whom he is chosen, and commanding no more respect...It is this self-respect and this pride that are now so sadly lacking; and that make the noncommissioned grade one whose responsibilities many men are glad to avoid.⁶⁸

In making his argument, Shelton examined the pay and conditions of service in both the U.S. Navy and in the armies of Britain and Germany. In all cases, he found that the respect, privileges and pay associated with promotion to NCO were markedly better than those of the U.S. Army.⁶⁹

Although Congress bowed to the army's desires by increasing enlisted pay in 1908 and 1916, the army itself did little to improve the overall status and privileges of the NCO corps. Junior NCOs continued to live and work largely under the same conditions as their privates; thus undermining the degree of detachment required of leadership. Since the army had failed to give its infantry and cavalry NCOs the professional education and training that would give them the expert knowledge needed to buttress their standing among their subordinates, NCOs could only lead by the force of their personalities or will.

It is interesting to note that the post NCO schools that did operate, were to instruct both NCOs and "select privates." In 1910 one general begged the Army Chief of Staff again that "a greater distinction be made between noncommissioned officers and privates generally throughout the service." He maintained that, "This will undoubtedly aid discipline and render warrants [of promotion] more desirable. This may be effected by providing separate messing and more privacy in quarters. Future construction of barracks should have this object in view."⁷⁰ Despite the general's exhortations, the Regular Army took no further steps, other than advocating pay

⁶⁸ Ibid., 99-100.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 72-6 and 84-6.

⁷⁰ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1910*, Vol. III, 173-4.

increases, to bolster the status of its NCOs prior to World War I. This failure would later increase the army's difficulty in raising and sustaining an effective wartime NCO corps.

One of the greatest ironies of the pre-Great War Regular Army, was that while it had somewhat lost confidence in the efficiency and professionalism of its NCO corps, many officers viewed it as a potential source for commissioning during a national emergency. One of the reasons that some officers pushed for a three year over a five year enlistment was the view that the service would be able to draw upon the larger pool of qualified men who wanted to "test the waters" of military service without the long term loss of personal freedom and time. The best soldiers in this pool could be promoted to sergeant and then be earmarked for commissioning as reserve officers. Thus, as Lieutenant Robert Danford pointed out,

Noncommissioned officers, being selected from relatively a larger number and a better class of men, would possess far greater ability and intelligence than do our present-day sergeants and corporals. The provisions for their reenlistment and the training they would then receive would or should fit them in most cases to hold commission in event of war.⁷¹

The regulars assumed that in a time of war the army would undergo a great and rapid expansion, and that the number of regular, National Guard, and reserve officers would be insufficient to lead the enlarged force. In 1914, the military reformer Major General William H. Carter argued, "What we need badly for such emergencies as arose during the Civil War and the war with Spain is a well adjusted plan for determining the relative merits and *qualifications of the young noncommissioned officers of the regular army in order that they may be promoted as additional second lieutenants for war* (original emphasis)."⁷²

The view that the army would commission a number of regular NCOs in time of war was even pervasive in the sergeant ranks. In 1916, one sergeant told journalist C. C. Lyons "I'm

⁷¹ Department of War, *Three Year Enlistment for the Army*, 44.

⁷² MG William H. Carter, "The Greater Leavenworth" *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXV, No. 104 (October 1914), 176.

certain to be made a captain if war is ever declared.”⁷³ The sergeant’s remarks were closer to reality than perhaps he knew. Upon the federal government’s mobilization of the National Guard for service on the Mexican border, a number of state governors requested that the War Department discharge the Regular Army NCOs detailed as instructors to their guard units so that the regulars could then accept commissions in the National Guard. On 18 June 1916, President Woodrow Wilson bowed to the request and discharged 51 of the 203 regular NCOs on duty with state guard regiments.⁷⁴

Nowhere does it seem that the pre-war regular officers and NCOs considered the second order effects of commissioning enlisted men for service in wartime. All thoughts, it seems, were on the expansion of the officer corps, and thus the army conducted no planning on how it would grow and sustain a wartime NCO corps. The Regular Army’s general assumption that it was proper and fitting to commission enlisted men at the expense of maintaining a qualified cadre of NCOs within its small units strongly influenced its approach to the selection and training of officers and NCOs in World War I.

As the Regular Army entered the Great War, it brought with it certain assumptions and perceptions of NCO leadership that tainted its expectations of the proper duties and status of its sergeants and corporals. Although regular officers viewed NCOs as “the backbone of the army,” and believed that strong NCOs were essential to the smooth operation of their units, the turn-of-the-century expansion of the army had so diluted the cadre of long-service NCOs, that the same officers also questioned the overall professionalism and efficiency of their sergeants and corporals. One of the greatest failings of the pre-war Regular Army, was its failure to create a sound and effective educational system to improve the lapses in NCO skills and leadership that

⁷³ Lyon, 16.

⁷⁴ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1916*, Vol. I, 936.

were so evident to its officers. By falling back on the “hard knock” school of having NCOs “learn by doing,” and the tendency to plan only for expanding the officer corps in wartime, the regulars helped to create a number of systemic problems in enlisted leadership that would cause the AEF great trouble in the Great War.

Chapter 4

Combat Leadership in the “New Warfare”

In 1884, Army Commanding General Phil Sheridan observed, “If improvements in guns of every caliber continue to be as rapid as during the past fifteen or twenty years...battles will become so destructive to human life that neither side in war will be able to stand up before the other.” He went on to predict, “Armies will then resort to the spade, the pick, and the shovel; both sides will cover themselves by intrenchments (sic), and any troops daring to make exposed attacks will be annihilated.”¹ Sheridan was well positioned to witness the birth of this “New Warfare:” a grinding and bloody form of mass industrial conflict that promised to exponentially expand the scope, duration, and lethality of war. This form of warfare combined the effects of the previous French, Industrial, and Managerial Revolutions. The nationalism unleashed by the French Revolution allowed states to harness the political passions of their citizens to swell the ranks of their wartime armies. The Industrial Revolution allowed nations to sustain these legions and equip them with a host of novel and ever more lethal weapons. The Managerial Revolution sparked the rise of the military staffs and governmental bureaucracies needed to mobilize, command, and control both the new legions and the national resources required to wage mass industrial warfare.

Sheridan could look to his own life to understand this “train wreck of revolutions.” When he was born in 1831 the U. S. Army was still a tiny constabulary force armed largely with smoothbore muskets and other battlefield technology that had changed only slightly since the late 1600s. By the time he became a major general in 1864, the Union army had ballooned to a force of over a million men, and it was a force directed by telegraph, moved by railroads, and increasingly entrenched to survive a battlefield dominated by the fire of rifled muskets or breech-

¹ Department of War, *Annual Reports of the War Department for 1884* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1884), 50-51.

loading rifles. When Sheridan died in 1888, the world's armies were scrambling to field small bore, smokeless powder magazine rifles, machine guns, and breach-loading artillery pieces able to use indirect fire to hurl high explosive shells at ranges calculated in miles rather than yards.

As the expanse and deadliness of the modern battlefield grew, the “new warfare” began to change the demands that armies placed on their junior combat leaders. The need to disperse combat formations to survive the firepower of new weapons exacerbated existing problems with battlefield command and control. This change increasingly demanded captains, lieutenants, and NCOs able to exercise initiative and a mounting level of independent action. This chapter will examine how the U. S. Army understood and internalized the realities of the “new warfare” and its effect on junior combat leaders prior to the United States’ entry into World War I. It will address the following questions: How did the Regular officers’ perceptions of modern war change their views of tactics, training, and junior leader development?; How were the Regular Army’s expectations of junior leaders altered by the “men against fire” debate?; Between August 1914 and April 1917, how well did Regular officers understand the tactical realities of the Western Front, and how did the war in Europe influence their perceptions of combat leadership?

In the wake of the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Russo-Turkish War, the armies of the United States and Europe all struggled to understand the effects of a vast array of new weapons upon their doctrine, tactics, and training. As Michael Howard and Antulio Echevarria have noted, all the major powers were consumed by the central issue of how armies could achieve the decisiveness of the offensive without suffering prohibitive casualties.² The central dilemma of this “men against fire” debate centered on the issues of mass and command and control. In the age of muzzle-loading weapons, the basic tactical unit was the regiment. The

² Peter Paret, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy*, “Men Against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914,” by Michael Howard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 510-526. and Antulio J. Echevarria, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers Before the Great War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 13-51.

close order regimental formations used from 1700 through the mid-1800s could be controlled with relative ease by the voice and drum commands of its field-grade officers. Junior officers and NCOs merely assisted the field-grade officers in maintaining the cohesion, discipline, and momentum of the unit in battle. Company-level leaders seldom had the chance or need to exercise independent command.

As demonstrated at Cold Harbor, Gravelotte-St Privat, Plevna, and other battles of the late 1800s, the withering firepower of the defenders had made short work of massed regimental formations. This reality prompted French, German, British, and American armies to experiment with thinning and spreading out their attack formations and to use tactics that moved their attacks forward in brief bounds using the terrain as cover against the enemy's fire.³ The idea was to present the smallest possible target to the defender until the attacker's last rush would overwhelm the defenses. The seemingly easy solution to the attacker's quandary was unfortunately wrecked on the rock of command and control. As the attacker thinned and spread his formations, he quickly found it nearly impossible to direct the fire and maneuver of his subordinates. The attacker also discovered that the loose formations also made it nearly impossible for him to mass either the firepower needed to suppress the defender or the numerical superiority at the spear point of his attack to overpower the defender during the final assault.⁴

One of the enduring popular myths of the Great War was that the harsh realities of the "new warfare" came as a sad surprise to the era's military professionals. Although the war's officers were stunned by the intensity and level of destruction of 1914, it is inaccurate to argue that they failed to understand that "the next great war" would be sharp and bloody. As with their European compatriots, American officers had long debated the implications of mass industrial

³ Echevarria, 13-51.

⁴ Ibid.

warfare. In fact, in 1882 the *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* offered a prize for the best essay on the “Important improvements in the art of war during the past twenty years and their probable effect on future military operations.” The winner of the prize, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Lazelle dissected the probable effects of new weapons with clinical precision and detachment. He noted that “Maneuvering under fire has now become very hazardous if not impossible,” and that “A front attack by infantry alone upon a defensive line has little chance of success; obstacles and defensive strength should first be crushed by artillery.” He concluded that only close coordination between the arms and attack plans that fixed the defending enemy’s attention to the front while the main attack fell on his flanks or rear offered any hope of success.⁵

The second place essay by Captain Francis Greene essentially agreed with Lazelle’s assessments, and likewise stressed the argument that the defense had eclipsed the power of the attack. As Greene maintained, “As it is not unlikely that any great battle will be fought hereafter without the use of entrenchments, it may be affirmed with certainty that the breechloader has enormously increased the relative power of the defense.”⁶

It is interesting to note that both Lazelle and Greene assumed that the next great war would be typified by the large scale use of defensive trenches. Both officers drew their evidence for this assertion from the campaigns waged in the last twelve months of the American Civil War. This belief in the unavailability of trench warfare seems to have influenced American tactical thought well into the twentieth century. However, neither man was willing to argue that

⁵ LTC Henry Lazelle, “Important improvements in the art of war during the past twenty years and their probable effect on future military operations” in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. III, No. XI (1882), 355-360.

⁶ CPT Francis Greene, “Important improvements in the art of war during the past twenty years and their probable effect on future military operations” in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. IV, No. XIII (1883), 14.

trenches and defensive firepower had completely negated the attack. Like their European peers, the Americans believed that victory could only be achieved by the offense, and went to pains (and sometimes great leaps of logic) to prove their point. For example, although Greene noted the heavy losses that the attacker suffered against entrenched defenders at Fredericksburg, Cold Harbor, Kennesaw, and Petersburg, he still pointed to the battles of Chattanooga and Nashville as evidence that with “proper tactical dispositions of the troops based upon thorough study of the strong and weak positions of the enemy’s lines” no trench lines were impregnable.⁷

Building upon the arguments of Emory Upton, Greene argued that with modern weapons the Napoleonic “shock tactics” had been supplanted by “fire tactics,” and the attacker would now have to maneuver “against the flanks of these [defensive] positions as to compel the defenders to come out and fight in the open, or by advancing against them in successive waves of thin lines of attack.” He noted that under the conditions of modern war, “skirmishers have now become the real body of the attack.”⁸ To a large extent, one can see the genesis of John Pershing’s concept of “open warfare” in these early solutions for crossing the “fire-swept ground” against an entrenched enemy.

Although some members of the officer corps were certainly aware of the changes in warfare that had occurred in the forty years since the Civil War, it is also clear that the United States Army, as an institution, entered the twentieth century with no consensus on how to maintain the attack without suffering prohibitive casualties. Due to its constabulary duties and the nation’s rather secure strategic position, the U. S. Army lagged behind those of Europe in debating and testing ways to overcome the growing power of the defense. In fact, the army’s first true tactical manual, *Infantry Drill Regulations*, was not published until 1891. In the

⁷ Ibid., 17-18.

⁸ Ibid., 5.

manual, the army codified the use of “closed” and “extended order” in the attack. The “closed order” of four-man columns was to be used only to maneuver troops to the battle area just outside the range of the enemy’s small arms. All formations within the battle area itself would be in “extended order:” formations based on single squad-sized lines of skirmishers moving forward by bounds while making the best use of available cover.⁹ Despite the army’s efforts to solve the problem of attacking in the face of modern armaments, the manual fell far short of resolving the questions of how to best suppress the firepower of the defender or the intrinsic dilemma of battlefield command and control. In fact, historian Perry Jamieson noted that the *Infantry Drill Regulations* was not well received within the army and many commanders simply ignored the manual altogether.¹⁰

In the wake of the Spanish American War, the “men against fire” debate within the U. S. Army intensified. While the debates that raged in the halls of Fort Leavenworth and in the pages of the service’s professional journals demonstrated that increasing numbers of officers understood the challenges of the “new warfare,” few of these debaters offered viable solutions to these problems or even agreed on the realities that they would face on the battlefields of the future. While they were a decided minority, some officers argued that war had in fact become less lethal as formations on the battlefield became more diffuse and officers became more adept at using cover and concealment on the battlefield. As late as 1913, Major James Chester maintained, “The mortality in modern battles is much less than when hostile armies fought within less than two hundred yards of each other with muzzle-loading guns. Then the dying and the dead lay under the feet of the fighting men until the action was over, and more men would

⁹ Perry D. Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: United States Army Tactics 1865-1899* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 92-112.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 113-119 and 123-5.

fall in five minutes than in the whole day's work under modern conditions."¹¹

Few officers agreed with Chester's conclusions. In a lecture he delivered at the General Staff and Service College in September 1902, Captain James Dickman (who would later command the 3rd Division, IV Corps, and 3rd Army in the AEF) painted a very bleak view of what his students would face in the next war. Dickman argued that with the advent of smokeless powder and the use of well sited and concealed trenches the attacker would be drawn into a deadly battlefield where a nearly invisible defender would quickly scythe down attacking infantry and cavalry. He noted that, "For the attack, there will be no mantle of smoke to hide the horrors of the battle field or to afford cover for the movement of bodies of troops. The moral effect of suffering severe loss without knowing whence it comes, and consequent inability to reply to the enemy's fire, is also very great."¹² Unfortunately, Dickman offered few solutions to the grim tactical picture he painted. The differences in Chester's and Dickman's arguments do highlight the overall lack of clarity and certainty among American military professionals as they grappled with the difficult subject of doctrinal and technological change.

Although American officers may have lacked consensus on their visions of the emerging realities of combat, the subject sparked a steady flow of professional writing on the subject between 1900 and 1917. Like Chester and Dickman, other officers also tried to craft a coherent vision of future war by attempting to draw together "lessons learned" from recent conflicts and extrapolating, as best they could, the shape and parameters of the modern battlefield. As part of this process, the officers also attempted to determine the new leadership skills and attributes that

¹¹ MAJ James Chester, "Comment and Criticism on Moral Preparation of the Soldier," in *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. XXXII (1913) 112. For another example of the tendency to see modern war as somehow less deadly as previously, also see, CPT Dana Merrill, "Infantry Training" in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (July-August 1912), 59.

¹² CPT J. C. Dickman, "General Service and Staff College Lectures Number Ten: Modern Improvements in Fire Arms and Their Tactical Effects" (Fort Leavenworth: General Service and Staff College Press, 26 September 1902), 2. For a similar apocalyptic view of the "new warfare," also see Merrill, "Infantry Training," 59.

would be required of junior leaders to fight and survive in combat. In crafting this vision, officers drew upon the nation's own experience in the Civil War and the War with Spain, as well as the more recent trends in warfare demonstrated by the Boer and the Russo-Japanese War.

Of all these conflicts, the Russo-Japanese War was the one that drew the most professional interest and study among the American officer corps prior to World War I. Even when attempting to extract the ephemeral lessons from these conflicts, some officers clearly understood the need to place the wars within their proper context and of avoiding the risk of drawing too many hasty conclusions. For example, in 1904, First Lieutenant R. H. Peck went so far as to note, "Our War with Spain was of too short duration to really test modern improvements [in warfare], while the conditions in South Africa were so exceptional in many respects, that there is a danger of drawing erroneous conclusions from them." Peck hoped that the then ongoing war between Russia and Japan would be a useful guide to war in the future for he believed it truly "tested all the improvements in modern warfare."¹³

The War Department was just as eager as Peck to squeeze as much information on the "new warfare" as possible from the Russo-Japanese War. In 1904, the Secretary of War sent a delegation of ten officers to Manchuria to observe both armies and to report back on the conduct of the war and its implications for future conflicts. Four of these officers, William Judson, Joseph Kuhn, John F. Morrison, and Peyton March, went on to serve as generals during World War I, with March rising to the position of Army Chief of Staff.¹⁴ All of the American observers were long service Regulars with solid professional credentials.

Although there were some differing interpretations among the officers of what they

¹³ 1LT R. H. Peck, "General Service and Staff College Lectures No. 14: Infantry in Attack" (Fort Leavenworth: General Service and Staff College, 13 December 1904), 1.

¹⁴ Henry B. Davis, Jr., *Generals in Khaki* (Raleigh, NC: Pentland Press, 1998). 207-8, 220-1, 242-3 and 272-3.

witnessed on the battlefield, the officers generally agreed that their observations validated the contemporary American tactical doctrine and, or, presaged no great change in warfare. Major Joseph Kuhn went as far as to note,

Considering the magnitude and duration of the war and the fact that it is the first great war between nations having modern arms and training since 1877, one might reasonably expect some startling and original methods. If there is one fact more than any other which has impressed itself on my mind it is that, in its general features at least, the war was conducted by both sides along strictly orthodox lines...So far as I was able to judge, the recognized rules and principles for conducting warfare underwent no serious modifications in their application.¹⁵

After following the Japanese army, Captain John Morrison concluded “The Japanese and their army have shown us little that is not in the books, little that can be truly called original.”¹⁶

As with Kuhn, the other observers tended to interpret what they saw as a confirmation of their beliefs and their faith in existing U.S. Army practices. In his final report Captain Karl Reichman confidently maintained, “I believe that our drill books supplemented by field regulations fully meets the requirements of infantry work on campaign.”¹⁷ The reports generally praised the morale and offensive spirit of the Japanese, emphasized the continued predominance of the offensive, downplayed the effects of artillery, and stressed the importance of the bayonet and the rifle.

While none of the observers minimized the heavy casualties that both sides endured, their underlying argument was that a vigorous offensive remained the key to victory and, despite the effects of modern weapons, the attack could still prevail. This faith in the offense was later codified in the army’s tactical doctrine. The *Infantry Drill Regulations of 1911* (hereafter *IDR*)

¹⁵ War Department, *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Part III Report of Major Joseph Kuhn, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 227.

¹⁶ War Department, *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Part I Report of Captain J. F. Morrison, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 98.

¹⁷ War Department, *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Part I Report of Captain Karl Reichman, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 278.

reaffirmed the army's predilection for the attack by stating "The infantry must take the offensive to gain decisive results."¹⁸ Captain John Morrison even argued that, "This campaign [in Manchuria] proved that frontal attack against an intrenched (sic) position can be successfully made." However, he went on to warn, "But it seems equally proven that the attack must be made by not only brave but thoroughly trained soldiers. I do not believe half-trained soldiers can do it, except at a cost that is practically prohibitive."¹⁹ It was, of course, in the Regular Army's interest to proclaim the need for a deep reservoir of "thoroughly trained soldiers," but the reports also highlighted the officer corps' underlying assumptions about tactics, leadership, and the attributes that soldiers needed to operate on the modern battlefield.

The American officers tended to see in the Japanese the spirit, morale, and discipline that they feared was lacking in the American people. Lieutenant Colonel Edward McClernand observed,

The discipline of the Japanese army is excellent. The habit of obedience to superiors is bred in the bone, and has been traditionary among the people for centuries. When the Japanese soldier has to perform a certain task, he does it as a matter of course, and not only executes it, but executes it to the best of his ability. The seriousness with which he viewed his mission in the war left a deep impression on the writer. The heart of the nation was in the struggle, and every soldier carried himself as it was his sacred duty to perform his work with faithfulness and zeal.²⁰

He viewed the Japanese as worthy of emulation, and noted, "If our countrymen would have their Army at its best, they must give it their affection, and always encourage a pride among its soldiers in the faithful discharge of duty."²¹ In a veiled critique of American society Major Kuhn remarked, "Just how soon the spirit of commercialism will destroy the military spirit of Japan,

¹⁸ War Department, *Infantry Drill Regulations, 1913, corrected to December 31, 1917* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 95. (hereafter, *IDR*)

¹⁹ Morrison, 98.

²⁰ War Department, *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War, Part V, Report of Lieutenant Colonel Edward McClernand*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

time alone can tell, but the later was a living force during the Russo-Japanese war [which] was apparent to the most casual observer.”²²

If the Japanese were the model soldiers, it was the Russians that the American officers feared more closely mirrored American realities. Captain Carl Reichman pointed out,

Among the chief causes that led to the defeat of the Russian army, are lack of preparedness, lack of mobility, initiative, and offensive spirit... The superior intelligence, discipline, mobility, and aggressive spirit of the Japanese army stand out so sharply that no one can overlook them who is in search of the qualities that helps to win victories... The physical exertions and the mental strain of the ten days' battle are apt to break down the entire human system- even the stolid nature of Russian officers and soldiers succumbed under the stress of battle and numbers of them became insane at Liaoyang- and neither patriotism nor enthusiasm will be able to hold up men; it is discipline alone that will triumph over human nature.²³

The message was clear; morale and discipline could overcome the deadly material realities of the battlefield. In his lecture “Infantry in Attack” at the Infantry and Cavalry School, First Lieutenant R. H. Peck echoed the sentiments of a British officer who noted, “the Japanese have demonstrated that the defensive is not so all powerful as was supposed. They have shown what all modern military theorists have failed to realize, that the human element is still the most potent factor in deciding the fate of battles.”²⁴ Thus, unquestioned obedience, superior fighting spirit, and iron discipline would allow the attacker to gain moral ascendancy over the enemy and allow him to successfully cross the deadly ground. These “lessons” from the Russo-Japanese War, would be the touchstones of the Regular’s approach to tactics and leadership in the Great War.

This focus on the ability of superior morale and discipline to overcome the soul-less firepower dominance of the defense was demonstrated by the observers’ constant praise for the Japanese use of the bayonet. In his report to the Chief of Staff, Captain Peyton March

²² Kuhn, 232.

²³ Reichman, 277-9.

²⁴ Peck, 12.

maintained,

One of the striking lessons of the Japanese war is the return to the use of the bayonet and sword upon the battlefield. This is greatly increased by the constant use of night attacks by both sides...While the exact figures will never be available as to the number of casualties due to the bayonet ...it is a noticeable fact that the bayonet is not an obsolete weapon by any means in modern warfare, in spite of the increased effectiveness of the modern rapid-fire field gun and magazine rifle. This is also true of the sword.²⁵

Not to be outdone in this praise of the *armes blanch*, infantry Captain Reichman rejoiced that,

As regards to the infantry the war has shown that the days of the bayonet are not yet numbered. In view of the great range and rapidity of fire of the present infantry weapon it was thought at one time that hand to hand conflict between dismounted men had become impracticable, and this opinion was strengthened by the killing power of shrapnel. The war in the Far East has shown that such hand to hand conflicts may often take place...When the details of this war are sufficiently known it will be probably discovered that boldness and resolution, coupled with some degree of skill, will in the future, as in the past, led to hand to hand fighting and victory.²⁶

Reichman also argued that as firepower forced the attacker to wage his battles under the cover of night, close quarters fighting would become more prevalent and the bayonet would only increase in its importance on the battlefield.

Ironically, the praise that the American observers heaped on the bayonet was not matched by any real evidence of its increased effectiveness. The two medical observers of the war, Colonels Valery Harvard and John Hoff, both argued that the actual number of casualties caused by bayonets was far from being remarkable. By their estimates, bayonets accounted for less than one percent of all wounds. Colonel Harvard concluded that the bayonet's "effect...is chiefly moral, for the number of wounds it inflicts is practically negligible."²⁷

²⁵ *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Part I, *Report of Captain Peyton March*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 54.

²⁶ Reichman, 278.

²⁷ *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Part II, *Reports of Colonel Valery Harvard and Colonel John Van R. Hoff*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing

Why the combat arms officers continued to tout the power of the bayonet despite the evidence to the contrary is puzzling. Perhaps Reichman and March's praise of the bayonet was little more than grasping at straws, a "whistling past the graveyard," as they groped toward solving the "men against fire" conundrum. When faced with the intractable problem of how to achieve an offensive victory in the face of growing defensive firepower, American officers had few tangible solutions. It was easier, and more comforting, for Reichman and March to extol the power of moral factors in war, as symbolized by the bayonet charge, than to confront the ugly and maddening physical factors in war as symbolized by the magazine rifle and machine gun.

While most of the Americans hyped the importance of the bayonet, they also tended to downplay the importance of modern rapid fire artillery on the new battlefield. For example, Colonel McClernand stated,

Although infantry acting on the offense may meet with considerable losses from artillery fire, the attacking lines should not ordinarily be driven back by this fire alone or even permanently checked by it. The target offered is too temporary and frequently during the rushes too uncertain for the artillery to gain a decided advantage.²⁸

In a similar vein, Captain Judson reported, "So far as can be seen the big guns on neither side produced any marked effect...big shells, falling among the scattered fieldworks, produced no damage worthy of the name. The men actually laughed at them."²⁹ While McClernand and Judson did not completely discount the effect of artillery, they argued that its major battlefield contribution was more psychological than physical. McClernand concluded that "In the attack the moral support given by the artillery to the assaulting infantry is great and often the

Office, 1906), 33. and Kuhn, 55. If these numbers are accurate, they were in fact similar to the "less than one percent" of casualties caused by the bayonet during the American Civil War. Brent Nosworthy, *The Bloody Crucible of Courage: Fighting Methods and Combat Experience in the Civil War* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 595-9.

²⁸ McClernand, 102.

²⁹ Judson, 211.

determining factor of success.”³⁰ Although Captain Morrison disagreed with McClernand on the psychological impact of shelling, he echoed the sentiment that the Russo-Japanese War indicated little change in the importance of artillery. He maintained, “The moral effect [of artillery] on good troops is, I believe, overstated. From what I saw and was told by Japanese officers of the effect of Russian artillery, I do not believe that the improvements of field artillery will have much, if any, effect on changing [our] present infantry tactics.”³¹

Not all of the observers were as quick to dismiss the emerging lethality of artillery. While he admitted that the nature of some wounds made it impossible to determine the true source of the injury, the medical observer, Colonel Harvard, warned, “The losses to artillery fire have been decidedly greater than in any previous war.”³² However, Joseph Kuhn was quick to undermine Harvard’s conclusions. In his analysis of the medical statistics, Kuhn maintained that the increased artillery casualties were only due to the fact that many of the wounds were received during the siege of Port Arthur, a situation that optimized the use of artillery. He noted that when examining the open terrain battle at Liaoyang, only 7.99 percent of wounds were due to artillery, a number “not differing materially from the results obtained in the Franco-Prussian war.”³³

Of the combat arms observers only the infantryman Carl Reichmann voiced concern over what he saw as the increased power and looming importance of artillery. He warned that, “The rapidity of fire which the modern field gun is capable makes possible an intensity of fire never witnessed in any previous war.”³⁴ Reichmann predicted that future conflicts would spark a rapid expansion of the artillery arm and a dramatic increase in the weight and volume of shellfire on

³⁰ McClernand, 120.

³¹ Morrison, 84.

³² Harvard, 31.

³³ Kuhn, 53.

³⁴ Reichmann, 269.

the battlefield.³⁵ Unfortunately, within the U. S. Army, his Reichmann's troubling beliefs were overshadowed by the more conventional and comforting views of artillery presented by Morrison, McClelland, and Judson.

This debate over the relative importance of artillery was significant because it influenced the army's tactical doctrine up to World War I. Although the observers acknowledged that a combined approach to tactics was important, in the final analysis, they tended to relegate artillery to a mere supporting role for the infantry. Artillery "prepared the way" for the attacker by "beating down" the enemy guns, suppressing the defender's infantry firepower, and providing a morale boost to the assault troops while simultaneously undermining that of the defender. Despite indicators from the war in Manchuria that pointed to the growing importance of artillery in modern warfare, the observer reports reinforced the infantry-centric focus of the American doctrine.

The observers' reports from Manchuria also upheld this infantry bias by noting the continued primacy of infantry small arms fire as the decisive material element in modern war. In this area, the officers merely reinforced the army's long-standing partiality for the rifle. Historians Perry Jamieson and Russell Gilmore have noted that in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the army enthusiastically embraced individual rifle marksmanship as the cornerstone of its tactical doctrine. This "rifle craze" rested upon the faith that an army of marksmen could create such hail of rapid, accurate, and lethal fire as to make it invincible on the battlefield, regardless of whether the force was attacking or defending.³⁶ This approach

³⁵ Ibid., 269-271 and 280. While Reichmann highlighted the lethality of shrapnel, he was one of the few officers of his generation to note the emerging power and potential of high explosive shells. He observed that "The high explosive shell destroys cover (earthworks and entrenchments) readily and the Russians were at a great disadvantage in possessing no such projectiles."

³⁶ Russell Gilmore, "The New Courage": Rifles and Soldier Individualism, 1876-1918." *Military Affairs*, Volume 40, Number 3 (October 1976), 97-102. and Jamieson, 54-69.

seemingly offered a ready solution to the attacker's "men against fire" dilemma. The key to the attack was simply to steadily build up the volume of accurate fire until the defender was physically and psychologically wrecked and thus unable to resist the attacker's final assault.

The American observers were predisposed to see in the Russo-Japanese war those things that seemed to confirm contemporary practices of the American army. Based on his study of the Japanese, for example, Morrison concluded, "The value of quick accurate shooting was most apparent." He went on to note that, "In the advance by file the target is small and exposed for a short time only. If there are no good, quick shots firing at him he will probably go forward unhurt."³⁷ Likewise, one of Major Kuhn's greatest critiques of the Japanese was,

Although much attention is paid to instruction in target practice, the shooting did not impress me as being very good, considering the intense volume of fire delivered by the firing line. Volley fire was but rarely used by the Japanese, who generally refrained from opening fire until mid-ranges were reached, when they invariably resorted to file firing, each man firing rapidly, too rapidly, in fact, for good results. While this method produced an enormous hail of bullets...accuracy of shooting suffered...and the expenditure of ammunition impressed me as being out of all proportion to the casualties inflicted on the Russians.³⁸

Kuhn's examination of the medical statistics of the Japanese 3rd Army seemed to him to confirm the primacy of infantry fire in war and to validate the American fixation with the rifle. He noted that even though the siege of Port Arthur increased the proportion of casualties due to artillery, over 59 percent of Japanese wounds still came from rifle fire.³⁹

The Americans' prejudices and beliefs were also apparent in their discussion of machine guns. Although most of the observers commented on the relative effectiveness of this weapon,

³⁷ Morrison, 97.

³⁸ Kuhn, 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 55. The medical officer Major Charles Lynch actually put the percentage of wounds caused by infantry small arms fire at a much greater number. He noted that the percentage of bullet wounds suffered by the 1st Japanese Army's divisions at Liaoyang ranged between 89% to 75% of all casualties and that small arms accounted for over 82% of the Army's wounds at Mukden. *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Part IV, *Report of Major Charles Lynch*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 403.

few of them argued that it materially changed battlefield realities. The observers continued to view the machine gun as it was presented in American doctrine; a weapon of opportunity whose role was similar to the artillery and whose effectiveness was strictly proscribed.⁴⁰ With a slightly veiled smugness the message from the observers was clear; the American doctrine was clearly valid and any lingering doubts or questions remaining from the Russo-Japanese War could be dismissed as the failure of the combatants to more closely adhere to “correct practices.”

In the final analysis, the “lessons” of the Russo-Japanese War were problematic. Depending on the reader’s predilections, the war offered enough evidence to support most all points of view on the subject of weapons, tactics, and the future direction of warfare. What is clear, however, was that the assurance and comfort that the army drew from the observers’ reports continued to influence American doctrine up to the nation’s entry into World War I. John Morrison, for example, used his position as an instructor at the Leavenworth Staff College to create a cadre of disciples committed to the faith of the all-conquering rifleman.⁴¹ From 1904 through 1914, lectures at the Army Service Schools at Fort Leavenworth and articles in professional military journals continued to stress the primacy of moral strength and rifle power over the “physical” power of artillery and machine guns. Despite the proven lethality of the later on the Western Front between 1914 and 1916, American military thought continued to be grounded in the comfortable assumptions of 1900 when the nation entered the war in 1917. These obsolete assumptions would hobble the army’s efforts to train junior leaders capable of operating on the battlefields of World War I.

⁴⁰ Kuhn did note that machine guns were most effective in the defense and in sieges and admitted that the Russian guns “were used with telling effect against the Japanese in the numerous bloody assaults.” 197. The evolution of the machine gun in American service is best covered in David Armstrong, *Bullets and Bureaucrats: The Machine Gun and the United States Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982). Given Armstrong’s superior coverage of this issue, there is no need to belabor his points in this paper.

⁴¹ Timothy Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 88-89. George Marshall would later state that Morrison, “taught me all that I have ever known of tactics.”

As the American army entered the second decade of the twentieth century, its officers were confident that its tactical doctrine rested upon a solid foundation of proven practices and a firm theoretical understanding of the future direction of warfare. Like their European compatriots, American officers believed that the offense, carried through to a decisive conclusion by an infantry assault, was the key to victory in war. This belief was enshrined in both the army's pre-war and wartime doctrine. The *Infantry Drill Regulation of 1911* (hereafter *IDR*) and the updated regulation of 1917, for example, both stated, "The passive defense should be assumed only when circumstances force it. Only the offensive wins."⁴² This focus on the offense meant that the army stressed the need for an aggressive spirit in both leaders and men, the ability to use infantry firepower to set the right conditions for the assault, and the skill and willingness to force the decision by use of the bayonet. In describing the sequence of the attack the *IDR* stated,

Fire superiority beats down the enemy's fire, destroys his resistance and morale, and enables the attacking troops to close on him, but the actual or threatened occupation of his positions is needed to drive him out and defeat him... The defenders, if subjugated by the fire attack, will frequently leave before the attack begins. On the other hand, it may be necessary to carry the fire attack close to the position and follow it up with a short dash and a bayonet combat... Confidence in their ability to use the bayonet gives the assaulting troops the promise of success.⁴³

This point was driven home in the army's officer schools. In a 1907 lecture to students at the Infantry and Cavalry School, Captain Charles Crawford unequivocally stated "To obtain [the] necessary demoralization of the enemy the attacker's bullets must hit a number of their men, but the soldier on the offensive must keep in mind that his first and most important object is

⁴² *IDR corrected to December 31, 1917*, 122.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 116-7. Similar statements are also found in the *Field Service Regulations of 1913*, but this publication tends to be more cautious in its approach to pushing the attack in the face of modern weapons. U.S. Department of War, *Field Service Regulations of the United States Army, With Corrections to May 21, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 158-9.

to advance close enough to deliver a bayonet attack and that his fire is but a means to attain this end.”⁴⁴ Crawford was quick to downplay the alleged increase of defensive firepower and even argued that the changes in weaponry actually favored the attacker. He argued that, “The thinning of the defender [’s] line, due to the development of great firepower, has made this line more vulnerable to bayonet assaults by groups of determined men than it was in the old double rank, elbow touching elbow days.”⁴⁵ This experienced infantry officer even went as far as to speculate, “The reduction in caliber [of small arms] has reduced the power of the bullet so that probably many of the wounds, where the bones are not hit, would not stop a man whose blood was up in a bayonet charge.”⁴⁶ Surely this was the best of both worlds. If Crawford was correct about the irresistible power of the attacker’s combination of fire and shock, then victory was assured, and if he were wrong about the weakness of the defender’s firepower, then the assaulting soldiers could take heart in the fact that being hit would generally not hurt that much.

The army viewed the sequence of the attack as described by Crawford and the *IDR* as the ideal melding of physical and psychological effects on the enemy by the perfect mating of firepower and the shock of the bayonet. However, this American solution to the “men against fire” dilemma rested upon several assumptions. The primary assumption was that the attacker could gain such a superior volume of accurate fire as to attrite the defender (who the doctrine writers also assumed would be protected by some form of trench works), shatter their morale, and suppress the enemy’s own fire to the point that they would be unable to resist the attacker’s final charge.

⁴⁴ Captain Charles Crawford, *Weapons and Munitions of War, Part I, Infantry Weapons* (Fort Leavenworth: Staff College Press, 1907), 11. from the CARL archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* See also, 2LT L. H. Drennan, “Psychology of the Bayonet,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 2 (September-October 1914), 169-171. Drennan argued, “The main point was to get the firing line within bayonet range, for that is the *raison d’être* of the fire attack.”

Backed by what they saw as the “lessons” of the Spanish American, Boer, and Russo-Japanese Wars, the Regular officer corps generally embraced this offensive doctrine and its underlying assumption of superior American marksmanship. Although he viewed the bayonet as the weapon of the tactical *coup de grace*, Charles Crawford confidently proclaimed, “The end of all warfare is attained by breaking up and destroying the enemy’s forces in battle, and the chief instrument used is the small arm rifle.” As evidence for this assertion he drew upon statistics from the American Civil War, the Wars of German Unification, and Morrison’s report on the Russo-Japanese War. He noted that “The casualties inflicted by small arms are from five to fifteen times those inflicted by any other weapon.”⁴⁷ In a lecture at the Army War College, Lieutenant Colonel R. K. Evans amplified this argument by noting, “Fire action is the controlling factor in deciding battles,” and declared, “Over 80 per cent of the men that fall in battle go down under infantry fire.”⁴⁸

Crawford’s fellow Leavenworth instructor, Captain Henry Eames, also imparted to his students an unshakable faith in the moral imperative of gaining and maintaining fire superiority in modern war. Eames noted, “Victory in battle almost entirely depends upon a locally obtained fire superiority...having once obtained the supremacy and given the skill and moral strength to maintain it, victory is assured.”⁴⁹ His formula for obtaining this fire superiority was relatively simple, “firstly by bringing to the firing line more rifles than the enemy, and secondly, by better shooting and fire discipline and by taking every advantage of cover.”⁵⁰

Eames’ fixation with fire superiority was mirrored in army doctrine. The *IDR* itself stated, “In a decisive battle success depends on gaining and maintaining fire superiority. Every

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁸ LTC R. K. Evans, “Infantry Fire in Battle,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. V, No. 6 (May 1909), 819.

⁴⁹ Captain Henry E. Eames, *The Rifle in War* (Fort Leavenworth: Staff College Press, 1908), 53. from the CARL archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

effort must be made to gain it early and then to keep it.” The manual also optimistically noted, “Over open ground attack is possible only when the attacking force has a decided fire superiority. *With such a superiority the attack is not only possible, but success is probable without ruinous losses*” (emphasis added).⁵¹ It is interesting to note that despite the fact that the Great War was entering its fourth year, and many of the manual’s assertions had been proven false in combat, this passage remained in the December 1917 edition of the *IDR*.

In principle the writers and disseminators of the army’s doctrine were correct. The “new warfare” demanded that the attacker gain and maintain a clear firepower advantage over the defender to allow them to destroy the enemy or gain ground. The key problem lay in their unquestioned belief that the infantry rifle would be the key source of both offensive and defensive fire superiority.

Given the American fetish for infantry firepower it is ironic that the army continued to undervalue the machine gun. In official doctrine and professional journals, officers continued to argue that the weapon remained one of mere fleeting opportunity of little value in the offense.

In a 1912 *Infantry Journal* article, Captain A. W. Bjornstad observed of machine guns,

They cannot move on an enemy and dislodge him or repel an assailant who has approached within a very short distance with the aid of good cover... They are purely auxiliaries, having very important and yet very limited uses and they are always dependent on infantry for protection. A machine gun cannot *supplant* 30 riflemen. It can merely equal the fire of 30 infantrymen at certain ranges, and at certain critical times and places.⁵²

It is interesting to note that as late as 1917, the *IDR* continued to relegate its discussion of the

⁵¹ *IDR corrected to December 31, 1917*, 104. Again, the *FSR* was more conservative than the *IDR*. Although the *FSR* agrees that the only way that the attacker could overcome the defender was to establish fire superiority, this would not be secured unless, “the number of rifles put into action by the assailants is either greater than the number opposing them, or the assailants are better shots or more skilled in the use of cover than the defender, or the latter are surprised or have been demoralized by previous defeat and the assailants have an unquestioned moral ascendancy over them.” It also warns, “Frontal assaults are not impossible, but in order to be successful the assailants must gain a superiority of fire *and be willing to pay the price of victory*” (original emphasis), *FSR corrected to May 21, 1913*, 158.

⁵² Captain A. W. Bjornstad, “Infantry Combat” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 6 (May-June 1912), 838.

weapon to its “Miscellaneous” chapter, and declared, “Machine guns must be considered as a weapon of emergency. Their effectiveness...renders them of great value at critical, though infrequent, periods of an engagement.”⁵³

In fairness, there were some good reasons for the army’s skepticism over the machine gun. The major weapons in its pre-war inventory, the M1904 Maxim Gun, M1909 Benet-Mercie Machine Rifle, and the M1914 Colt Machine Gun, all had inherent characteristics or flaws that limited their operational usage. Weight proved to be the biggest draw-back to both the water-cooled M1904 Maxim Gun and the air-cooled M1914 Colt. With its tripod and a full water jacket the Maxim weighed a cumbersome 152 pounds while the Colt with tripod tipped the scales at 91 pounds. The ponderousness of these weapons limited their mobility and thus made them difficult to employ offensively. Although the Benet-Mercie was a veritable lightweight at 30 pounds, its complicated machinery and propensity to break firing pins and extractors made it very unreliable under battlefield conditions.⁵⁴ It should also be noted that, with the exception of the Germans, the major European armies had similar reservations about the utility of the machine gun and also attached caveats to its usage in their pre-war doctrines.⁵⁵

While the army’s skepticism over the machine gun was perhaps understandable, other of its assumptions were less justifiable. As with the American observers of the Russo-Japanese War, army tacticians continued to consistently overestimate the power of small arms fire while simultaneously undervaluing the power of artillery. The *IDR*, for example, maintained that “Except when the enemy’s artillery is able to effect an unusual concentration of fire, its fire upon deployed infantry causes losses which are unimportant when compared with those inflicted by

⁵³ *IDR.*, 127.

⁵⁴ Bruce Canfield, *U. S. Infantry Weapons of the First World War* (Lincoln, RI: Andrew Mowbray Publishers, 2000), 156-181.

⁵⁵ Echevarria, 158-166.

his infantry.”⁵⁶

The certainly of this conviction was mirrored in the army’s schools and unofficial publications. In his 1914 book, *Infantry Training*, Colonel John Morrison noted, “The artillery will often sweep with fire an area being crossed by infantry” and that “Infantry encountering this kind of fire should, as it approaches, lie down and get whatever cover is available and, after the storm has passed, move on.”⁵⁷ He argued that shrapnel projectiles, “will not penetrate the infantry soldier’s pack at any range, so that when lying on the ground his pack affords complete protection to his spine and considerable protection to all vital parts except his head, and confidently predicted that, “the chance then of a man getting wounded...would only be about 1 in 80 if in the open and very much less with partial cover.”⁵⁸ Ironically, even as Morrison was publishing this work, events in northeastern France were beginning to call into question his assertions.

Student officers in the schools at Fort Leavenworth were constantly bombarded with the assumption-laden tenets of the army’s doctrine. Although he admitted that artillery support was invaluable for preparing the way for the attacker by suppressing the defender, and argued for combining the effects of both infantry and artillery, Leavenworth instructor Henry Eames taught his students that, “In the ultimate, the fire of infantry and of artillery will be found to be so similar as to be practically identical at [hitting] animate targets, the radius of potential efficacy being the chief difference...”⁵⁹ He also maintained that an infantry regiment “firing at 1000 yards can produce as many hits per minute as will 12 [artillery] batteries firing at 3000 yards at

⁵⁶ *IDR.*, 84.

⁵⁷ John F. Morrison, *Infantry Training* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Cavalry Association, 1914), 66.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁹ Eames, 76-7.

the same target.”⁶⁰ Likewise, Captain Crawford lamented that,

Some observers of the Russo-Japanese conflict were much impressed with the power of modern artillery, and were inclined to believe that the relative importance of artillery had greatly increased in late years. None of these officers gave statements showing the actual casualties made by the differing arms, their reports apparently reflecting their impressions only.⁶¹

Reflecting these sentiments, one American officer concluded that the “infantry is the chief arm, to which the other two (artillery and cavalry) are subordinate.”⁶² Given the missionary fervor and faith that these officers exhibited in their lectures, it is no surprise that their students later became the disciples of the AEF’s “open warfare” doctrine.

The ultimate problem with the branch parochialism exhibited by Eames and Crawford was that it blinded the army to the reality of combat as it emerged on the Western Front, hindered efforts to forge a realistic combined arms approach to warfare, and, as will be seen, had a negative influence on the training of America’s wartime corps of junior leaders. For example, while army schools and journals touted the need for combined arms training, seldom were these sentiments actually put into practice. In October 1914 Major General William Harding Carter noted, “Many years of experience...have made plain to me that one of the serious needs of the service...is a knowledge of modern field artillery, its fighting capacity, and its relations to the infantry and cavalry in campaign and battle.” He went on to lament, “A knowledge of modern field artillery, its methods and effectiveness of fire, is almost a sealed book to our infantry.”⁶³ At the precise time that Carter wrote these passages, the major European combatants were discovering the ugly realities of the “new warfare.” Unfortunately, over the next three years, the

⁶⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁶¹ Crawford, 9.

⁶² Editorial Staff “*Proportion of the Three Arms*,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 6 (May-June 1912), 851.

⁶³ MG William Harding Carter, “A Greater Leavenworth” in *Journal of the United States Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXV, No. 104 (October 1914), 179.

American army continued to labor under a set of tactical and doctrinal assumptions that should have been steadily eroded by the experiences of the armies on the Western Front.

It is clear that the U. S. Army closely followed the military developments of the Great War between 1914 and 1917. The U.S. Army received a constant flow of reports from its military attaches in Europe, and its professional journals published a steady stream of accounts of the conflict from American observers and European participants. Despite this flow of information about the war and its larger tactical, organizational, and technological implications, there is little indication that these reports led to any substantive changes to the U. S. Army's doctrine or patterns of military thought prior to 1918. Although fiscal, operational, and political constraints prevented the army from fielding new weapons or experimenting with new organizational models during this period, there were no tangible restraints on the officer corps' ability to grapple intellectually with the doctrinal challenges being evidenced on the Western Front. The saddest indictment of the pre-war officer corps was that it continued to cling to the tactical assumptions that underpinned its doctrine long after the evidence from Europe had proven them false.

From the very outbreak of the war American military attachés reported the military situation and doctrinal developments and innovations emerging on the European battlefields. Major Spencer Cosby, the military attaché in Paris, was one of the more keen American observers of the combat on the Western Front. One of the major trends that he uncovered and reported back the American General Staff was the vast rise of casualties caused by artillery and machine gun fire. In November 1914 he reported that a French officer had estimated that 75

percent of soldiers killed on the Western Front were due to artillery fire.⁶⁴ Nine months later, Cosby reported to Washington the staggering casualties that the French had suffered in the fighting around Arras in May and June 1915. A French General Staff officer told Cosby that a division in the 6th French corps was down to a strength of only 12,000 men and had suffered over 32,000 casualties to date. Although he placed French casualties at around 60,000 to 85,000 for the campaign, he admitted that some of the figures ranged to as high as 200,000 men. In one division which had suffered 800 men wounded in the fighting north of Arras, he ominously noted that “Only two were wounded by rifle bullets, all the others by shell and grenades.”⁶⁵ Given the fact that the American Regular Army’s strength in 1914 was a mere 92,482 men and its doctrine was so small arms-centric, Cosby’s reports should have carried more portent.⁶⁶

As an engineer officer, Cosby was also well-fitted to report on the realities of trench warfare. In two separate reports on 25 March and 5 October 1915, Cosby presented detailed descriptions of the trench systems on the Western Front and the challenges they presented to offensive operations. He also was able to visit French trenches on an active part of the front and gave a pointed account of the devastation left in the wake of the firepower of the “new warfare.” The village of Betheny, he noted, was “nothing but a mass of ruins, not a single house having escaped the rain of German shells, of which at least 40 are dropped on it every day, and often several hundred.” He also agreed with one French staff officer’s assertion that, “The present war has registered the decline in importance of the cavalry arm and a corresponding rise of the

⁶⁴ Report of Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché, “Conversation With a French Artillery Officer,” dated 4 November 1914, National Archives RG 165, “Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917,” File 8698, Roll 219.

⁶⁵ Report of Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché, “French Casualties,” dated 25 August 1915, National Archives RG 165, “Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917,” File 8698, Roll 219. The higher estimates of the French losses were actually closer to reality than Cosby’s estimates. In the fighting at Artois from 3 May to 18 June, the French fired over two million rounds of ammunition and suffered 140,000 casualties for only meager returns. Robert A. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), 165.

⁶⁶ *Annual Report for 1914*, 7.

artillery and Engineers...The infantry for the moment are acting chiefly as supports for the other two arms.”⁶⁷

Despite Cosby’s unique point of observation, not all, and perhaps few, American officers agreed with his assessments. A cavalry officer claiming to have interviewed Allied veterans, quickly dismissed reports of the touted power of artillery. He noted,

I often asked as to the comparative losses from artillery and rifle fire. None of those questioned gave me a figure for artillery fire of less than fifty percent of the total losses, and one estimate ran as high as seventy-five percent. *These figures are undoubtedly absurd but it goes to show how our minds are impressed by what may be called primitive reason* (emphasis added).⁶⁸

The same officer equally discounted arguments that modern firepower had effectively removed cavalry from the battlefield. He also arrogantly maintained, “I firmly believe that two of our normal cavalry brigades with its proper proportion of artillery, available to the Allies’ left about September 6th [1914], would have meant disaster for von Kluck.”⁶⁹ As the British Expeditionary Forces’ cavalry division was unable to check the advance of Kluck’s army in August 1914, the unnamed American “Officer Abroad” was doing little more than idle speculation and unprofessional boasting. However, his remarks do illustrate the dangerous American tendency to believe that its weapons, organizations, and doctrine were inherently superior to those of Europe. Unfortunately this propensity would later manifest itself in the AEF’s efforts to craft its own unique doctrine during the war.

In addition to reports of their own experiences at the front, and of discussions with Allied

⁶⁷ Report of Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché, “Engineers Notes On the War,” dated 25 March 1915, “Engineers Notes On the War (No. 2)” dated 5 October 1915, and “French Trenches and Village Organized for Defense” dated 28 April 1915. National Archives RG 165, “Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917,” File 8698, Roll 219.

⁶⁸ “An Officer Abroad,” “Notes on the European War,” in *Journal of the United States Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, No. 107 (July 1915), 53-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 56. Alexander von Kluck’s First Army was the right wing of the German attack into France in August 1914. His aggressive maneuvering allowed a gap to develop between his forces and those of the Karl von Bulow’s Second Army which the French and British were able to exploit during the Battle of the Marne (7-9 September 1914).

officers, the military attaches also sent back to the American General Staff translated doctrinal manuals and circulars that detailed the evolution of tactics on the Western Front. On 11 November 1915, Captain J. W. Barker submitted a report containing a copy of a provocative French circular entitled, “Study of the Attack in the Present Period of the War.” Although Barker did not include the name of the author of the study, it was written by Captain Andre Laffargue, a veteran combat company commander. Laffargue’s study offered a detailed discussion of the challenges of attacks against fortified positions as well as some suggestions of how to overcome them. This penetrating analysis offered a number of gems on minor tactics, combined arms coordination, small unit training, and combat leadership that were valuable to all company and battalion level leaders attempting to understand the realities of the “new warfare.” Although the study was published in its entirety in the *Infantry Journal* in September 1916, there is no evidence in American doctrinal publications or in the army’s training plans of 1917 that indicated that the work had any real influence on American military thought.⁷⁰ Although Laffargue’s study was certainly not the “be all end all” of World War I minor tactics, it at least offered the Americans *a model or foundation* from which they could have built a tactical

⁷⁰ Report of Captain J. W. Barker, Military Observer, “A Study on the Attack in the Present Period of the War,” dated 11 November 1915, National Archives RG 165, “Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917,” File 8698, Roll 219. also, Captain Andre Laffargue, “A Study on the Attack in the Present Period of the War,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (September-October 1916), 101-143. A month after this publication, the *Infantry Journal* published another article by Laffargue that offered sound council to junior leaders and soldiers on proven “tactics, techniques, and procedures” for surviving on the modern battlefield. Captain Andre Laffargue, “Advice to the Infantry Soldier,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (November-December 1916), 255-272. Laffargue’s original study was important because it was one of the first, and most detailed, discussion of minor tactics to be published from the experienced ranks of the Allied junior officer corps. Although Laffargue’s work never became official doctrine within the French army, Marshal Ferdinand Foch did circulate copies of it to some of his generals and the captain did privately publish a small run of the pamphlet in 1916. Timothy Lupfer credits a captured copy of Laffargue’s pamphlet with being one of the inspirations for the German’s “Stormtroop” infiltration tactics. However, Bruce Gudmundsson accurately notes that the German’s experimentation with these methods predates Laffargue’s publication by several months, and was more influenced by a traditional German reliance on mission orders and decentralized command and control. Timothy Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1981), 38-9. and Bruce Gudmundsson, *Stormtroop Tactics: Innovation in the German Army, 1914-1918* (Westport: Praeger, 1989), 193-6.

doctrine that was more realistic and less assumption-laden than that which they began the war with in 1917.

Another French manual, *Instructions on the Offensive Conduct of Small Units*, would ultimately receive a more official acceptance within the American army. The French originally published the manual in January 1916 and the American attaché forwarded a translation to Washington on 22 March 1916.⁷¹ The manual drew upon Laffargue's earlier manual as well as the front line wisdom of other French officers. Unfortunately, the work languished in the War College Division until after the United States entered the war. The War Department hastily published and issued the work in May 1917, but since the tactics within the manual revolved around synchronized attacks using artillery, light and heavy machine guns, hand and rifle grenades, one pound guns, and other implements of modern warfare that the U. S. Army lacked, the publication's utility was limited.

Based on the reports of American observers and European participants, some officers within the General Staff began to subtly question existing Army organizational structures and tactical assumptions. In November 1915 the Army War College began publishing a series of studies intended to support Secretary of War Lindley Garrison's "Continental Army" reform and reorganization plan.⁷² One of these monographs in particular, *Study on the Development of*

⁷¹ "*Instructions on the Offensive Conduct of Small Units*" dated 22 March 1916, National Archives RG 165, "Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917," File 8698, Roll 219.

⁷² In March 1915 Garrison ordered the Army Chief of Staff Hugh Scott to prepare a "Statement of Proper Military Policy" that he could present to President Wilson and the Congress to reform the Regular Army and National Guard. As a proponent of "preparedness," Garrison argued that the existing Regular Army was too small and the National Guard too inefficient to adequately protect the continental United States (and to a lesser extent its overseas possessions) from foreign attack. Garrison envisioned "producing a military system capable of developing fighting power sufficient to meet any given national emergency, at the proper time, supported by all the resources, technical and economic, of the country." The "Continental Army" plan would have expanded the Regular Army while reducing the nation's reliance on the National Guard by gradually building a reserve force directly controlled by the War Department and the Regulars. The War College study not only examined the need to mobilize and train soldiers, but also studied how the European combatants were mobilizing finance and capital, industry, and industrial manpower. Facing a tough reelection bid in 1916, and unwilling to expend political capital to counter the growing opposition of the plan in Congress and from the National Guard Association, Wilson quashed further discussion of a

Large-Caliber Mobile Artillery and Machine Guns in the Present European War, highlighted realities on the European battlefields that were at direct odds with the army's infantry and rifle-centric doctrine. The study noted that the war had driven all of the major combatants to increase the number and shell-weights of their heavy artillery. It also pointed out the tactical limitations of field guns such as the French 75mm, the war's exponential increase in the duration and intensity of barrages, and the deadly effect of high explosive-firing heavy artillery on infantry and fortifications. The author went so far as to credit the German army's victories on the Western and Eastern fronts to "the use of these enormous fieldpieces," and asserted that such guns "must hereafter be considered as essential to success in war."⁷³ The study likewise warned that the war had forced the combatants to increase their number of machine guns while also issuing and employing them at lower echelons than had been called for in their pre-war doctrines.⁷⁴ Based on what was being taught in the army's schools and printed in its professional journals, there is no indication that this monograph had any influence on American thoughts and practices prior to 1917.

Despite the warnings and recommendations of their military attaches and general staff, as was the case in the Russo-Japanese War, American officers exhibited an inclination to seek evidence in the reports from the war that seemed to validate existing American practices. In some cases this was accomplished by picking through the reports from the various combatants until they found accounts or editorials that matched American military sensibilities. For

reserve-based "Continental Army." This, and other disagreements with Wilson over "preparedness," led Garrison to resign on 10 February 1916. Army War College, *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States, September 1915* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916).

⁷³ Army War College, *Study on the Development of Large-Caliber Mobile Artillery and Machine Guns in the Present European War*, November 1915 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 4-5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8. The overall *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States* also contained another report, *Changes in Organization Found Necessary During the Progress of the European War*. This report chronicled the alterations that the Europeans had made to their organizational structures due to their combat experiences. While the report did little more than list these changes, their number and scope alone should have given the Americans some warning that the Great War was ushering in massive changes to warfare.

example, in July 1915 the *Cavalry Journal* reprinted a report from a German officer stating, “The cavalry has not only not become an antiquated arm, but it is meeting all conditions of war in such an apt way dovetailed into the frame of this newest of all wars. Its *raison d’être* is more than only proved.”⁷⁵ Likewise, the *Infantry Journal* printed an article from a French general, who praised the “calm and cool rifle shot...who can bring down ten men with ten bullets,” but also argued, “The complete weapon of the infantryman is a rifle with a bayonet...the only one which combines in the highest degree the two eternal methods of action, fire and shock. But the bayonet is only added to the rifle as the shock follows fire, the later preparing for the former.”⁷⁶

In December 1915, the editorial staff of the *Infantry Journal* examined the course of the war on the Western Front and noted that warfare seemed to have separated into two distinct branches: the stationary and attritional “trench warfare,” and the maneuver-focused and decisive “open warfare.” From this analysis, they asked the vital question, “In our preparation for war, which of these two classes of warfare should first occupy our attention?”⁷⁷ The writers accurately described the ugly realities of trench warfare and that bravery was simply not enough to overcome the physical supremacy of defensive firepower. They noted, “Trench warfare demands a special class of weapons and material. To break through a thoroughly entrenched line requires a vast number of heavy guns ...and an enormous supply of heavy shells, as these are the only means of destroying wire entanglements and casemates.”⁷⁸ Despite the challenges of trench warfare, and the looming possibility that American soldiers would have to face it in the future, the infantrymen ultimately maintained,

⁷⁵ An Officer of High Rank, Berlin February 1915, “What has the World’s War Taught Us up to the Present Time That is New in a Military Way,” in *Journal of the United States Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVI, No. 107 (July 1915), 99.

⁷⁶ General Cherfils, “Infantry Fire in the Present War,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (November 1915), 384-9.

⁷⁷ Editorial Staff, “The Lessons of Trench Warfare” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (December 1915), 505.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

All the advantages possessed by either side were won in open warfare. Rather than conclude that continuous trench warfare is an inevitable phase of any future war, should we not in our preparation make every effort to forestall the possibility of its occurrence...To devote a large part of our energies to the development of the enormous amount of materiel required of trench warfare...is equivalent to an acceptance to defeat in that period of the war (open warfare) which is most decisive of the final result.⁷⁹

Here again, the debates that swirled in the pages of the professional military journals over the “true” lessons and meaning of the Great War for the American army foreshadowed the doctrinal prejudices and assumptions that would later influence the AEF’s tactics and its expectations of its junior leaders.

Army officers, if they chose to, could also gain an appreciation of the ugly realities of the war in Europe from the popular press. The war was big news, and American reporters were drawn to the conflict like a moth toward the flame. The famous “writer of fortune” Richard Harding Davis witnessed the fighting in France and Belgium in the fall of 1914 and published his account of the war’s early battles in *With the Allies*. Although the work was mainly a shrill denunciation of German actions in Belgium, Davis did portray the destructiveness and deadliness of modern war.⁸⁰ After viewing a Germany artillery battery in action around Ypres, reporter Arnold Bennett informed his American audience that, “Around the guns were educated men who had spent years- indeed, most of their lives- in the scientific study of destruction...They had, indeed, been explicitly told on the highest earthly authority that, if an order came to destroy their

⁷⁹ Ibid., 506-7. The editors also argued against the U.S. building up a supply of heavy guns because they “will find no place in mobile operations.”

⁸⁰ Richard Harding Davis, *With the Allies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), pp. vii- x. Davis was a war correspondent for the Wheeler News Syndicate and an unabashed supporter of the Allies. He was famous for his previous coverage of the Spanish American War, the Boer War and a host of other conflicts. He was one of the first Americans to come out against Wilson’s declaration of neutrality. Of the German military and its destructiveness Davis reported, “This is not a war against Germans as we know them in America...It is a war...against the military aristocracy of Germany, men who are six hundred years behind the times; who, to preserve their class against democracy, have perverted to the uses of warfare, to the destruction of life, every invention of modern times.”

fathers and their brothers, they must destroy their father and their brothers.”⁸¹ Despite their obvious pro-Allies sentiments and Yellow Journalism sensibilities, these commentators still managed to convey to a mass American audience the changing face of modern war.

One of the keenest observers of the war, and the drastic changes to combat that it had heralded, was Henry J. Reilly, a West Point graduate and veteran of both the Regular Army and Illinois National Guard. When the war broke out Reilly offered his services to the volunteer American Ambulance Corps and served with the Allies from October 1914 through February 1915. He then toured both Western and Eastern Fronts as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. While he shared Davis and Bennett’s pro-Allied views, he was still able to present an honest and accurate portrayal of the European fighting. For example, in September 1915 he reported,

The average person, if asked what he believes to be the most prominent feature of the fighting on land in the present war, generally answers, airplanes or trench warfare. He is wrong...The average soldier or officer, if asked what he believes to be the most prominent feature in the present war, will promptly reply, the artillery...It has been the artillery which, by the intensity of its fire, has surprised even the other branches of the service.⁸²

He precisely dissected the challenges that artillery and machine gun fires presented to the infantry and provided a detailed discussion of the development of observer-controlled indirect artillery fire.⁸³ The clinical exactness with which he described the power and lethality of artillery and machine guns far exceeded almost all the analysis and commentary of the war that was written by American officers in their War College reports, professional articles, and Leavenworth lectures from 1914 through 1916.

⁸¹ Arnold Bennett, *Over There* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915), 173.

⁸² Henry J. Reilly, *Why Preparedness* (Chicago: Daughaday and Company, 1916), 326. Reilly wrote the book based on articles that he had written for the *Chicago Tribune* and intended it to be a strong argument for the preparedness movement. In fact Leonard Wood, the prophet of preparedness, wrote the book’s introduction. Reilly’s pro-Allied prejudices in no way detracted from his ability to accurately describe the combat he observed. His chapter “Artillery in the Present War” noted the professional skill of the German artillerists.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 330-7 and 352-6.

One of the important questions to ponder is why did the army continue to cling to outdated concepts of war in the face of mounting evidence from Europe that warfare was changing? Why did the army continue to advocate the primacy of the infantry attack when the power of artillery and the defense were so manifest? Unfortunately, there are no easy explanations for this phenomenon. Part of this problem stemmed from the army's place within American society. The traditional belief that large standing armies were threats to liberty and a drain on the wealth of the nation continued to influence American political thought and actions well into the twentieth century. Thus, even as the European combatants were feverishly working to expand their overall number and ratio of artillery pieces, machine guns, aircraft, and the other implements of modern war, the Congress made scant effort to appropriate any funding for these types of weapons prior to the nation's entry into the war. In fact, with the exception of the Philippine War era expansion of the army (this was an expansion and not a modernization), the army was perpetually cash-strapped from the end of the Civil War to 1917. It is interesting to note that the American private of 1916 was actually paid one dollar less per month than the Civil War Union private of 1864 and 1865.

This penury created a culture within the army where officers were expected to make-do with whatever means that they had at hand. Thus, rather than pine for artillery and machine guns that they would never get, was it not better to build a doctrine based on the "proven," reliable, and, most importantly, relatively cheap firepower of the rifleman? It is a fascinating commentary on the mentality of the pre-war U. S. Army that its last new fully fielded weapon system prior to 1917 was the M1913 "Patton" Saber.⁸⁴ Like the rifle, the new saber promised a

⁸⁴ By "fully fielded weapons system" the meaning is that it not only was issued to all cavalry troopers, but also that the weapon had a tactical doctrine associated with its use. The saber was the brainchild of George S. Patton, who had based his design, and its intended tactical use, on observations that he had made while studying at the French Cavalry School at Samur.

low tech and inexpensive solution to the “men against fire” dilemma.

The army’s small budget also exacerbated internal tensions among its various branches as they battled for their piece of scarce defense dollars. The irrational fear of a Spanish attack on American costal cities in 1898 had led to a steady flow of money to costal fortifications, coast artillery, and the navy in the years prior to World War I. This prioritization left little money for the other branches, or much funding for emerging technologies such as the air plane.⁸⁵ This internal wrangling promoted branch parochialism and merely reinforced the “make-do” military culture.

Other factors that perhaps hindered any plans that the army may have considered for pre-war modernization were prevailing political realities and public attitudes related to the war. On 19 August 1914 Woodrow Wilson asked the American people to support the United States' neutrality in the World War and "be impartial in thought as well as in action."⁸⁶ Four months later in his annual address to Congress, he declared that the conflict in Europe was "a war with which we have nothing to do, whose causes cannot touch us," and assured Americans that "...we shall not turn America into a military camp. We will not ask our young men to spend the best years of their lives making soldiers of themselves."⁸⁷

In 1914, Wilson’s position generally reflected the attitudes of the American people. Though mass opinion polls had yet to appear by the First World War, the results of a late 1914 *Literary Digest* poll of 367 American newspaper editors revealed something of the general American feelings of ambivalence toward the European conflict. When asked which of the European belligerents most held their personal sympathies, 20 of the newspapermen supported

⁸⁵ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army 1898-1941* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 4-5 and 166-7.

⁸⁶ Sean D. Cashman, *America in the Age of the Titans* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 460-1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, and John Dickinson, *The Building of an Army* (New York: Century, 1922), 33.

the Germans, 105 voiced sympathy with the Allies and the remaining 242 responded that they held no particular preference or sympathy for either side. The results of the poll led its authors to conclude that "...the sympathy on either side is that of a distant observer. No belligerency is evident anywhere."⁸⁸ While it is perhaps overly simplistic to use the editors' responses as a specific gauge of popular American opinion in 1914, the poll does point to the divisions and uncertainties of American attitudes on the war and its combatants. The United States of 1914 and 1915 was a nation with substantial ethnic populations that opposed one side or the other or "militarism" in general. It was a population beset by racial, sectional, economic, and social tensions that made it difficult to gain any political consensus, either for or against, military expansion or modernization.⁸⁹

As war engulfed Europe in August 1914, many Americans viewed the event as a distasteful and self-destructive blunder of the decadent Old World. Wrapped in the Victorian faith in progress and science, Americans watched with dismay and regret as the "finest flower of Western Civilization" consumed itself in an orgy of destruction and brutality.⁹⁰ With the security of vast oceans, was it not easy for Americans to agree with Wilson's contention that the conflict was simply "a war with which we have nothing to do." When the threat to the nation was so distant, what was the point of building a modern army when so much money had been

⁸⁸ "American Sympathies in the War," *Literary Digest*, Vol. XLIX, No. 20, 14 November 1914, 939-941 and 974-978. The editors were also asked to comment on the sympathies and viewpoints of their communities. In most cases, the editors believed that their personal views corresponded with the general outlooks of their readers.

⁸⁹ Richard S. Faulkner, "Innocents Abroad: The Perceptions and Opinions of the American Soldiers Toward First World War Europe" (MA thesis, University of Georgia, 1996), 6-19 and Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), xvii-xliv.

⁹⁰ *Literary Digest*, Vol. XLIX, No. 11, 12 September 1914, 441-445, 449-60 and 464. The Digest compiled and commented on newspaper and periodical articles of the time. A number of articles in the first weeks of the war saw the European events in terms of a "collapse of civilization" and Christianity.

spent on a modern navy designed to keep the foe away?⁹¹ The ambivalence of building a large army even continued after the United States entered the war. In fact, in April 1917 Thomas Martin, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, stated, “Congress will not permit American soldiers to be sent to Europe.”⁹²

Even after the sinking of the *Lusitania* and other German “atrocities” (real or purported) tended to sway American opinion toward the pro-Allied camp, the nation remained deeply divided about the war until 1917.⁹³ Although powerful voices, such as Theodore Roosevelt, pushed for preparedness, equally powerful voices, such as Eugene Debs and Oswald Garrison Villard, equated preparedness with militarism and political repression. Debs, for example, viewed the preparedness movement as a plot to “transform the American nation into the most powerful and odious military despotism in the world.”⁹⁴ Not surprisingly, the League for the Limitations of Armaments scolded those politicians “stampeded by the hysterical craze for additional armaments.”⁹⁵ Thus, the politically charged preparedness debate so muddied the water over the future direction of the army that any meaningful modernization was basically stillborn prior to the nation’s entry into the war.

Wilson, a Southerner with an ingrained distaste for “big government” and all things military, also stymied any meaningful efforts to prepare the army to wage a modern war until 1916. The president’s desire to maintain American neutrality (and perhaps to avoid a political landmine prior to the elections of 1916), led to the quashing of any serious contingency planning

⁹¹ This faith in the Navy as the nation’s best defense was also shared by Wilson in 1914 and 1915. John P. Finnegan, *Against the Specter of A Dragon: The Campaign for Military Preparedness* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974), 76.

⁹² Quoted in Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 8.

⁹³ Faulkner, “Innocents Abroad: The Perceptions and Opinions of the American Soldiers Toward First World War Europe,” 20-34.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Finnegan, 126.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

for a possible war against Germany. In August 1915 after hearing a report that the General Staff had been working on plans for a war with Germany, Wilson threatened that every officer involved would be relieved of duty and ordered out of Washington.⁹⁶ His anger with military men such as Leonard Wood who appeared to undercut his policy of neutrality by their vocal support for preparedness led him to direct the War Department to muzzle the public pronouncements by serving officers. On 23 February 1915 General Order 10 directed that, “Officers of the Army will refrain, until further orders, from giving out for publication any interview, statement, discussion, or article on the military situation in the United States or abroad, as any expression of their views on this subject at present is prejudicial to the best interest of the service.”⁹⁷ Robert Alexander, the wartime commander of the 77th Division, later recalled that the president’s directives created an atmosphere where, “Any officer, however distinguished, who displayed ordinary foresight by the advocacy of any preparatory measure did so at the jeopardy of his career.”⁹⁸ Whatever their beliefs on the need to modernize the army, few officers seemed willing to follow Leonard Wood’s open criticism of the Wilson administration.

Lastly, army officers themselves seemed unwilling to accept the problems of their doctrinal thinking. Much of this stemmed from a deeply ingrained, if hubristic, faith in American exceptionalism. There was a willingness to accept the idea that “American methods” and an inherent abundance of “American know-how” would always present the nation viable solutions to problems that bedeviled “lesser” mortals such as the Europeans. In other words, the American solution to the “men against fire” debate would succeed if for no other reasons than it came from the same soil from which had sprung George Washington, Thomas Edison, and the

⁹⁶ Ibid., 42-6 and 56.

⁹⁷ General Order No. 10, 23 February 1915.

⁹⁸ Robert Alexander, *Memories of the World War* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1931), 1.

Wright Brothers.

This attitude caught army officers in a great dilemma. If in fact the American citizen made a superior soldier, West Point made a superior officer, and Leavenworth and the War College made superior doctrine, why then worry about preparedness? This quandary led to a great degree of cognitive dissonance within the army's thinking. On one hand there was the faith in American military practices as touted by officers such as Morrison and McClelland, on the other, was the belief that recent societal changes had sapped the vigor and vitality of the American male and thus made citizen soldiers unreliable under the stress of modern war. Some officers clearly saw the perils of this self-delusion. As one noted in the *Infantry Journal*,

It is a national illusion that we are natural soldiers; that we are natural marksmen; that we are Americans and therefore exceptions to the human race...the marksmanship of the past has been exaggerated by enthusiastic writers. One recognized authority upon American history relates of a body of Virginians who joined Washington that every man could hit a squirrel in the eye at three hundred yards while moving at the double quick himself. There was never a rifle made whose accuracy would permit such a feat, nor was there ever a man made who could see a squirrel's eye three hundred yards away. Experience has shown that you must first rid the recruit of the idea that he is a natural shot, and then teach him how to shoot.⁹⁹

The solution to the predicament was to make the army itself the vessel of American exceptionalism. Only the American army could properly teach the citizen "how to shoot" and only the American army using American methods could find the solution to the tactical problems that bedeviled the European combatants. These attitudes later colored how Pershing and other American officers interacted with the Allied trainers and advisors working with the army in both the United States and France.

The "answer" to the question of why the army refused to change its doctrine in the face of mounting evidence from Europe of course lies in the hazy shades of gray where all the above

⁹⁹ S.M.Q. "The Present Problem," in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (September 1909), 252-3.

listed factors intersected. Ultimately, what is clear was that a host of internal beliefs and external realities left the U. S. Army with little desire to alter its doctrine or even the ability to obtain the quality and quantity of weapons that were proving so important in Europe. However, while budget constraints hindered weapons procurement, no such tangible obstacles prevented the officer corps from embarking on an intellectual investigation of how the Great War was changing warfare. Despite substantial indications of deep shifts in the conduct of war, the American officer corps as a whole retained an ostrich-like indifference to these emerging realities and thus continued to see war as they wanted it to be rather than intellectually engaging the war as it was.

Having discussed the army's attempts, or failures, to come to grips with the realities of modern industrial warfare, it is now important to examine how the army believed that these new realities would influence the way that it would have to select, train, and utilize its junior leaders. Although American officers may have placed a great faith in the exceptionalism of the nation and its army, few questioned the fact that modern firepower had made novel demands on combat leadership. The questions of doctrine and leadership in the "new warfare" were inextricably linked from the very beginning of the "men against fire" debate. As early as 1882, Greene and Lazelle both agreed that the "new warfare" would place a much heavier demand upon junior leaders. Greene acknowledged that the open order infantry formation that he recommended "throws great responsibility upon the senior captains" and that "all recent experience shows that the result of battle, under the fire of breechloaders, depends...upon the skill of the commanders of small units."¹⁰⁰ In a similar vein, Lieutenant Colonel Lazelle argued,

The difficulties of command are greater with breechloaders. Fighting is more individualized, from the lowest to the highest unit of command. More is left to the judgment of the commanding officer of each, from the

¹⁰⁰ Greene, 24.

company to the corps commander, and more is required of each. The fate of battles depends more on the courage and capacity of the individuals; and the difficulty is greater of holding men in hand, and maintaining close directing fire. The General may order the attack, but the careful disposition of the troops to the ground, and their forcible use to a common purpose must be left to company, to field, and to subordinate general officers.¹⁰¹

Thus, 35 years before the United States sent troops to fight in France, some within the army had already come to the conclusion that the “new warfare” portended drastic changes within the ranks of the army’s company-level officers and NCOs.

As American and European officers came to realize that the battlefield was becoming more lethal, and thus more disperse, they also began to see that their armies now demanded junior leaders able to operate without the direct oversight and direction of their superiors. Rather than being file-closers operating within the ear and eye shot of their regimental commanders as they had been during the Civil War, the emerging “new warfare” battlefield placed a premium on captains, lieutenants, and NCOs who were able to use their initiative and judgment to carry out their missions. In 1909, Captain George Balzel observed, “it is self evident, that in order to have an efficient whole, the minutest part must be made as perfect as available means of training will permit.”¹⁰² To this end, he observed, “the display of judgment among the minor leaders...is one of the demands of modern warfare”¹⁰³

Some turn of the century American officers also came to believe that the changes in warfare required not only more independent leaders also more self-reliant and self-disciplined soldiers. As formations spread and the use of battlefield cover and concealment became more important, the individual soldier gained vastly more control over their fire, movement, and their other actions in combat. One junior officer warned,

¹⁰¹ Lazelle, 373.

¹⁰² CPT George Baltzell, “The Proper Training of an Infantry Company,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. V, No. 5 (March 1909), 639.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 645-6.

The tendency in modern warfare to fight battles in extended order and in small detachments, and to throw more responsibility upon the individual soldier, has brought a new influence to bear upon the profession of arms. And in view of the fact that the world has so long looked upon the soldier as an unthinking automaton, there still room for development along newer and more scientific channels. It is probably safe to say that there is no longer a place in modern tactics for the soldier who cannot, under battle conditions, take care of himself if occasion arises.¹⁰⁴

This change in the army's expectations of the individual soldier carried important ramifications for junior leaders. The close formations of the muzzle-loading era provided a built-in cohesion and unifying direction to soldiers within a unit in combat. Knowingly or not, these formations utilized the natural tendency for soldiers in combat to huddle together for the reassuring elbow-to-elbow touch of one's comrades. As formations thinned and spread, soldiers were thrown upon their own to deal with the fear, uncertainty, and confusion of battle. When a line of dispersed soldiers "went to ground" as a result of enemy fire, or to establish their own base of fire against an enemy, inertia accumulated and leaders found (and find) it difficult to get them up and moving again. Without close and direct supervision it was all too easy for the soldier to either stay in a sheltered position while his unit moved forward, or to conduct his own fire and maneuver without any direction from above. To a very great extent, the realities of the modern battlefield gave rise to the military adage that "each infantryman is his own general."

Unfortunately, the conditions on the new battlefield placed junior leaders in a position where they were being pulled in two directions. They themselves had to develop the skills and abilities to achieve their missions without the direct supervision of their superiors while simultaneously being required to train their subordinates to act in a similar manner. Thus, the junior leader was faced with the dilemma of training his subordinates to act semi-independently

¹⁰⁴ CPT Frank Tebbetts, "War and Emotionalism" in *Journal of the Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXV, No. 104 (October 1914), 222.

while also needing to retain the command, control, and cohesion needed to achieve the mission. This often pitted the needs of the leader against the fears and instincts of the soldier.

It is interesting to note that a number of officers turned to the relatively new science of psychology to help them to understand and explain the leadership attributes now needed to direct the newly empowered soldier. The reformer J. Franklin Bell went so far as to lecture a group of Leavenworth students that, “The military commander who contemptuously disregards the psychological equation of his soldiers will never succeed on earth.”¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the noted National Guard officer, Major General John F. O’Ryan argued that, due to the stress that modern warfare had on the individual, an understanding of psychology was now a key leadership skill. Following the Leavenworth model that required officers to conduct a tactical estimation of the situation prior to issuing orders, O’Ryan maintained that officers should also go through a “psychological estimate of the situation” before combat. This was of critical importance because, “Great fear is a psychological cholera. Like cholera it thrives among the ignorant...In no profession is it so important to contend with the human emotion of fear as in the profession of arms.”¹⁰⁶

Some officers went so far as to cite psychological theorists as evidence for their assertions on leadership and the modern soldier. Major Frank McCoy, who would rise to command the 42nd Division’s 63rd Infantry Brigade in the war, noted, “A Frenchman, Le Bon, gave new food for thought in his psychology of the crowd, and the practical soldiers are applying his principles in full intent...”¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, Lincoln Andrews noted,

¹⁰⁵ GEN J. Franklin Bell, “Reflections and Suggestions: An Address by General J. Franklin Bell” 17 March 1906, From the CARL archives, FT Leavenworth, KS., 3.

¹⁰⁶ MG John F. O’Ryan, “The Psychology of Discipline,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 5 (March-April 1914), 694 and 700. O’Ryan was the only National Guard general officer who gained and retained command of an AEF division (the 27th) during the war.

¹⁰⁷ Major Charles E. Kilbourne, ed. *The National Service Library*, Vol. 3. *Principles of Training*, by Major Frank R. McCoy (New York: F.P. Collier and Son, 1917), 193. McCoy was referring to French social psychologist

The psychology of control of men on the battlefield is a big subject of vital importance to leaders...Man, an individual, is largely controlled by his emotions- they color his judgment in the calmest moments, in excitement he is likely to become their creature. Men in a crowd are always swayed by impulses often so unreasonable as to seem absurd and impossible to any one of them standing alone...The strongest instinct in man, handed down from primal times, is self-preservation. When he feels that life is threatened, fear obtrudes...In a command of soldiers on the battlefield, you have a crowd subjected to the strongest emotional emotions, the ideal conditions for developing a mob.¹⁰⁸

That American officers would have been drawn to LeBon is not surprising. The Frenchman's elitist suspicion of the creation of an irrational "mass man" echoed the regulars' own wariness of the relentless modernity of the evolving industrial society. The officers perceived that the values of the industrial men were at odds with the traditional military virtues of self-sacrifice, obedience, austerity and discipline.

Although these resorts to psychology may have seemed progressive, in fact, most of the officers, like McCoy and Andrews, merely put a modern sheen on traditional patriarchal practices. It is safe to say that the psychology used by the average Regular officer had more of a decidedly Social Darwinist bent than anything intended by Sigmund Freud or Gustave LeBon. While officers like J. Franklin Bell accurately argued that leaders had to appeal to soldiers more through reason than through coercion and the fear of punishment, he admitted that he was up against a tradition of unquestioned obedience and deference that would be hard to transform.

As junior leaders tried to come to grips with the issue of soldier motivation and *mentalité*, they also had to contend with the more tangible problems of command and control. While weapons technologies had undergone massive changes, the technologies for combat

Gustave LeBon. LeBon's 1896 book, *The Crowd*, argued that industrialization and the rise of mass political culture had given rise to a mob mentality where the individual's identity was subsumed by the crowd and he willingly sacrificed his self interests for those of the collective. This often led to mass irrationality. Marvin Perry, *An Intellectual History of Modern Europe* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 327-9.

¹⁰⁸ Lincoln Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1916), 37-8.

communications, especially those used for the attack, had not significantly changed since the musket era. Although the use of wire-linked field phones had been perfected by the turn of the century, the wires were easily damaged by shellfire or incautious soldiers. Furthermore, laying wire while moving forward during an attack made the linesman obvious and easy targets for the enemy. Although the army placed emphasis on the use of flag signals, the signal men were likewise vulnerable targets for enemy marksmen. Junior leaders were thus generally left with no other recourse for command and control than using messengers or voice and hand and arm signals. These also had their drawbacks. Messengers could be killed, get lost, or fall victim to fear-inspired inertia. One prescient infantry officer described a battlefield where,

The air is filled with hostile bullets, with the snap and drone of shrapnel, while a single man standing erect draws down a sudden and accurate shower of bullets. You are flattened to the ground, intently watching the enemy, keeping an eye to the companies on either of your flanks, and on the musician crouched by your side, who watches the rear for signals. Your voice will not carry a dozen feet, while your whistle sounds but feebly. The tense faces of the men as they glance around either for direction of the platoon commander or guide, or covertly to the ditch a hundred yards in the rear, show the strains they are under...how else will you communicate your will except by signals? The ordinary means of expression fail, even if you do attempt to rush about on the firing line yelling madly in this or that man's ear, or harshly grasping a quaking shoulder. You fail to command; you only increase the tension of battle, or get killed.¹⁰⁹

Although the army was well aware of the problems with battlefield communications prior to 1914, wartime reports from Europe continued to stress their continued baleful influence. In 1916, one American observer reported,

¹⁰⁹ CPT Dana Merrill, "Infantry Training" in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (July-August 1912), 61-2. The problem with communication was well understood by American officers prior to World War I, as the following quotes note... "A war strength company cannot be handled on the firing line by word of mouth; in the noise and excitement of firing, the captain cannot make himself heard or understood." He recommended that officers use of whistle and hand-arms signals to command their soldiers in combat. 37. 1LT G. R. Guild, "The Company in Combat Exercises," in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (July-August 1914), 37, and "A battalion commander must be far enough to the rear to observe his entire line. In the noise of a real battle his voice could not be heard ten yards by the men in the firing line. The same is equally true of company and platoon leaders. These officers cannot be running up and down the line giving instructions; if they tried it they would not last long." Morrison, *Infantry*, 30.

Communication under normal conditions is maintained by telephone and buzzer, and it almost always happens that telephone lines are cut by artillery fire, and then it is necessary to fall back on visual signaling and communication by messenger...Control during action has been found most difficult to obtain. The noise is terrific and once an attack is launched, communication is next to impossible and results in throwing control largely on the shoulders of subordinate commanders, such as section and platoon leaders. The platoon leaders led their platoons during the attack; the company commander follows with the last of the company reserves; the battalion commander would probably remain in the battle headquarters until the attack has made considerable advance...The battalion once launched in the attack is very little influenced by its commander until the enemy's trench is consolidated.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, there were no ready solutions to these problems of command and control. The only hope, as the observer had noted above, was to build an army of self-disciplined soldiers and leaders able to operate within the fear and chaos of battle and achieve their missions with little direct oversight from field and general officers. As the European armies had discovered, this was easier said than done.

As previously noted, in the years prior to the Great War, some army officers had called for leaders trained to exercise initiative on the battlefield. They hoped that this focus would somewhat offset the challenges of battlefield communications. The *IDR* attempted to codify this point by stating, "When circumstances render it impracticable to consult the authority issuing an order, officers should not hesitate to vary from such order when it is clearly based upon an incorrect view of the situation, is impossible of execution, or has been rendered impracticable on account of changes which have occurred since its promulgation." However, the *IDR* offered senior commanders the ability to have the "best of both world" by also declaring, "In the application of this rule the responsibility for mistakes rests upon the subordinate, but unwillingness to assume responsibility on proper occasions is indicative of weakness."¹¹¹ Thus,

¹¹⁰ Editorial Staff, "Information on Trench Warfare" in *Journal of the Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXVII, No. 111 (July 1916), 15-18.

¹¹¹ *IDR*, 99-100.

the army sought to balance its desire for self-reliant leaders with its equally strong desire for subordination and control.

The inherent conflict between subordinate's initiative and superior's control meant that the army consistently sent its junior leaders mixed messages on its institutional expectations of combat leadership. On one hand, J. Franklin Bell decried officers "trained in the old tradition of prompt and unquestioning obedience, without even a desire to understand," and hoped for the day when the notion that a soldier's only duty was to obey "will forever be left to repose upon the scrap-heap of other discarded military notions."¹¹² On the other hand, Ellis and Garey lectured officer candidates at Plattsburg,

Never forget that you lose your identity as an individual when you step into ranks; you then become merely a unit of mass. As soon as you obey properly, promptly, and, at times, unconsciously, the commands of your officers, as soon as you cheerfully give up the pleasures and personal privileges that conflict with the new order of life to which you have submitted, you will then have become a disciplined man.¹¹³

In truth effective combat units had to be able to meld the two together. Soldiers and leaders had to be disciplined to stand the stress and strain of combat, they had to obey orders to accomplish their assigned missions, and they had to be willing and able to make snap decisions based on changing battlefield realities. Unfortunately, the army did a poor job of reconciling these competing demands within both its doctrine and its leadership training.

It is clear from the era's professional writings that a number of officers recognized this flaw in doctrine and training. In 1909 Captain George Baltzell complained, "If a company commander were allowed the proper degree of freedom, he would find little difficulty in

¹¹² Bell, "Reflections and Suggestions," 3.

¹¹³ O. O. Ellis and E. B. Garey, *The Plattsburg Manual* (New York: The Century Company, 1917), 17. Ironically later in the work they also noted, "officers and men of all ranks and grades are given a certain independence in the execution of the tasks to which they are assigned and are expected to show initiative in meeting the different situations as they arise.", 206.

arranging his system of instruction in consonance with his own ideas. But under the present system, the orders of the department commander and likewise the views of an inspector may not be in harmony with the methods a commander would like to pursue.”¹¹⁴ Three years later, another infantry officer argued,

...the essential point needed in our infantry to-day is more independence for organization commanders and a direct holding of them responsible for results attained. To do this they must be given the freedom of method and not have every moment of the day mapped out by superior authority. This not only kills all initiative so essential to war, but also takes away any direct responsibility for the training of their organizations.¹¹⁵

In 1916 a major with the Mexican Punitive Expedition bewailed, “Experience has led me to believe that the with-holding of initiative from subordinates is one of the very worst faults to be attributed to the field officers of our service.” He went on to note, “And my experience as a captain showed me that the majors may be quite as much at fault. Many an officer who has been an excellent troop commander, makes an indifferent major, because he interferes too much with the initiative of his subordinates.”¹¹⁶ Time and time again, the junior officers’ freedom to use the initiative and exercise a degree of autonomy was sacrificed to their superior’s desire for control and proper subordination.

Although junior officers chaffed under the smothering control of their superior officers, they seem to have been just as guilty of this offense when it came to their NCOs and soldiers. Some officers undoubtedly believed that the changes in warfare would demand as much of NCOs as it did of junior officers. For example, Lincoln Andrews maintained that, “The

¹¹⁴ CPT George Baltzell, “The Proper Training of an Infantry Company,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. V, No. 5 (March 1909), 660.

¹¹⁵ CPT Dana Merrill, “Infantry Training” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (July-August 1912), 69-70.

¹¹⁶ _____, “Reveries of an Old Field Officer” in *Journal of the Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXVII, No. 113 (January 1917), 15-18. Captain William Carpenter argued that superior officers, “should interfere in the instruction or handling of the company only when necessary to insure diligence, to rectify mistakes, or to prevent omissions.” Major Charles E. Kilbourne, ed. *The National Service Library*, Vol. 4. *Rudiments of Drill Mobile Army Troops* by Captain William Carpenter (New York: F.P. Collier and Son, 1917), 18.

exigencies of campaign and battle will continually place noncommissioned officers in unexpected command, and if their peace[time] training is to be reasonable, it must prepare them to meet these responsibilities.”¹¹⁷ Major Frank McCoy recommended that as soon as a company commander promoted a man to corporal, the first thing he should do would be to give the new NCO an independent mission that tested his ability to “think, decide, and act.”¹¹⁸

Regrettably, McCoy’s advice was not followed by many of his fellow officers. In 1916 the editor of the *Infantry Journal* lamented, “It cannot be denied that our noncommissioned officers are given too little scope for the development of their initiative as group leaders in the average company of the regular service.”¹¹⁹ Major James Chester chastised company commanders who “spend too much of their time with their companies” and thus set the condition that within their units, “They are everything and their non-commissioned officers are nothing.”¹²⁰

Along the same lines, another officer observed, “The tendency of many troop commanders seems to be to regard the troop as either a unit, or an aggregation of individual members. The existence of the squad leader is more or less ignored and the inevitable result must be that his interest lapses and his energy lags.”¹²¹ Company-level leaders of all ranks were hobbled by their superiors and the inability of the army to reconcile the needs of initiative and the demand for control. Ultimately this hindered the army’s ability to adequately prepare its junior leaders for facing the uncertainties of the battlefield. This would also influence the way that the army trained its mass of new officers and NCOs once the United States entered the war.

¹¹⁷ Lincoln C. Andrews, *Leadership and Military Training* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1918), 12.

¹¹⁸ *The National Service Library*, Vol. 3., 194.

¹¹⁹ Editorial Staff, “A School for Noncommissioned Officers,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 8 (April 1916), 955.

¹²⁰ MAJ James Chester, “Comment and Criticism on Moral Preparation of the Soldier,” in *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. XXXII (1913), 111.

¹²¹ 1LT William Edwards, “The Squad Leader and His Squad” in *Journal of the United States Cavalry*, Vol. XXIII, No. 94 (January 1913), 777.

The army's fixation with infantry firepower superiority was one of the greatest sources of its ongoing tensions between control and initiative. The weight that the army doctrine placed on gaining and maintaining a massing of small arms fire, in both the offense and the defense, dictated very strict direction by field officers of the targeting and orchestration of the firefight. It is only a slight exaggeration to argue that in the American infantry doctrine the chief role of maneuver was merely to move units to a place that allowed them to gain a firepower advantage (and of course to set the conditions for the final charge).¹²² The dictates of fire superiority tended to push officers at all levels toward micromanaging their subordinates in an effort to maintain strict control of the combat action.

This obsession with controlling fires was deeply embedded in the *IDR* and strongly echoed in the professional writings of Regular officers. The *IDR* delineated the roles and responsibilities for leaders at each echelon and provided detailed instructions on the conduct of the firefight. They established a distinction between fire *direction*, fire *control* and fire *discipline*. The battalion or company commander was responsible for fire *direction*. He selected the target, allotted parts of the target area to his subordinate leaders, determined the range, announced the sight settings of the soldiers, indicated the type of fire to be used (volley, fire at will, or clip fire), and gave the order or time to commence firing.¹²³ The platoon leader was responsible for fire *control*. He insured that the soldiers had the correct sight setting and target, observed, regulated, and as needed corrected the firing of their soldiers. He was responsible for giving "such additional commands or directions as are necessary to exact compliance with the

¹²² *IDR*, 104-9.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 68. Volley firing was the simultaneous firing of all the unit's soldiers on a specific target at the command of the officer. Clip fire instructed the soldiers to fire, as rapidly as they could, one five round clip of ammunition (the magazine capacity of the M1903 Springfield rifle). Fire at will allowed the soldier to regulate their own rate of aimed fire within their specified target area. It was "the class of fire normally employed in attack or defense," and was to be continuous until such time that the commander ordered cease fire.

captains will.”¹²⁴ Fire *discipline* was the responsibility of each soldier. It entailed, “care in setting the sight and delivery of fire; constant attention to the orders of the leader, and careful observation of the enemy; an increase of fire when the target is favorable, and a cessation of fire when the enemy disappears; [and] economy of ammunition.”¹²⁵ Although all leaders were responsible for ensuring fire *discipline*, this oversight was usually the purview on the unit’s NCOs.

The *IDR* made clear the paramount importance of making the fire of the individual soldier an extension of the will of the commander. It unequivocally stated, “The best troops are those that submit longest to fire control. Loss of control is an evil which robs success of its greatest results. To avoid or delay such loss should be the constant aim of all.”¹²⁶ Instructors at army schools and writers in the army’s professional journals constantly harped on this theme. Captain Henry Eames warned his students at Fort Leavenworth, “Fire Discipline is different from any other kind of discipline and it is vastly more important, and much more difficult to instill into the soldier.” Its goal was to get the soldiers to perform “without any conscious mental activity” so the “very muscles may instinctively obey the word of command.”¹²⁷ Although all military training (then as now) was to instill a reflexive response that allowed soldiers to overcome fear and to act rapidly and instinctively to battlefield events, the turn of the century army took this Pavlovian concept to an extreme.

For all the talk by some officers of the need for leaders to understand the psychology of their soldiers, to appeal to their men’s reason in giving orders, and to admit that the modern battlefield prevented the direct supervision of individuals, the army’s compulsive obsession with

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Eames, *The Rifle in War*, 57.

control actually seemed to be a throwback to the *Kadavergehorsam*- the corpse discipline- of the era of Frederick the Great. This reality encouraged leaders to attempt to micromanage their subordinates. In 1909 Captain George Baltzell wrote that in the firefight, the main duty of lieutenants and NCOs was “not a mere perfunctory repetition of commands, but a close supervision of their execution” and that this close control should be taken “even to the point of examining the sight adjustments [of his individual soldiers].”¹²⁸ Despite the dispersion of the modern battlefield and subsequent increase in the individual infantryman’s freedom of action, the army still expected its junior leaders to closely adhere to the will of their superiors and, in the process, exercise a strict and close control of their subordinates.

The desire for control was also reflected in the army’s mania for ammunition conservation. The fear among American leaders that repeating firearms would only encourage soldiers to waste ammunition goes back at least to the Civil War. Though the Civil War had demonstrated the effectiveness of repeating firearms such as the Spencer and Henry rifles, in 1866 the army adopted the single shot “trapdoor” Springfield rifle. While this decision was partially made out of a desire to have a more powerful cartridge than those used in the Civil War era repeaters, but the selection of the single shot “trapdoor” was also a means for controlling the individual soldier’s rate of fire.

It is interesting to note that both the Krag-Jørgensen and the M1903 Springfield magazine rifles that replaced the “trapdoor” both had magazine “cut-off” devices. The magazine “cut-off” physically prevented the weapon from loading the five rounds within the magazine, thus forcing the soldier to load and fire one shot at a time until his officers ordered him to disengage the “cut

¹²⁸ CPT George Baltzell, “The Proper Training of an Infantry Company,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. V, No. 5 (March 1909), 646.

off.”¹²⁹ Lieutenant Colonel R. K. Evans went so far as to state that the main duties of squad leaders was to ensure, “that the men do not fire without his orders or those of higher authority;[and] that they do not waste their ammunition.” He advised young NCOs that, “in battle every cartridge should be treated as if it were a hundred dollar bill, for which full value must be demanded.”¹³⁰ This issue was considered to be so important by the army that in September 1903, Captain John H. Parker presented a lecture at the General Services and Staff School that was related exclusively to the need for ammunition conservation in combat. This subject was considered to be so critical by the faculty that the school included the lecture in Captain J. C. Dickman’s textbook, *Modern Improvements in Fire Arms and Their Tactical Effects*.¹³¹

While ammunition conservation and the linked problem of combat resupply were important concerns for junior leaders, the army’s anxiety with these matters were far too influenced by its frontier experiences and reflected a lack of understanding of the realities of firepower-intensive modern battlefield. This concern again highlighted some of the inconsistencies in army doctrine. Although the doctrine placed great emphasis on gaining fire superiority by producing an overwhelming mass of rifle fire, it never articulated the point at

¹²⁹ It is fascinating to trace the evolution of this concern for ammunition conservation. In the 1990s, the Army and Marine Corps adopted the M16A2 rifle. Unlike its predecessor, the M16A1, which could be set to fire semi and full automatic, the M16A2 can only fire semi-automatic and a three-round burst. This move from full automatic to three-round burst fire was taken to keep soldiers from firing wildly and wasting ammunition.

¹³⁰ LTC R. K. Evans, “Infantry Fire in Battle,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. V, No. 6 (May 1909), 827.

¹³¹ CPT John H. Parker, “A Tactical Evolution: Lecture and Demonstration before the Faculty and Students, General Staff Service College, September 26, 1903” in Dickman’s *Modern Improvements in Fire Arms and Their Tactical Effects*. This fear of wasting ammunition also influenced the army’s attitudes toward machine guns. The Staff College’s Captain John Crawford was wary of the ammunition consumption of automatic weapons and warned, “the more complicated the arm and the more ammunition it can fire per minute, the greater will be the need for having a highly trained soldier to use it.” Crawford, 13. The army’s concern with ammunition conservation was mirrored by the British Army. Like the M1903 Springfield, the No. 1 Mark III Lee Enfield that the British adopted in 1908 also had a magazine “cut off,” and thus the two weapons were the only firearms of any of the major combatants to be so equipped during the war. When the British faced the need to equip the mass wartime army, in 1915 they dropped the magazine “cut-off” from the new No. 1 Mark III* to simplify the manufacturing of their weapons.

which that massive fire strayed into the realm of wasting ammunition. Veteran officers and NCOs could gain this understanding by experience, but this would be a difficult concept to master with green leaders and soldiers.

To produce the control of action that the army expected, it placed much emphasis on close order drill. Close order drill has long been a tried and true method for training new recruits in automatic response to orders and to act as part of a unit collective. The turn-of-the century army, however, continued to stress close order drill of its units above and beyond the dictates of recruit training. In his 1914 semi-official manual, *Fundamentals of Military Service*, Lincoln Andrews stated that the purpose of continual and constant close order drill was for

...training your minds and bodies into HABITS of precise unhesitating obedience to the will of your leader...Then when the stress of battle comes, and men's faculties are paralyzed by the unwonted roar and loss of life and straining fear, they may still be controlled because HABIT has made obedience automatic and the easiest line of action. (original emphasis)¹³²

George Baltzell also justified the close order drill focus on the control over the individual soldier by noting,

...in the heat of battle, the average man fires on in an almost cataleptic state, his mind incapable of ordinary obedience. Obedience under such conditions must, therefore, be instinctive and the result of long continued habit. This habit can only be learned by strict close order drill on the parade ground... Any carelessness allowed on the parade ground will bear ugly fruit on the battlefield where we require that under whatsoever stress of circumstances, danger and death, when the soldier hears the word of command his muscles if not his mind shall instinctively obey.¹³³

This belief that close control by leaders and the conditioned response of soldiers could somehow overcome, or at least mitigate, the fog and friction of combat was a touchstone of army training practices prior to the Great War. Soon after the United States entered the war, Frank McCoy admitted that, "The Great War has been terribly hard on the textbooks. About the only military

¹³² Lincoln Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service*, 42.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 58. Also see Crawford, 18 and 30-47, Lincoln Andrews, *Fundamentals of Military Service*, 90-91. and *The National Service Library*, Vol. 3, 216.

china that has not been smashed are the primary functions of discipline and its drill, *drill*, DRILL. (original emphasis).¹³⁴ This approach to training as “drill, *drill*, DRILL,” (especially close order drill) carried grave consequences for the leaders and soldiers of the AEF.

The U. S. Army on the eve of the Great War was beset by uncertainty and internal contradictions. For over thirty years its officers had striven to understand the dynamic changes in warfare that had been wrought by a host of new, and collectively, more lethal weapons. In trying to understand the parameters of this “new warfare,” the officer corps was hobbled by its own biases and a tendency to see in military actions in Manchuria and the Western Front of 1914-1916 those things that seemed to confirm its prejudices and validate its doctrine. The officer corps’ realization that modern weapons forced units to thin and spread out to survive on the battlefield led many to believe that the “new warfare” required junior leaders able to exercise initiative and semi-independent command outside of the traditional direct supervision of their superiors. Simultaneously, the failure of changes in battlefield communications to keep pace with weapons innovations exponentially increased the difficulty for leaders at all levels to effectively command and control their units. However, these developments were in constant conflict with doctrinal trends and command traditions that sought to retain as much centralized control of small units as possible in the hands of superior officers. The tension between the initiative of junior leaders and the control by their superiors was never resolved prior to the Great War, but the American tendency, reinforced by its doctrine and training methods, leaned more heavily upon the side of centralized control. All of these factors ultimately meant that the U. S. Army entered World War I without a clear understanding of modern war, or a cogent vision of what the “new warfare” demanded of combat leaders in small units.

¹³⁴ *The National Service Library*, Vol. 3., 203.

Chapter 5

“Where are we to get them?”- The Quest for Reserves of Leaders 1905-1916

In his 1913 Annual Report, Chief of Staff of the Army Leonard Wood warned,

I . . .invite attention to the necessity for building up, with as little delay as practicable, a reserve of officers qualified to serve as company officers for reserves or volunteers. If we were called on to mobilize to meet a first-class power, we should require immediately several thousand officers; where are we to get them? This is a matter of vital importance, and one which should be attended to at once and not left to the rush, hurry, and confusion proceeding a war.¹

Within four years of this statement, the United States was at war with a first-class power, and the nation had done little to mitigate the “rush, hurry, and confusion” of mobilization. Woodrow Wilson’s decision to mobilize a mass draftee-based army for use in France presented the immediate problem of providing officers for the nascent force. In theory Wood’s question of “where are we to get them?” should have been answered largely by the federalization of National Guard officers and the recruitment of military-trained students from the nation’s Land-Grant colleges. Unfortunately, neither of these sources delivered the quality or quantity of trained officers and officer candidates that the army needed. Nor did any of the army’s mobilization plans address the need to build a trained and reliable wartime NCO corps. As has been shown in the preceding chapters, the army had clear ideas of its expectations of officers and NCOs and a clear, albeit flawed, conception of modern war. This chapter will examine the army’s pre-war plans for creating a reserve of officers and NCOs and the challenges of attaining wartime officers and NCOs from the National Guard, Land Grant colleges, and the Plattsburg

¹ War Department, *Annual Reports 1913*, Vol. 1. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 151-2. Wood’s lament was nothing new. In 1901 Elihu Root had informed the Congress of the need to make “a large number of young men . . .competent to perform the duties of volunteer officers.” He warned that without this reserve “there will always be confusion, waste, delay, and suffering” in time of war. *Annual Reports 1901*, Vol. 1, 23-4.

camps. The chapter will also explore how the failure of the various mobilization plans contributed to the “rush, hurry, and confusion” in 1917 that Wood had so feared.

The idea that the army would need to expand its officer corps in wartime was not unique to the World War One era. In the midst of the Civil War, Congressman Justin Morrill proposed a bill offering federal land grants to colleges and universities “where the leading object shall be... scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach. . . agriculture and the mechanical arts.”² Morrill envisioned the Land-Grant colleges as a more democratic, cost effective, and reliable source of wartime officers than the “treason tainted” Military Academy.

The 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act unfortunately left many questions and issues of military training in the colleges unanswered. The legislation was open to interpretation as to whether or not the instruction was compulsory for the students and about which governmental organization would hold ultimate oversight for the program’s implementation. While the War Department was responsible for providing instructors and equipment to support military training, the Interior Department was responsible for overseeing land grant funding and the overall administration of the program. Faced with these ambiguities, and the realities of low post-Civil War budgets, the War Department did little to standardize or support military training in the Land-Grant colleges or the other educational institutions that taught military science between 1865 and 1912.³

Army officers had long been aware of the shortcomings of the Morrill Act. The noted nineteenth century reformer, Emory Upton, advocated recasting the Regular Army as a skeleton force that would serve as the strong “expandable” superstructure for a large reserve-based wartime army. Upton viewed the Land Grant Colleges as the best potential source of reserve

² Quoted in Gene M. Lyons and John W. Massland, “The Origins of the ROTC,” *Military Affairs* Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Spring 1959), 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 3-5. and *War Department Annual Report, 1913*, 189.

officers to lead the units that would be filled upon mobilization. He noted that these colleges could, “supply us with a class of officers such as we have never seen in our army during any past war,” but realized that the system of military training in these institutions was in need of reform before they could achieve his vision. Upton recommended that the first steps for making the Land Grants a reliable source of officers were to impose “a uniform programme of theoretical and practical instruction” in all colleges. Upton also argued that for his system to work, it was vital for the army to keep track of the graduates of the Land Grant military programs. He recommended that a roster of these graduates could easily be maintained by using the existing *Army Register*.⁴

Although Upton accurately gauged some of the key shortcomings of the Land Grant military training system, it was not until the army’s dismal performance in the Spanish American War that army reformers gained enough momentum to try to overturn decades of bureaucratic inertia. The war with Spain, and the nation’s subsequent need to protect and police its overseas possessions, led Secretary of War Elihu Root and military reformers like Leonard Wood to re-examine the Land-Grant colleges as a source for officers. The Spanish American War and Philippine Insurrection had demonstrated how unprepared the nation was to expand the existing officer corps. As previously noted, to gain enough officers to lead the Volunteer Regiments raised to fight in the Philippines, the army ultimately had to resort to the direct commissioning of

⁴ Emory Upton, *Armies of Asia and Europe* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878), 343-4 and 366-7. Based upon his inspections of Japan, China, Persia, and the major European powers, Upton concluded that the proper military policy for the United States would be to recast the Regulars as the foundation for an “expandable” wartime army. Upton, who was strongly influenced by Prussia’s string of victories against the Danes, Austrians, and French, saw the German reserve system as the best model for the Americans to emulate. Under his plan, each active duty regiment would establish a depot that maintained a skeletal organization for two wartime battalions. These skeletal battalions would be made up of Regular Army company and battalion commanders and the requisite battalion staffs. In wartime, the soldiers for these organizations would come from a reserve of “National Volunteers,” whose military reliability and effectiveness rested upon a rigorous training regimen overseen by their Regular Army officers. Under Upton’s plan, the militia would lose its position as the nation’s first line of reserve.

Regular NCOs and civilians. Of the 2,000 line officers in service in 1902, 414 were former enlisted men and 512 were commissioned directly from civilian life with no previous military education.⁵ To prevent a reoccurrence of this ad hoc method of obtaining officers, Root and Wood were determined to transform the Land Grant Colleges into a viable source for officers.

Between 1909 and 1914 the army took steps to standardize training in the colleges and to define its expectations of the military program. In all educational institutions offering military instruction, the War Department gave professors of Military Science and Tactics the mission to “qualify students who enter the military departments of such institutions to be company officers of infantry volunteers, or militia.”⁶ To accomplish this mission, the War Department mandated that all able-bodied college students would have to take 84 one-hour blocks of instruction over the course of two years. The instruction was to be mostly lecture-based and focused on the Infantry Drill, Field Service, and Small Arms Firing Regulations.⁷

Unfortunately, the War Department’s reform efforts had little effect on the actual military education of students in the Land-Grant colleges prior to World War I. The ambiguities of the original Morrill Act continued to hamper the army’s efforts to define student eligibility and requirements for military instruction. As Leonard Wood noted in 1913, “Under the present law there is no specified standard of military instruction required, and no penalty attached to

⁵ Graham Cosmas, *An Army for Empire* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1994), 93, 126-128, 143-146; and Timothy Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 56.

⁶ Ira L. Reeves, *Military Education in the United States* (Burlington: Free Press, 1914), 68. Reeves was a Regular Army captain and Professor of Military Science and Tactics at the University of Vermont when he published this work. The Army Appropriations Act of 1904 required the army to provide 100 officers to support civilian educational institutions. To qualify for assignment of a Regular Army instructor, military colleges had to have 100 students over the age of 15 enrolled in their military programs. Non-military institutions were required to have 150 students enrolled in their military programs.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68-9.

insufficient or improper military instruction that endangers the receipt of the annual funds appropriated.”⁸

Many officers argued that the inefficiency of the military programs at civilian colleges stemmed from a “clash of cultures” between the army officers assigned to teach at the institutions and the civilian faculty. One Professor of Military Science and Tactics noted that most academics placed little importance on military education and supported tactical instruction only to the degree required to “get by the law” of the Land Grant Act. He also pointed out,

College professors as a general thing are men of peace. Few of them have had any military training, and with the exception of those in the departments of history but few have made any special study of the question of national defense. They are inclined to look upon the military as a needless expenditure of energy and resources, and upon military men as consumers contributing nothing to the world.⁹

These sentiments were echoed by a number of other officer-professors. In 1911, Lieutenant Smith, an officer assigned to the University of Idaho, noted of the civilian faculty, “To many of them it (military training) is something to be endured and not fostered and while the chief administrative officer may not be openly antagonistic he may not display any great enthusiasm for things military.”¹⁰ That same year, the officer assigned to the Kentucky Military Institute admitted that he was discouraged after being assigned to the college because “The military was regarded as a necessary evil, by both teachers and cadets.”¹¹ These tensions contributed to the failure of prewar efforts to achieve any degree of standardization in military education.

⁸ *War Department Annual Report, 1913*, 188. and Reeves, 79.

⁹ Reeves, 102-3. Reeves’ assessment of the attitudes of college professors may be far too harsh. The president of his own institution, Guy Benton was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the Plattsburg Movement and many other academics strongly favored preparedness and Universal Military Training. John G. Clifford, *The Citizen Soldiers: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement, 1913-1920* (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1972), 24-7.

¹⁰ Draft manuscript “Notes on College Duty,” dated 2 March 1911, RG 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, 1903-1919, Microfilm finding guide M1024, File 6410, Roll 78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Even when military instruction was conducted in educational institutions, it seldom seems to have focused on subjects that would prepare the students to become company-grade officers. Far too much of the instruction was centered on basic recruit training that had little relevance to modern warfare or to the leadership requirements of being an officer. The War Department's *Annual Report* of 1913 noted, "At the last annual inspection it was generally found that sufficient progress had not been made in practical instruction; that too much time was spent in close order (drill) and ceremonies at the expense of good theoretical instruction and practical fieldwork."¹² This problem even extended to military schools and colleges. In 1914 Captain Richard Stackton, the Assistant Commandant of the Bordentown Military Institute, argued,

While some schools are excellent in the instruction given, in the majority of cases the cadet has little or no real military information or interest. The average ex-military-school student is not...suited for a commission in the National Guard or Volunteers. . .in most institutions, mere *drill* is given, and the youth graduates with the impression that a faultless parade and the ability to form a line of skirmishers and fire a few blanks...are the sole requirements of a complete military education.¹³

Thus, with a focus on close order drill and firing "a few blanks" the true value of the little military instruction performed in most of the nation's colleges was negligible.

To correct some of these faults, in 1911 the Chief of Staff directed the War College to prepare a guide for army officers assigned to colleges and universities. This guide, "Notes on College Duty," was intended to both aid in standardizing military instruction as well as providing helpful hints for officer-professors for avoiding the pitfalls of working with college faculty and students. In dealing with the civilian professors, the guide recommended that, "The officer

¹² *War Department Annual Report, 1913*, 189. Similar comments appeared in the *Annual Report* of the following year. For a sketch of military education at the micro level see Richard S. Faulkner "Our Patriotic Duty at Home and Abroad: The University of Georgia in World War I," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXIX, no. 4 (Winter 1995), 924-931.

¹³ Captain Richard Stockton, Jr., "Military Schools and the Nation," *Infantry Journal*, Vol XI, no. 1 (July-August 1914), 25.

should go to the institution with the idea of becoming one of the faculty in all that the term implies, that is, he should make up his mind to enter fully and heartily into their social affairs, accepting their hospitality and being scrupulous in returning it.”¹⁴ It also advocated that the officers should make themselves useful to the college by assisting the coaching of sports teams and by assisting in non-military college administration and instruction.

The guide also reminded officers that their attitudes and interactions with their students greatly influenced the latter’s perceptions and opinions of military service. It warned, “an officer who has been serving with troops almost invariably adopts a manner with the cadets such as he has been accustomed to use with enlisted men,” and that “this manner is invariably resented by the cadets.”¹⁵ “Notes on College Duty” also urged that officers realize,

The prime object of military instruction in college is to fit the young men for duty as officers of volunteers in time of war. This is done by drill and discipline directed as to give the students an intelligent appreciation for the various rules and duties that are placed upon them, and by inculcating a love of country and a fondness for and interest in military service...therefore, don’t give them a dislike of things military by exaggerating the severity of discipline so that they will fail to respond to the call and utilize the lessons you have imparted.¹⁶

In many ways these instructions reveal the grave challenges that the army officers faced. On one hand the instructor had to prepare the students to serve as wartime officers; a task requiring a great and arduous degree of physical and mental preparation, while on the other hand, the instructor could not attain this degree of realism without perhaps prejudicing the students against military service. Unfortunately, the available evidence suggests that the tendency of instructors was to sacrifice the former for the later.

¹⁴ Draft manuscript “Notes on College Duty,” dated 2 March 1911, RG 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, 1903-1919, Microfilm finding guide M1024, File 6410, Roll 78. 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

Despite the army's good intentions, little changed in either the ability of officers to work with college students and faculty or to provided the students a meaningful degree of military training. For example in the army's 1912 annual inspections of college military programs, the inspector went as far as to recommend that the army withdraw all regular officers assigned to the North Georgia Agricultural College because, "The discipline of the military department ... has become intolerable, due to lack of proper support of the officer on duty by the college president."¹⁷ The inspections also revealed that, "The relation of the military department of the University of Idaho to the college authorities has not been satisfactory during the past year" and that "the situation at this particular college required the exercise of more tact than the officer [assigned] possesses." The inspector believed that the source of the tensions was that, "The president of the institution has a strong personal dislike" for the officer at the college.¹⁸

Although the officers at civilian colleges tended to blame the civilian students and faculty for their problems, Wood and other officers realized that the army was also responsible for some of the failings of its military instruction of college students. In an address to the Engineering Association of Land Grant Colleges, General Wood admitted that the War Department's own "inertness" and that a lack of officers suitable to teach college students were ultimately to blame for much of the poor results in military education. Wood's assertions were shared by some of the officers who had served at colleges. Captain Ira Reeves, for example, believed that the shortcomings of college training stemmed from unimaginative officers who attempted to train students as if they were recruits.¹⁹

¹⁷ College Inspection Board, Memorandum dated 12 June 1912, RG 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, 1903-1919, Microfilm finding guide M1024, File 7066, Roll 117, 12.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Reeves, 99-100, 102, 105., and Clifford, 12-13.

A great part of the failure of military education in the Land Grant colleges was that the army had no set standard for the officers it selected to post at educational institutions. While the instructors were generally officers of good standing (for example, John Pershing taught at the University of Nebraska from 1891 to 1895), they had no special qualifications or training to teach at the college level. In most cases, the army saw instructor duty as a well-deserved break for its officers from the grind and isolation of frontier service.²⁰ In 1914, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Hale went as far as to argue that a more rigorous selection process for the regular officers assigned to teach Military Science at civilian colleges would not only improve military instruction, but would also “reverse the antagonistic attitude concerning the military department sometimes encountered” between the officers and the college administration and faculty.²¹

Another obstacle to the army’s ability to raise a ready reserve of college trained officers had more to do with administrative problems than with lapses in instruction or a “clash of cultures” between military and civilian instructors. Simply put, until 1915, the army made no effort to even maintain a list of those students who had graduated from college military programs. In 1912 Secretary of War Henry Stimson lamented that the lack of a rational system for building a cadre of reserve officers was “one of the greatest defects in our military system.” He pointed out that the greatest cause of this defect was that the War Department had no system for tracking those students who had graduated from the military programs and thus, “the young men who graduate at such institutions pass out into civil life without any definite place for them in our military establishment.”²² He also noted that since there was also no system of annual

²⁰ Frank Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, Vol. 1 (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1977), 101-109.

²¹ LTC H.C. Hale, “Military Instruction in Colleges,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. X, no. 5 (March-April 1914), 689.

²² War Department, *Annual Report for 1912*, Vol. I, 99.

training to keep those graduates current on tactics and military matters, within five years the former cadets quickly forgot the little training that they had received at college.

A 1916 War College study confirmed Stimson's fears. The War College noted that between 1905 and 1915, 287,952 students had received some degree of military training from Regular Army officers at American college and universities. The army only considered 44,592 of these students to have graduated from its college military programs. However, the War College admitted that "only a small percentage" of the 44,592 "will be considered 'trained officers,' as the words are understood to-day, but all will have pursued a course, both practical and theoretical, insuring a working knowledge of rudiments."²³ The report went on to note that of the 15,323 graduates of the college military programs between 1912 and 1915 only 1100 were even recommended by their Regular Army instructors for regular or volunteer commissions. The War College staff maintained that of those who graduated from military courses prior to 1912, "nearly all have, no doubt, lost touch with things military, and have consequently forgotten what little they learned before their graduation."²⁴

Whatever the reason, it is clear that the military education in Land-Grant colleges and other educational institutions did little to prepare their students for commissioning. Although many of these former students would eventually become officers in World War One, the army realized the uneven nature of their previous military education and required most of them to attend an Officer Training Camp prior to being commissioned.

In theory, the question of having a ready and reliable cadre of reserve officers and NCOs should have been moot. Since its founding in 1879, the National Guard Association, and various state adjutant generals, had waged a long and bitter battle to establish the guard as the nation's

²³ War Department, *Study on Educational Institutions Giving Military Training as a Source for a Supply of Officers for a National Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

primary wartime reserve.²⁵ While legislation between 1903 and 1910 granted the National Guard this long-sought status, the Guard continued to suffer from a host of problems that ultimately prevented it from being either a source of trained leaders or a reliable wartime reserve.²⁶

As with the Regular Army, the Spanish American War and the Philippine Insurrection highlighted the glaring tactical, administrative, and logistical problems of the Guard. Due to problems with training and shortages of manpower, only two National Guard regiments, the 71st New York and the 4th Massachusetts (and detachments from the 33rd and 34th Michigan), participated in the Cuban Campaign. Although seventy-five percent of the American forces in the Philippines in 1898 and 1899 were guardsmen, their clamoring to return home after the peace treaty with Spain, and problems with their equipment and training, limited their utility as a steadfast adjunct to the Regulars.²⁷

The post-Spanish American War effort to reform the Regulars also touched the National Guard. As historian Jerry Cooper has noted, a number of National Guard officers had long advocated a strenuous reform of the Guard that sought to transform it from a state force for maintaining internal social order and the suppression of civil unrest (usually in the form of labor strikes) to one that would enable it to serve as the nation's military reserve in time of war.²⁸ In the wake of the war with Spain, these reformers made common cause with Secretary of War Elihu Root to modernize and rationalize the National Guard.

²⁵ Jerry Cooper, *The Rise of the National Guard: The Evolution of the American Militia 1865-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 87-107. Cooper's work remains the best examination of the National Guard's efforts to change its role as an internal force for maintaining public order to being a competent military reserve.

²⁶ Although the term "National Guard" was not used by all states during this period, and was not mandated for use by all state forces until the National Defense Act of 1916, the author will use the term as interchangeable with "militia" or "state guard" throughout this chapter.

²⁷ John K. Mahon, *History of the National Guard and Militia* (New York: MacMillan, 1983), 128-133.

²⁸ Cooper, xiii-xvi.

The first step in the process of transforming the National Guard into a viable wartime reserve was the Act to Promote the Efficiency of the Militia, generally known as the Dick Act for its main political supporter, Ohio Congressman Charles W. Dick. Dick, a general in the Ohio National Guard and chairman of the House Militia Affairs committee, worked with Root to craft the first major legislative effort to change the purpose and composition of state military forces since the Militia Act of 1792. The Dick Act of 1903 aligned the National Guard's organization and equipment with the Regular Army's, provided federal funding and Regular Army personnel to assist in the training of state forces, allowed the War department to hold joint National Guard and Regular Army maneuvers, and stipulated the minimal training standards that the federal governments expected from the states.²⁹ The act also sought to improve the professionalism of National Guard Officers by allowing them to attend Regular Army schools. Additional legislation in 1908, 1912, and 1916 continued the trend toward transforming the Guard into a reliable national reserve which would be more responsive to the federal government.³⁰ In January 1908, for instance, the War Department established the Division of Militia Affairs (later renamed the National Guard Bureau) to oversee the training, equipping, and inspection of state units.

With the support of the National Guard Association, some guardsmen-reformers, such as New York's John F. O'Ryan, began pressuring state governors and legislators to place their units, officers, and NCOs on a more sound professional footing. One of the reforms that came from this pressure was the establishment of annual schools for officers and NCOs. In the

²⁹ "An Act to promote the efficiency of the militia and for other purposes" (hereafter the Dick Act) 21 January 1903. (32 Stat. L. 778). The act was also printed in its entirety by the army in General Order number 7 dated 24 January 1903. The act gave the states five years to accomplish, "The organization, armament and discipline of the organized militia...shall be the same as that which is now or may hereafter be proscribed for the regular and volunteer armies of the United States."

³⁰ Mahon, 139-143, 147-149; Cooper, 108-117. and Timothy K. Nenninger, "The Army Enters the Twentieth Century," in Kenneth J. Hagen and William R. Roberts, *Against All Enemies* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 219-222.

summer of 1910, for example, 26 states held 27 officer training camps (Indiana held two camps). These camps trained a total of 2,566 guard officers and lasted for an average of 5.8 days. Twenty-two of the camps had training cadres drawn from the Regular Army. The largest of these camps trained 393 Pennsylvania officers, while the smallest consisted of only three South Dakota guardsmen.³¹

As was the case with the Regular Army, some states saw value in these camps and made professional education a cornerstone of their professionalization reforms. As one guardsman wrote,

The benefit a militia officer receives from attending these schools, is just the benefit an amateur derives in watching a professional in his own line of work at his trade. A college baseball team may play a great game of ball. The Harvard or Yale team, for instance, may know the history and theory of the game as well as the professional, but put them together and the college team will profit by the experience.³²

This desire to educate their way to professionalism was typified by the experiences of New York and Connecticut. Building on their earlier successes with officer and NCO courses, in 1913 New York expanded its offering by holding separate schools of application for its infantry, artillery, cavalry, medical, engineer, and signal officers and NCOs. These schools were of variable length with the infantry and artillery schools both running 20 days, the cavalry eight days, and the medical, signal, and engineer schools each running for six days.³³

The Connecticut National Guard followed a similar path to professionalization as New York and mandated set courses of instruction for the state's officers and NCOs. The state also held summer "Camps of Instruction" where these leaders could demonstrate their ability to

³¹ Walter M. Pratt, *Tin Soldiers: The Organized Militia and What it Really Is* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1912), 68. In the case of the South Dakota camp held at Fort Meade, South Dakota from 26 June to 2 July, the Regular Army cadre outnumbered the guardsmen two-to-one.

³² *Ibid.*, 87.

³³ New York Adjutant General, *Annual report of the Adjutant General of the State of New York for the Year 1913* (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1914), 7-11.

execute the drills that they had studied. The Connecticut Adjutant General also directed that regimental commanders establish unit schools for their captains, lieutenants, and NCOs. The state directed that the officer course for company grade infantry officers would be held over four years. The first year of instruction would focus on the *IDR*, *FSR*, *Small Arms Firing Manual*, and the *Manual of Guard Duty*. The second year continued the study of the *FSR* and *IDR* and introduced topics on administration and military topography. The third year instruction was to expand the officer's study of administration and military topography and introduce map problems, maneuvers, and military law. The final year of the course completed the officer's study of map problems, maneuvers, and military law and introduced military field engineering and military hygiene. The officers were examined by a regimental board at the completion of each yearly sub-block of instruction.³⁴

Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts also led the nation in providing for the education of their NCOs. As with the Regulars, the education of NCOs in these states was given much less emphasis than that of the officers. However, as their school systems matured, the guardsmen managed to narrow these educational gaps. The case of the Connecticut National Guard is illustrative of how the more progressive state guards approached this issue. In 1906, for example, the state Adjutant General provided less guidance on the curriculum and goals for these courses than it did for the officer schools. In 1906 the Connecticut Adjutant General merely decreed that while regimental commanders appointed NCOs based on nominations from their company commanders, the captain could only nominate soldiers who had passed an examination

³⁴ State of Connecticut, *Biennial Report of the Adjutant General, State of Connecticut, to the Governor for the Two Years Ended September 30, 1912* (Hartford: Heminway Press, 1912), XXI-XXX. The Connecticut guard also capped the year's training by conducting a "Camp of Instruction of Officers for Mobile Troops." In the 1912 camp held from 11-15 June 1912, the instructors consisted of two majors, two captains, and a first lieutenant from the Regular Army and focused on battalion and regimental minor tactics. The training consisted of field problems in the morning and afternoon and "practical talks" conducted by the cadre on the key doctrinal and theoretical points that the students needed to understand for the next day's training.

testing his knowledge of “the school of the soldier, the school of the company, and the extended order.”³⁵ The state expanded this guidance in 1911 by mandating that company commanders hold noncommissioned officers schools concentrating on guard duty, the *Small Arms Firing Manual*, and the minor tactics as covered in the *Field Service Regulations*. The following year, the state Adjutant General issued revised guidance for NCO and Officer schools in General Order 42 (20 September 1912). This order gave more explicit directives on the textbook or paragraphs from army doctrinal manuals to be covered in each sub-block of the annual courses. The NCO school curriculum focused on basic rifle care and marksmanship, tactical signaling, map reading, minor tactics, tent pitching, and basic field engineering. The goal of the course was “to make expert instructors of the non-commissioned officers in these subjects.”³⁶

Despite the reform efforts, a wholesale change in the professionalism of National Guard officers and NCOs proved elusive in the years prior to World War I. Much of the positive changes tended to be very localized, with the most progress being made in the Northeast and the least in the South and Midwest. That reforms proved weaker in the South and Midwest reflected general historic trends of entrenched localism and a strict parsimony of state budgets in those regions. In *Military Education in the United States*, the Regular Army reformer Ira L. Reeves praised Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon, and Vermont for actively working to improve the efficiency of their National Guard units.³⁷ In testimony before the House

³⁵ Adjutant General State of Connecticut, *Regulations for the Connecticut National Guard* (Hartford: Adjutant General’s Office, 1906), 54-5.

³⁶ State of Connecticut, *Biennial Report of the Adjutant General, State of Connecticut, to the Governor for the Two Years Ended September 30, 1912, XXXV- XXXVIII*.

³⁷ Reeves, *Military Education in the United States*, 378-380. Reeves particularly praised the leadership program instituted by Massachusetts. These sentiments were echoed by George Marshall while he served as an “instructor-inspector” assigned to the Massachusetts guard in 1911-1912. In his January 1912 report to the Chief of Militia Affairs, Marshall praised the Massachusetts professional education system and noted “The present system of courses is probably more elaborate and comprehensive than in other states and it is too early to report on its success. The school for enlisted candidates for commissions is apparently a splendid idea and is intended to offset the evils of promotion by election.” However, even he admitted that the units displayed a continued weakness in company

Committee on Military Affairs in January 1916, Chief of Staff Hugh Scott went so far as to warn the congressmen, “You must not form your ideas of the National Guard of the States like New York and Pennsylvania...Some of the State guards do not measure up to them.”³⁸ Unfortunately, due to the lack of effective federal oversight of the professional education among the states, a shortage of qualified Regular Army instructors, and the limitations of the time that guard units could devote to officer and NCO training, the trend toward increased professionalization touched only a limited number of guard officers from 1905 through 1916.³⁹

As shown by the officer camps of instruction held in 1910, the time states allocated to “hands-on” leadership training was far too short in duration to impart the essential tactical and technical knowledge that the guardsmen needed to survive in a modern war. Some senior National Guard officers readily admitted that the state schools were “not up to the standard of the [Regular] Army.”⁴⁰ Even among those few officers and NCOs exposed to the trends of professionalism, much of the training they did receive (as was also the case with their Regular Army brethren) was not based on a realistic appreciation of modern warfare. Since the National Guard drew their tactical concepts from Regular Army sources, any doctrinal defect in the

leadership and troop leading during annual maneuvers. See George Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. I, *The Soldierly Spirit December 1880- June 1939*, edited by Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 57-67.

³⁸ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 31 January 1916, 32. The available evidence from National Guard and Regular Army inspections of guard training during this period tends to show that the educational reforms made in the Northeast were more the exception than the rule.

³⁹ Reeves acknowledged this problem and noted, “The authorities of each State, to a large extent, exercise their own judgment in determining the degree of efficiency required for their troops. The natural result is that there is very little coordination between the Organized Militia of the several States. There is really no standard of efficiency to which all States conform.” Reeves, *Military Education in the United States*, 377. Some guard units themselves realized their shortcomings. The Adjutant General of Arkansas noted in 1910 that “More responsibility should be required by the company officers in the performance of duty by the corporal, sergeants, and lieutenants. Especial attention to company schools is earnestly requested.” Arkansas Adjutant General, *Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of Arkansas, 1909-1910* (Little Rock: Arkansas National Guard, 1910), 22.

⁴⁰ See John O’Ryan’s statement in Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 21 and 28 January and 1 February 1916, 130.

regular's plans for joint maneuvers, courses, and manuals served to further hobble the guardsmen's quest to be a battle ready force.

Despite their best intentions, the Dick Act and other pre-Great War legislation fell far short of truly transforming the National Guard into a ready reserve. The blame for this shortcoming was shared equally between the regulars and the guardsmen. The Regular Army had long disparaged state forces as "tin soldiers" corrupted by political considerations and machinations who were only fit for Forth of July parades.

To a very great extent, the turn-of-the-century Regular Army reformers were disciples of Emory Upton and, based on their comments in professional journals and reports, generally seemed to have agreed with his criticism of the militia system.⁴¹ In his influential work, *The Military Policy of the United States*, Upton attributed the source of the United States' military weakness to its historical reliance upon undisciplined militia troops commanded by officers "utterly ignorant of the military art."⁴² He also blasted what he saw as the intrusion of the states into national military matters and blamed guardsmen for hindering the establishment of a viable reserve system controlled by the federal government and administered by the Regular Army. To counter criticism of the militiamen and driven by a desire to dethrone the National Guard as the

⁴¹ In defending his "Continental Army" plan before Congress in January 1916, Secretary of War Garrison maintained that the plan was "the unquestioned evolution of Gen. Upton's mind, concurred in by Gen. Sherman, and since that time it has been concurred in by military writers, the last being Gen. Carter." Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 8 January 1916, 11. Garrison's reference to "Gen. Carter," was to William Harding Carter, one of the army reformers most credited with bringing the Uptonian legacy into the twentieth century. Machoian, 220-1, 245-7, 271-2. Although reformers such as Carter, Leonard Wood, and Arthur Wagner varied in their commitment to Upton's vision, they shared a belief in the inefficiency of the National Guard as a tool for national defense. See T. R. Brereton, *Educating the U. S. Army: Arthur L. Wagner and Reform, 1875-1905* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 8-11.

⁴² Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968; reprint, Washington D.C.: War Department, 1904), XIII-XIV.

nation's military reserve and replace it with a system of "National Volunteers," Upton chided that "they should not hold me responsible for the facts of history."⁴³

Based on this Uptonian legacy, it is difficult to discern from the reports and observation on the National Guard by the period's regular officers whether the guardsmen were truly inept or merely the victims of Regular Army prejudices and arrogance. What is clear, however, was that from 1903 through 1916, regular officers kept up a steady drumbeat of denunciation of the guard's training, professionalism, and readiness. The regulars acted upon their perceptions of the guard. For instance, one regular officer noted in a 1909 edition of the *Infantry Journal*, "In a few [states] the national guard is a political machine and the commissioned officers petty political bosses." He went on to decry the fact that "military education of the State forces has progressed little beyond the company drill-ground stage."⁴⁴ The writer patronizingly, if accurately predicted, "the vast majority of those who would now fight our battles are peaceful farmers, mechanics, and clerks, whose acquaintance with deadly weapons is confined largely to the farm mule and the office lead pencil."⁴⁵

Unfortunately, the author of the *Infantry Journal* article was far from being alone in his biting critique of the state forces. There is enough uniformity in the comments of the annual reports of the various Regular Army officers assigned to National Guard units and the Chief of the Division of Militia Affairs to suggest that, despite their prejudices, there were some grounds for their harsh assessment of the guardsmen. These evaluations highlight that the reforms of the National Guard intended by the Dick Act and its subsequent revisions fell far short of making the guard a reliable wartime reserve. The Chief of the Militia Bureau, Major General Albert L. Mills, admitted as much during a hearing before the House Committee on Military Affairs in

⁴³ Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States*, XII, XIII-XIV.

⁴⁴ S.M.Q. "The Present Problem," in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (September 1909), 252.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

January 1916. In Mill's estimation the guard had failed to meet the goals of the Dick Act "by a considerable measure."⁴⁶

It is interesting to note that prejudicial attitudes were not limited to the regulars. Based on their long experience of being the butt of the regulars' patronizing attitudes, some guardsmen developed outlooks that likewise colored their interaction with Regular Army inspectors and instructors. Before embarking on their annual summer encampment in July 1914, the commander of the 1st Missouri Infantry Regiment, Colonel A. B. Donnelly, cautioned his officers,

We will have three regular army officers detailed to the regiment during this camp. Remember my previous admonition about keeping your mouth shut. Remember that we have no troubles in the regiment, we have no troubles in the state, we have no criticism whatever to make of the government, or of the division of militia affairs regulations. We are in harmony with everything that has been done or is being done. The personal shortcomings of officers must not be discussed by other officers. Do not tell the troubles of your company to the regular officers. This is strictly a family matter...It will do no good to talk of them publicly and it will only acquaint our critics with whatever shortcomings we may have. In other words, keep your mouths shut, and keep it shut tight, except where it is open to commendation. Do not, under any circumstances, allow an argument...arise between officers in the presence of outsiders...Do not make light on another officer's ignorance on any particular subject, especially in the presence of outsiders.⁴⁷

It is difficult to discern whether Donnelly's statement was indicative of the attitudes of other guardsmen. Two years earlier, after participating in joint maneuvers with the regulars, New Jersey guardsman Captain Harry Kramer reported that, "the regular officers were splendid in their treatment of the National Guard," and that "everyone seemed eager at all times to impart the information, and there was a genial spirit which speaks well for the growing friendliness of

⁴⁶ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 31 January 1916, 7.

⁴⁷ Letter from COL. A. B. Donnelly "To the Officers of the First Infantry, National Guard of Missouri" dated 11 July 1914, in the Joseph J. Koch Collection, Combined Arms Research Library Archives, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

the two branches of service.”⁴⁸ However, if Donnelly did represent the outlook of even a handful of guard officers, such feelings could only have hindered the goals set out by the Dick Act.

While they often echoed the reservations of their compatriots, some regular officers realized that many of the National Guard’s faults stemmed from problems with state laws and regulations that were beyond the control of the guard officers themselves. In 1906, for example, Major John Dapray noted that Florida limited the commissions of their National Guard officers to a four year term. He believed that the term was arbitrary and led to the subordination of good officership to “mere political considerations which now not infrequently hamper or interfere with the enforcement of proper military discipline.”⁴⁹ The same year, Major Charles Vernou, a Regular Army inspector of the Michigan National Guard, noted that the state gave its officers little power to discipline their soldiers and thus, “If a man becomes dissatisfied or has been disciplined, he absents himself from his duties, [and] does not attend drill.” He lamented that, “The captain’s one means of punishment is to recommend the man’s dishonorable discharge, which many of the men do not consider in the light of a punishment.”⁵⁰

Some regular officers went so far as to beg their peers to understand the burdens that their state comrades faced and to thus temper their denunciations and be more helpful in assisting the guardsmen. In 1909 Major William Johnson, a Regular Army inspector assigned to the Missouri National Guard, noted that guard company commanders were “martyrs to duty” who received very little remuneration for their services and had to divert time from their civilian occupations to fulfill their guard duties. He also pointed out that most guard officers were encumbered by a

⁴⁸ Quoted in Pratt, 145.

⁴⁹ War Department, *Annual Report, 1906*, Vol. IV. (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 152.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

host of concerns ranging from drill hall maintenance and rental to the procuring of recruits that were largely alien to their regular peers. He also argued that the cost of attending commissioning examinations and the purchase of uniforms “deters many worthy noncommissioned officers from accepting office” and contributed to the commissioning of officers with deep pockets but very little military experience.⁵¹ This argument was also made the New York National Guard John F. O’Ryan. He noted that while the National Guard was looking to commission officers from among the ranks of college graduates interested in military service,

...when they find that it generally involves the expenditure of \$300 or \$400 for uniforms, equipment, and side arms their enthusiasm wanes. We often find that by far the largest percentage of the young men in that class have been maintained at college by much sacrifice on the part of their families, and when they have graduated they are without funds for such expenditure, and while they have the time and inclination to enter the service of the National Guard they are not always available due to that fact.⁵²

Thus, while the regulars were quick to decry the guard’s leadership shortfalls, few understood the cost in time and money that their citizen soldier comrades endured for the dubious honor of serving in the guard.

Some regular officers also criticized their fellows for uncovering the guard’s flaws while doing little to correct them. In 1911, the future AEF corps commander, Robert Bullard, chided his fellow regular officers for not doing more to aid the guard. He noted that far too many regulars were “apt to look upon knowledge of their profession as the sole merit of the soldier and stubbornly refuse to take the means, by keeping themselves in touch with their countrymen, of

⁵¹ War Department, *Report of the Chief, Division of Militia Affairs* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 243-4.

⁵² Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 21 and 28 January and 1 February 1916, 116.

giving themselves an opportunity and making their knowledge count for something to their country in time of war.”⁵³

Unfortunately, the available evidence seems to show that the attitudes expressed by Daprey, Vernou, Johnson, and Bullard, were not representative of the regulars’ outlook toward the guard. The one item that met with near universal condemnation by regular officers was the continued practice by a number of states of allowing soldiers to elect their leaders. Although some guard officer-reformers, such as John F. O’Ryan, had fought to place the state forces on a more professional footing, the practice of electing officers remained entrenched throughout the decade prior the nation’s entry into World War I. In O’Ryan’s own state of New York, there was no set policy for selecting officers as late as 1913. Although the governor, working through the State Adjutant General, appointed most officers, approximately a third of all the state’s guard units (to include the famous “Fighting 69th” New York Infantry) continued to allow the soldiers to elect their officers.⁵⁴

State policies for commissioning National Guard officers ran the gamut of possibilities. In Connecticut any male United States citizen and resident of the state over the age of 18 holding a certificate of qualification from the state Adjutant General and not under “sentence of disability to hold office” could be commissioned second lieutenant. Although field officers were to be elected by the company and field-grade officers of their regiments, and company officers were to be elected by the officers and soldiers of the company, “Every person to be appointed to an office in which a knowledge of military tactics is required, must pass an examination before an

⁵³ COL. Robert Bullard, “The Military Study of Men,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (November-December 1911), 328.

⁵⁴ New York Adjutant General, Annual report of the Adjutant General of the State of New York for the Year 1913 (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1914), 7-11.

examining board, prior to being appointed.”⁵⁵ The Georgia and California National Guards followed the same requirements for election as did Connecticut, but mandated that the candidate had to pass an examination immediately following their election or face removal from command.⁵⁶

Kansas was much less strict on the professional qualifications it required for commissioning. Its militia laws merely required that “The field officers of each regiment shall be elected by the commissioned officers of the companies of each respective regiment; the company officers, by the members of each respective company.”⁵⁷

Despite the trend toward increased professional education, many states chose to follow more of the Kansas “path of least resistance” example than the one followed by Connecticut and Massachusetts. In 1916 General Albert L. Mills reported to Congress that of the 48 state or territorial guards (including the District of Columbia and Hawaii), 35 used election by the members of the company as their methods for commissioning second lieutenants, and 31 used the same method for commissioning their first lieutenants and captains. The remaining states used a variety of different methods, ranging from appointment by the governor to competitive examination to commission their company grade officers.⁵⁸ Given the rapid changes occurring

⁵⁵ Adjutant General State of Connecticut, *Regulations for the Connecticut National Guard* (Hartford: Adjutant General’s Office, 1906), 10-12.

⁵⁶ Adjutant General State of Georgia, *Regulations for the Government of the Georgia National Guard* (Atlanta: Foote and Davies Company, 1908), 10, 20, 25-6, 28-37. Adjutant General State of California, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the California National Guard* (Sacramento: State Printing Office, 1906), 22-4, 58-9. The Georgia state regulations mandated that the written examination of the candidate’s professional knowledge would consist of 100 questions and stipulated the sources from which the questions would be drawn. It also allowed, but did not require, the board to test the candidate’s practical knowledge by leading a body of troops through the regulation drills.

⁵⁷ Adjutant General State of Kansas, *Kansas Militia Law of 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907* (Topeka: Adjutant General’s Office, 1908), 9.

⁵⁸ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 31 January 1916, 40-43. Of the remaining states, five used appointment by the governor, four used some form of competitive examination, two used either election or examination, and one state each used the following to commission their second lieutenants: election by men of the company following examination, nomination by enlisted men but selection by superior officers, and election or examination of only

during the period in technology, tactics, and doctrine, this lack of uniformity in commissioning or following the paths of least resistance would prove deadly indeed.

The Regular Army officers objected to the system of electing officers because they believed that it undermined training and discipline within guard units while also sublimating professional competency to mere politics and popularity. As Captain A. J. Macnab noted of the Illinois National Guard in 1906, “The system of electing officers gives the enlisted men of the company an opportunity to express approval or disapproval of their officers’ actions and causes the almost constant working of petty politics within the companies.” He argued that the “officers must keep the good will of the enlisted men in order to retain their positions, and good will and discipline in command of this kind do not always go together.”⁵⁹ Macnab’s point had some merit. In 1908 the Adjutant General of the Texas National Guard admitted that he was having trouble reenlisting soldiers because they were dissatisfied with the physical hardships that they had endured during the drills and maneuvers of the previous year. To quiet the discontentment and lure soldiers back into the ranks, he ordered that the summer encampment for 1908 would be “tempered to what the troops could comfortably stand, instead of trying their powers of endurance,” and that officers were to make the camp “as instructive and pleasant as possible.”⁶⁰ Given the physical and mental demands that war makes upon leaders and soldiers, in the long run, the compromises made by the Texans were perhaps shortsighted.

NCOs. For captains and first lieutenants, eight states used seniority, six used appointment by governor, three used competitive examination, and one state each used election by men of company following examination, election or examination of only NCOs, seniority following examination, and either election or examination. This author is not certain how accurate Mills was in compiling this list. For example, while he states that Georgia used election to select their junior officers, this does not agree with the state regulations of 1908. However, Mills is correct to show the strength of the elective system.

⁵⁹ War Department, *Annual Report, 1906*, Vol. IV., 154.

⁶⁰ Adjutant General State of Texas, *Biennial Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Texas for the Period Ending November 30, 1908* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1908), 3 and 11.

Six years after the passing of the Dick Act, the issue of the election of National Guard officers was still being denounced by the regulars as well as some guardsmen. Walter Pratt scolded his fellow guard soldiers,

...how long would a department store be able to compete with its competitors if the managers of its departments were chosen by the popular vote of the employees? And what kind of managers would be elected? Would the most efficient, best posted, and strictest man be elected? No! it would be the easy-going, good fellow who would get the job every time. In the National Guard to-day there are many officers who, sad to say, are much too lenient and familiar with their men simply because they are afraid of becoming unpopular and fear being turned down when elections come. This matter is a serious handicap to the Organized Militia and should be given attention for the good of the service.⁶¹

Pratt was far from being alone in this sentiment. In 1909 Captain M. A. Eliot, a regular assigned to the Illinois National Guard decried, "The curse of the guard is politics, both company and municipal" and lamented that, "few officers have the moral courage to forget that they are holding office to which they have been elected and do their duty fearlessly." He noted that when politics influenced the commander (a situation that he encountered frequently), "I have generally found a poor company."⁶² In a similar vein, after working with the Ohio National Guard, Captain J. B. Schoeffel declared, "I am of the opinion that a great mistake is made in the election of officers." He maintained the fact that the officers were "indebted to the men of the company for their position detracts a great deal from efficiency and discipline." Schoeffel recommended that all guard officers be appointed by the governor on recommendation from the regimental commander and be forced to demonstrate their professional knowledge on examinations.⁶³

Even though the Regular Army observers may have been predisposed to take a jaundiced view of the National Guard, one should not be too quick to discount their opinions. The

⁶¹ Pratt, 25-6.

⁶² War Department, *Report of the Chief, Division of Militia Affairs for 1909*, 238.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 247-8.

instructor-inspectors assigned to guard units and the other regulars who assisted in the administration of National Guard summer encampments had the close vantage point and enough professional expertise to judge the failings of the elective system. For all the shortcomings of the selection and development of the Regular Army officers, they paled in comparison to an elective system that allowed the commissioning of guard officers with little or no military experience or knowledge.

It was not until the National Defense Act of 1916 that the federal government finally stipulated that all National Guard officers appointed after the act had to have “successfully passed such tests as to his physical, moral, and professional fitness as the president shall proscribe.” Upon passage of the legislation, the Chief of the Militia Bureau, Major General Albert L. Mills, believed that the new requirement sounded the death knell of the old elected officer system, or, at least “eliminates most of the more objectionable features of that system by providing a remedy against the election of unqualified officers.”⁶⁴ Regrettably, this change came too late to deal effectively with the issue of professional competency in the National Guard’s officer corps before the U.S. entered World War I. Faced with the need to fill the shortages in its officer ranks in the early months of the war, a number of National Guard units tacitly overlooked the strictures of the National Defense Act and pushed through the commissioning of candidates that seemed to at least have the education or background to be an officer (more of this will be covered in Chapter Six).

In addition to their condemnation of the elective system, Regular Army officers often offered a withering appraisal of the leadership and professional abilities of their National Guard peers. After inspecting the Alabama units in 1909, Captain George Moore wrote, “I found, in

⁶⁴ War Department, *Report of the Acting Chief of the Militia Bureau, 1916* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 49.

general, a deplorable lack of instruction in elementary matters, without the redeeming feature of active interest.”⁶⁵ Another officer observing that state’s units found them so wanting that he recommended that “no troops be ordered to maneuver camps until they have perfected themselves at home in the simple company movements in close and extended order.” He blamed the lapse on “A lack of enthusiasm [that] was noticed on the part of most of the field officers.”⁶⁶ The same year, Lieutenant L. L. Gregg noted of the Illinois National Guard that “In connection with the knowledge of the duties of the officers and noncommissioned officers, I find that, as a rule, they are not sufficiently well instructed.”⁶⁷ Echoing these sentiments, Captain O. S. Eskridge observed of the Wyoming guard,

One of the greatest difficulties to be met with is the matter of procuring good men for company officers. It does not seem to be a matter of much difficulty to get hold of good men for the rank and file...The trouble seems to be in getting officers who can get these men together, and who will study, work, and fit themselves to command these men. With a few exceptions, the officers do not know nearly as much about their business as we require our sergeants and corporals to know, consequently it resolves itself into a case of the blind leading the blind.⁶⁸

While it is clear that ingrained attitudes and prejudices colored these regular officers’ attitudes toward the National Guard, there was enough “smoke” in their comments to indicate the existence of “fire” in their assertions about the level of readiness of guard leaders.

Lest one argue that perhaps 1909 was simply a “bad year” for the National Guard, it is revealing to note that as late as 1916 the report of the Chief of the Militia Bureau noted that many of the earlier negative observations on the training and readiness of the guard’s officers remained unchanged. Despite a decade of joint active and National Guard summer maneuvers,

⁶⁵ *Report of the Chief, Division of Militia Affairs for 1909*, 233.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 253. Although the author chose to draw most of these quotes used in these paragraphs from the War Department *Annual Reports* from 1906, 1909, and 1916, a perusal of the other reports from this decade indicate that the National Guard had substantial problems in personnel and training that went far beyond the simple prejudices of the Regular Army observers and inspectors.

the attendance of guardsmen at Regular Army schools, and the use of regular officers and NCOs to train guard units, the ability of guard officers to fight a modern war and effectively lead soldiers in combat remained highly dubious.

In his 1916 annual report, Mills maintained that the training of the National Guard, at all ranks and levels, was problematic. In 1915, only 43 percent of guardsmen on the militia rolls had “attended at least 24 drills of one hour and a half each during the year,” and only 58 percent of soldiers equipped with rifles had conducted an annual range fire.⁶⁹ He attributed much of the guard’s problems to the failure of their officer corps. Mills argued that in training guard officers tended to avoid the more difficult and hands-on subjects that would be useful to improving their soldiers’ combat effectiveness in favor of those subjects such as close order drill “which an ill-prepared officer may continue and repeat without exposing their ignorance.”⁷⁰ Mills concluded that while, “there has been much commendable effort made to advance the theoretical instruction of Infantry,” a closer examination revealed, “in many cases such instruction suffers materially through the lack of trained officers and noncommissioned officers.”⁷¹ He also reported that “the instruction of National Guard officers has not progressed as satisfactorily as that of the enlisted men, and the number who qualified for certificates of proficiency has been disappointing.”⁷² As tensions were growing between the United States and Germany, there seem to have been good reasons for the Regular Army to be skeptical of the ability of the guard’s officers and NCOs to provide adequate combat leadership in wartime.

Another indicator of this problem was the dearth of National Guard officers attending Regular Army schools. Although the Dick Act had opened these schools to qualified National

⁶⁹ War Department, *Report of the Acting Chief of the Militia Bureau*, 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² War Department, *Annual Report for 1916*, Vol. I, 906.

Guard officers, between 1906 and 1916 very few guardsmen actually attended and graduated from them. From 1906 until 1912, when most of the schools were disbanded, the most popular Regular Army course for guard officers was the garrison schools held at various posts across the nation. In these six years, 223 guard officers attended these schools with 180 (81%) finishing the course.⁷³ As previously noted in Chapter 2, the quality of instruction in these garrison schools varied wildly and it is questionable how much they truly contributed to the professional knowledge of the guardsmen. Once one removes the garrison schools, National Guard officer attendance at other Regular Army schools during the period dropped precipitously. In the decade prior to the U.S. entry into World War I only four of the six guardsmen attending the Infantry and Cavalry School, or its successor the School of the Line, graduated the course. During the same period, only one guardsman, Captain Wyatt Selkirk of the Texas guard, graduated from the Leavenworth Staff College, and only New York's Major General John O'Ryan graduated from the Army War College.

Although there is some evidence that this lack of National Guard participation in army schools was attributed to Regular Army obstructionism, much of this problem stemmed from the personal burden that the schools placed upon the individual guardsmen.⁷⁴ Clearly, a number of regulars welcome the guard's participation in professional education. In 1912, for instance, the Acting Commandant of the Army Service Schools, John F. Morrison, recommended to the Army

⁷³ All of the numbers cited in this paragraph came from the Annual Reports of the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Annual Reports of the Commandant of the Army Service School at Fort Leavenworth. The Fort Leavenworth reports are located in the archives of the Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. They can also be accessed from the CARL digital library at <http://cgsc.leavenworth.army.mil/carl/resources/archival/Annualreports.asp>. From 1906 through 1916, 30 guards officers also graduated from the Army Medical School or Field Service School for Medical Officers, and one guardsman graduated from the Army Signal School.

⁷⁴ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 21 and 28 January and 1 February 1916, 121. In his testimony John O'Ryan stated that the regulars rejected two of his officers to attend school at Fort Leavenworth because the post had no room for them. The officers in question were even willing to live in tents on the post parade ground if the regulars would admit them to the course.

Chief of Staff that Leavenworth establish a special class for field officers of the National Guard. Morrison argued that such a course would further the drive to establish a uniform system of training for both regular and guard forces and would build teamwork and cooperation by allowing guard officers to better “understand the regulars and their methods.”⁷⁵ Morrison’s recommendation made little headway, and prior to the Great War, only seven guard officers had attended the Special Class for Field Officers course. A major part of the problem of guard officers attending army schools was the fact that attendance required the citizen soldiers to place their civilian occupations on hiatus for at least a year.⁷⁶

The lack of guard officers graduating from Regular Army schools also reflected the academic rigor that the courses entailed. In 1914 the Service School Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel W. P. Burnham, reported that the two guard officers attending the course had been “handicapped on account of a lack of due preparation.”⁷⁷ Consequently, the ability of the army school system to influence the professionalism of the National Guard officer corps was limited prior to the Great War.

The commencement of the Great War sparked an intensification of the search for an effective means of raising a wartime reserve of leaders. Unfortunately, this issue also became inextricably linked to the contentious debate over the state of the nation’s preparedness to fight a major war. Ultimately, while the partisan political debate publicized the glaring need for a system for building a cadre of leaders, it also so polarized the political process that the army was able to do little to truly ameliorate the problems.

⁷⁵ Army Service Schools, *Army Service Schools Annual Report for 1912* (Fort Leavenworth: Army Service Schools Press, 1912), 11-12.

⁷⁶ This problem was noted in the Congressional testimony of Hugh Scott, the Florida National Guard Adjutant General, Clifford Foster, and John F. O’Ryan. See, Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 31 January 1916, 31, and 1 February 1916, 110-111, 121.

⁷⁷ Army Service Schools, *Army Service Schools Annual Report for 1914* (Fort Leavenworth: Army Service Schools Press, 1914), 13.

As shown in the last chapter, when the war in Europe began the public was generally in agreement with Wilson's declaration of neutrality. This consensus, however, did not last. As early as 14 October 1914, Massachusetts Congressman Augustus P. Gardiner called for an investigation of the war readiness of the American military after asserting that the nation was "unprepared for war, defensively or offensively, against a real power."⁷⁸ After the Germans began unrestricted submarine warfare, and the subsequent sinking of the American merchant ship *Gulflight* and the passenger liner *Lusitania*, criticism of Wilson's policies began to grow among the nation's anglophile-leaning upper and middle classes.

While the political wrangling over preparedness began to grow, American public opinion was also being shaped by a relentless barrage of anti-German propaganda emanating from Britain and France and being disseminated in the United States with the collusion of pro-Allied American elites. At the outbreak of the war, the British cable ship *Telconia* scored a decisive victory for the Allies by cutting the telegraph cables that linked the United States to continental Europe. From that point on, all the direct communications between America and Europe had to channel through British lines. This gave the Allies the ability to quickly shape and package war news while Germany was forced to rely on time consuming neutral intermediaries to tell its side of the story.

While bungling German propaganda operations alienated the American public, the British and French waged a subtle and brilliant campaign to win the hearts and minds of the United States. To hide direct British governmental involvement in the propaganda campaign, the British worked through sympathetic third parties in Canada and the United States to disseminate pro-Allied books, articles and films. Sir Gilbert Parker, the chief of British propaganda activities

⁷⁸ Quoted in Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1978), 184-5.

for the United States, gleaned *Who's Who* for the names of influential and potentially pro-Allied Americans and then had his third party agents “win” them over to the Allied side through correspondence and the use of well prepared propaganda writings. This careful and covert cultivation of American elites resulted in an ever widening web of pro-Allied sympathy as Parker’s proselytes used their local influence to bring the Allied message to the unconverted masses.⁷⁹ These pro-Allied elites would serve as the foot soldiers of the preparedness movement.

The “preparedness movement” brought together a range of Americans whose fears and motivations for joining the movement reflected the range of white middle and upper class anxieties of the Progressive Era. In her aptly titled book, *Standing at Armageddon*, Nell Painter characterized the first two decades of the 20th century as a period of severe and endless conflict between the nation’s class, ethnic, and racial groups. Economic centralization, a massive influx of immigrants, and breakneck urbanization forced greater numbers of Americans to compete for social status and financial security in the midst of bewildering societal change.⁸⁰ Nowhere was the loss of security and order more feared in American society between 1900 and 1916 than in the middle-class. Middle-class Americans feared both the social radicalism of labor and the new immigrants, and the growing economic power of the hyper-capitalists. Robert Wiebe argued in *The Search for Order* that an optimistic and progressive “new middle class” arose in the 1890s whose main focus was to use their new found professionalism to provide direction and social order to a chaotic industrial America.⁸¹

⁷⁹ M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War* (London: MacMillan Press, 1982), 167-186, and James D. Squires, *British Propaganda at Home and in the United States: 1914-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935,) 42-68. For a discussion of the factors that shaped American public opinion about the war from 1914-1916 also see Faulkner, “Innocents Abroad,” 21-36.

⁸⁰ Nell Painter, *Standing at Armageddon* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), x-xiii.

⁸¹ Robert Weibe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 111-113 and 165-7.

Although Wiebe was correct to note that the Progressives sought to restore order to American society, he overstated both their optimism and their faith that ultimately the “new middle class” would direct the nation. As Richard Hofstadter had more accurately noted, the dramatic increase in the cost-of living at the turn of the 19th century, coupled with the demands by both capital and labor for greater shares of profits, made the middle-class believe that they were “losing ground” in American society.⁸² In the face of this “status revolution,” the “progressive” middle and “gentile” upper classes channeled their fears into widespread and comprehensive attempts to reform society in an effort to stave off what they saw as their impending doom. As Painter argued, “Plain, stark fear lay at the core of much clamor for reform on the part of the middle and upper classes.”⁸³ The preparedness movement was a child of the progressive impulse and its overall purpose was a continuation of the progressive goal of redirecting the assumed violent and revolutionary tendencies of the lower classes and immigrants while also rejuvenating American society.

The preparedness movement drew on supporters with a constellation of varying agendas united only by their belief that the nation needed some form of broad military service and military reform to meet both the nation’s national security and societal needs. Some supporters, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Leonard Wood, believed that the United States had to strengthen its military might to retain its great power status and viewed Wilson’s neutrality policy as the height of physical and moral cowardice.⁸⁴ In a December 1914 speech that would earn him the lasting enmity of Woodrow Wilson, Wood stated, “A government is the murderer of its people who sends them to the field uninformed and untaught...these words are absolutely true and these fake humanitarians who recommend that we should turn the youth of this nation

⁸² Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 168-170.

⁸³ Painter, xii.

⁸⁴ Lane, 186-192. and H. W. Brands *T. R.: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 148-173.

into the battlefield unprepared are the unconscious slayers of their people to an extent far greater than the ordinary demands of war would render necessary.”⁸⁵ To Wood, the preparedness battle was a struggle to educate the public of the looming threats to American interests and to push forward the radical and unprecedented agenda of building a large peacetime army.

Wood and Roosevelt were also willing to make a common cause with elite educators such as Lehigh University president Henry S. Drinker and Princeton president John G. Hibben to advance the cause of preparedness. These educators viewed military training less as a means of building national strength than as a tool for building character and moral strength in the individual.⁸⁶ Military training would be the cure for the decadence, materialism, and unchecked individualism that beset the modern age. University of California president Benjamin Wheeler went as far as to note, “the atmosphere of the drill ground is a fine corrective upon the usual laissez-faire of the college yard.”⁸⁷ The academic leaders also saw universal military service as a means for ameliorating the nation’s ethnic and class tensions by throwing together the sons of the rich with those of the poor and to unite the native and the immigrant into a common crucible from which would be cast a new collective nationalism.

One of the most influential and active civilian supporters of the preparedness movement was Harvard graduate and blueblood lawyer, Grenville Clark. Following the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Clark became a vocal supporter of preparedness and an energetic organizer of summer camps to train civilians in the rudiments of military service. His efforts ultimately led to the formalization of the famous “Plattsburg Movement” by the establishment of the Military

⁸⁵Quoted in Lane, 188.

⁸⁶ Michael Pearlman, *To Make Democracy Safe for America: Patricians and Preparedness in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 82-93; Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of Higher Learning in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 219-222; and Finnegan, 60-62.

⁸⁷Quoted in Gruber, 221.

Training Camp Association (MTCA) in February 1916. Clark's beliefs on preparedness fused the military realism of Wood with the social reform agendas of Drinker and Hibben.⁸⁸

Not all of the support for preparedness was based on such high-minded ideas of civil obligation or moral uplift. Some Republican politicians viewed the preparedness issue as a club with which to rain blows upon the Wilson administration and its Democratic supporters.⁸⁹

Theodore Roosevelt helped to heal the rift between his Progressive Party and the Republicans by becoming the Grand Old Party's most visible critic of Wilson's neutrality policies. In a 23 September 1914 article in *Outlook Magazine*, the old Rough Rider attacked the timidity of the Democrats who he believed were willing to maintain peace for America at any price. He chided that "peace is worthless unless it serves the cause of righteousness." In a backhand swipe at the Democrat's foreign policy, Roosevelt thundered, "Above all, let us avoid the policy of peace with insult, the policy of unpreparedness to defend our rights, with the inability to restrain our representatives from doing wrong to or publicly speaking ill of others. The worst policy for the United States is to combine the unbridled tongue with the unready hand."⁹⁰ The Roosevelt-led Republican assault meant that the preparedness movement, and efforts to build a cadre of combat-ready leaders, became a political football that never quite made it into the end zone of either camp.

Ironically, the national political schism over preparedness was even reflected within the Wilson administration. This conflict pitted Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels against Wilson's own Secretary of War Lindley Garrison. Bryan, a long time foe of militarism and high defense spending argued that the

⁸⁸ John G. Clifford, *The Citizen Soldier: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement 1913-1920* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 61-4 and 102-8.

⁸⁹ Finnegan, 28-30.

⁹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, "The World War: Its Tragedies and Its Lessons," in *The Annals of America*, Vol. 13, 1905-1915 *The Progressive Era* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1976), 493 and 497, and Brands, 748-758.

preparedness advocates were merely using the issue for political theater. In December 1914 he confidently stated, “The president knows that if this country needed a million men, and needed them in a day, the call would go out at sunrise and the sun would go down on a million men in arms.”⁹¹ Garrison’s thinking was much more in line with that of Army Chief of Staff Hugh Scott and Major General Albert L. Mills, and as such, held a more pessimistic view of the army’s readiness.

With tensions growing with Mexico and Germany, in March 1915 Garrison directed Scott to have the General Staff and the War College draft a plan for “a military system capable of developing fighting power sufficient to meet any given national emergency, at the proper time, supported by all the resources, technical and economic, of the country....”⁹² Garrison directed that the plan be based on the army being prepared to repulse an invasion of the United States. The only planning to be done for an expeditionary force would be to relieve or recapture American possessions overseas. The secretary’s planning guidance was for the War College to craft a force which, “At the outbreak of war the Regular Army at home should be strong enough, with the addition of organized and trained citizen soldiers, to form the first line of defense in order to give sufficient time to permit the mobilization and concentration of our greater war army.”⁹³

Scott presented the War College’s preliminary plan, termed the *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States*, to Garrison in August 1915. It proposed to build a million man “mobile” or “continental” army. This army would be raised by increasing the size of the Regular Army and creating a European style reserve force that together would comprise 500,000

⁹¹ Clifford, 33.

⁹² Army War College, *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 116.

⁹³ Ibid.

soldiers ready for immediate employment. The reservists would serve two years with the Regulars before being released for reserve duty. The plan also called for the creation of a 500,000 man volunteer force consisting of civilians who had received some degree of military training at annual camps. The reserve force would be controlled by the federal government and completely separate from the National Guard.⁹⁴

Given the state of the nation's land forces, the Army staff realized that the military faced a number of challenges to meet Garrison's intent. The War College, for example, estimated that the reservists would require nine to twelve months of instruction to make them into effective soldiers. The army planners recommended that this training be done by the reservists attending a series of three-month long summer camps, followed by an additional three months of training upon the outbreak of war. This would ultimately, "enable them to meet a trained enemy." Despite these challenges, the planners still believed that building this "proper" and "logical" land force for national defense was achievable. When complete, the General Staff expected the Continental Army to field 15 infantry divisions, three cavalry divisions, nine regiments of heavy artillery and three regiment of mountain artillery.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States*, 128-135; and Army War College, *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of a Reserve for the Regular Army* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 10-17. The War College staff officers realized the political problems of their recommendations. If the Congress proved unwilling to support having reservist serve two years of active duty, the War College argued that the citizen soldiers still required at least nine months of intensive training prior to the war in addition to the three months of training that would follow the beginning of hostilities. Army War College, *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of a Force of Citizen Soldiers and Method of Training a Citizen Army on the Outbreak of War to Insure its Preparedness for Field Service* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 5. Garrison believed so strongly in the plan that he not only had the *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States* printed as a stand alone report, but also had its first chapter included as part of his Annual Report for 1915.

⁹⁵ *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States*, 128-135., and Army War College, *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of a Reserve for the Regular Army* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 10-17. The overall War College plan contained a number of separate reports that supported the Continental Army concept. The *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of a Reserve for the Regular Army* was one of those reports.

The planners understood that the greatly expanded “Continental Army” would also require a major increase in officers and NCOs. To some of the staff officers this was the greatest challenge the army faced in any effort to enlarge the force. In the report, *Study on Educational Institutions Giving Military Training as a Source for a Supply of Officers for a National Army*, one officer maintained,

With the evident defects in our system [of rising officers], brought before us through bitter experience, we should not fail to organize our resources of dependable personnel and insure a continuous flow of an ample supply of trained officers, from well-known and established reservoirs. In no other way can we provide enough officers for the Regular Army, the Regular Army Reserves, and the Volunteers on mobilization, or later replace the wastage incident to war.⁹⁶

Identifying the problem was simple; the solution, however, was another matter. It is clear from the various staff studies and reports that accompanied the *Statement of A Proper Military Policy for the United States*, that the War College staff had put much thought into solving this problem, but their recommendations were far from being uniform.

In his annual report to Congress in 1915, Garrison noted that many officers had discussed the possibility of creating cadet companies within existing regular units whose job it would be to train would-be officers. This plan had been suggested by some officers in the War College studies as being the most effective and rapid means of training and acculturating a large influx of young leaders. As one staff officer argued,

The officers should be appointed at least six months before the time set for the training season of troops. During this period the best method of training them would be to attach them to organizations of Regular troops, when they could receive both theoretical instruction in garrison schools and practical instruction in administration, garrison, and fieldwork.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Army War College, *Study on Educational Institutions Giving Military Training as a Source for a Supply of Officers for a National Army* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 3.

⁹⁷ Army War College, *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of a Force of Citizen Soldiers and Method of Training a Citizen Army on the Outbreak of War to Insure its Preparedness for Field Service* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 5 and 17.

Although there was some merit in this concept, other War College students noted that the plan would so consume the efforts of the Regular Army as to prevent it from accomplishing its operational requirements such as guarding the boarder with Mexico and policing the nation's overseas possessions.⁹⁸

These more conservative staff officers and War College students put forth their views in two War College monographs that were part of the overall Continental Army study. One of these monographs, *Study on Educational Institutions Giving Military Training as a Source for a Supply of Officers for a National Army*, argued that the army's Land Grant College-based system for educating potential officers was fundamentally sound, and only required some fine tuning to make its operations more efficient. The author recommended that the army continue to support military training in colleges, but to now focus more on grooming "selective young men who have shown special aptitude along military lines during their college course and who are recommended by the professor of military science and tactics." These selected students would be afforded the opportunity for further military training after their graduation from college that would qualify them to receive reserve commissions.⁹⁹

The other monograph, *The Recruitment of Officers in Time of Peace in the Principle European Armies*, examined how the European powers selected and trained their officer candidates and likewise concluded that the existing American system would be adequate with some minor legislative changes. Its author argued, "The fact that our educational institutions provide us with a class superior in education and training to the average citizen who enlists to make up the rank and file of the Army makes it possible to solve this problem in a scientific

⁹⁸ War Department, *Study on Educational Institutions Giving Military Training as a Source for a Supply of Officers for a National Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 10.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

manner.”¹⁰⁰ He recommended the establishment of a college-based Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) that would enable the army to install a uniform system for training potential officers in the nation’s colleges while also giving the Regular Army cadres greater autonomy when dealing with the colleges’ faculty and administration.

When it came to the issue of raising officers for the proposed force, Garrison took the more conservative path. He advocated merging the college-based military programs with the Plattsburg camp idea (more on Plattsburg below). The Secretary argued that the military instruction in Land Grant colleges be more strictly administered through a ROTC-like reform and advocated that students in those programs also attend Plattsburg-like summer camps to broaden their practical knowledge of military tactics and skills. He also maintained that given its existing facilities he could also immediately expand the Corps of Cadets at USMA from 624 to 770. He believed that the number of cadets at the academy could be ultimately expanded to 1200.¹⁰¹

Both Garrison and the Army staff understood that their plan would spark a vicious political debate. The most contentious points of the plan were its provision to build a large and expensive peacetime army and its proposal for the use of the National Guard. Under Garrison’s plan, the National Guard would merely reinforce coastal fortifications and guard key points, installations and lines of communications in the nation’s interior. In the Uptonian tradition, the army planners continued to argue that any reserve force that was not unquestionably answerable to the Federal government and under the direct operational control of the Regular Army was doomed to failure. One War College report maintained, “The Organized Militia is better trained, officered, equipped, and disciplined than in 1898, but men are about the same now as always,

¹⁰⁰ War Department, *The Recruitment of Officers in Time of Peace in the Principle European Armies* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916).

¹⁰¹ War Department, *Annual Report for 1915*, Vol. I, 24-5, 36-7, and 159.

and if they are not inclined to serve in war they will find a way to avoid service.”¹⁰² The report bluntly stated that the nation’s history had long demonstrated the “worthlessness of the militia.”¹⁰³ Rather than become mired in the constitutional debate over the viability of the dual state and federal control of the National Guard, Scott and the War College staff maintained that it was easier, and more militarily efficient, to severely curtail the National Guard’s wartime roles and simply build a federal reserve force. This plan, of course, still required Congressional action to revoke the guarantees made to the National Guard in the Dick Act and its 1908 revisions that made the state forces the nation’s first line reserve.¹⁰⁴

Garrison made a clumsy effort to soften the blows that his Continental Army plan rained upon the National Guard. His sop to the guardsmen’s pride was to announce,

The plan offers to the membership of the National Guard every alternative which a full recognition of their position suggests. With respect to the National Guard system under the Constitution there is to be not only continued but increased Federal cooperation and assistance. With respect to the personnel of the Guard opportunity is offered, either in units or individually, to come into the Continental Army whenever by the actions of their State they are free to do so.¹⁰⁵

The Regulars also offered a hand, albeit a condescending one, to their National Guard peers.

One officer noted,

There will be a number of National Guard officers who will make good officers, but it is impossible to form an estimate of the total number which can be obtained. There is no doubt, however, that they will be glad to come into the reserve units and thus assure themselves of the opportunity for future service at the front.¹⁰⁶

The message to the guardsmen and their political supporters was clear; the War Department’s commitment to “true” preparedness would create a new vision of the citizen soldier that

¹⁰² War Department, *The Militia as Organized Under the Constitution and its Value to the Nation as a Military Asset* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 8.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Clifford, 118-120; and Cooper, 117-121.

¹⁰⁵ *Annual Report for 1915*, Vol. I, 27.

¹⁰⁶ War Department, *Study on Educational Institutions Giving Military Training as a Source for a Supply of Officers for a National Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 4.

decisively broke with the hoary and flawed traditions of the state-based militia. Unfortunately, both Garrison and his Regular Army staffers misjudged the tenacity of the guardsmen in defending their prerogatives and the public's actual commitment to preparedness.

If Garrison and his army supporters were expecting a political fight, they were not to be disappointed. In January 1916 the House Committee on Military Affairs held a hearing on the Continental Army plan. The chairman of the committee, Virginia Democrat James Hay, had long shown an antipathy for both increasing the size of the Regular Army and the preparedness movement.¹⁰⁷ Throughout January, a steady parade of Regular Army and National Guard officers and pro and anti-preparedness advocates filed through the hearing room to give their opinions of the Continental Army plan. Feeling themselves besieged by the Uptonian Regulars and fearful for the survival of the militia, the National Guard Association launched an all out assault on the plan.

As expected, the regulars dusted off their long held criticisms of the guard to demonstrate the need for the creation of a new reserve force. Anson Mills testified,

The existing law classes the organized Militia as first line troops. As a matter of fact the force does not come up to the standard of first line troops, nor with its limited training, averaging not more than 15 days a year, should it be expected that it can acquire the efficiency which will justify placing the force in such a category. The best that can be expected is that the Organized Militia, as presently constituted and trained, will, at the outbreak of war, represent a potential rather than an actual fighting force, the development of which will require time and effort.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Flannigan, 33 and 74-5. Hay was also a supporter of the former Army Adjutant General, Major General Fred C. Ainsworth. While Chief of Staff, Leonard Wood had waged a bruising campaign against Ainsworth in his quest to make the army's administrative bureaus answerable to the army chief. Although Wood's campaign was successful, it proved to be a hollow victory. The conflict left Hay with a lasting enmity for the army staff and a personal dislike for Leonard Wood. As a sign of his displeasure, in 1915 Hay pushed through a provision that toughened the "Manchu Law" by reducing the number of General Staff officers allowed to be on duty in Washington. Lane, 157-9.

¹⁰⁸ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 31 January 1916, 9.

Mills cited several reasons for the failure of the guard to be “an efficient force for Federal purposes,” and in doing so, let vent the regulars’ accumulated ire of the existing system for wartime reserves. He noted that the National Guard was too under-strength to be a true reserve, that its organization was too heavy in the combat arms at the expense of logistical and support units, that it was inefficient in terms of administration and training, that it was far too willing to issue its soldiers an “excessive number of discharges for reasons other than expiration of term of service,” and that it was unable to attract “the best material that is available and suitable for such [military] service.” The General also assailed the failure of the states to adopt a uniform military code, especially when it came to the selection and training of officers. He concluded, “The Nation should be given every assurance that losses on campaign due to incompetent leadership will be reduced to a minimum.”¹⁰⁹

Mills was not alone in highlighting the need for a competent reserve of officers. This issue was raised by nearly every officer or official appearing before the board or by the board members themselves. When asked by the committee on the first day of testimony how he would raise officers for his plan, Garrison replied that he would call those citizens already listed as reserve officers, recall Regular Army officers who had resigned, and commission qualified National Guard officers. He went on to note, “eventually my notion is that the source of supply would have to come from military schools and colleges that would have been educating men under our supervision, under courses that we would lay down, and with institutions we would have officers present to participate in the training of those men.”¹¹⁰

In later testimony, Hugh Scott, Leonard Wood, and other Regular Army officers basically fell in line with Garrison’s proposal to reform the existing Land-Grant system for training

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹¹⁰ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 8 January 1916, 31.

potential officers, but differed in the details. Wood, for example, maintained that even after graduating from an improved college military program, the reserve officer would still require at least a year's service in the Regular Army to make him fully qualified to command troops in wartime.¹¹¹

When questioned by the committee on their estimations of how many officers would be required to meet "any serious war," the regular officers did show a discrepancy in their estimations. Scott, for instance, argued that the nation would require "30,000 to 40,000 officers" to meet any great military emergency.¹¹² Wood, however, argued that "Fifty thousand officers are barely enough for an army of a million and a half men."¹¹³ He drove home his point by lecturing the congressmen, "You will have no time to make an officer after the war starts."¹¹⁴ It is unclear where these experienced officers obtained their estimates. The army staff had only approached this question in a general manner. In 1915, one of the American Military Attachés in France reported to the General Staff, "An officer of the [French] General Staff on duty in the Ministry of War told me that the French losses in officers to June 1st [1915] were cavalry 280, artillery 1160, infantry over 10,000."¹¹⁵ A report compiled by the War College to support the Continental Army plan also noted the high casualty rates suffered by the British from August 1914 to October 1915. In all operations the British had suffered 6,660 officers killed, 2,000 missing and 12,633 wounded. Of these officer losses, 4,401 of the killed, 1,567 of the missing,

¹¹¹ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 January 1916, 284.

¹¹² Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 10 January 1916, 7.

¹¹³ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 January 1916, 285.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Report of Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché, "French Casualties," dated 25 August 1915, National Archives RG 165, "Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917," File 8698, Roll 219.

and 9,169 of the wounded had occurred on the Western Front.¹¹⁶ Given these facts, both general's estimations were far off the mark.

As with the case of their estimates for the number of officers that a wartime army would require, other aspects of the testimony demonstrated the inconsistencies and confusions within the War Department's case. Although Garrison's plans rested upon building a reserve of volunteer officers and soldiers, the issue of Universal Military Training (UMT) continued to confuse the issue. Historian Jack Lane has noted that Leonard Wood's unwavering and uncompromising prepotency of UMT played into the hands of those politicians looking to derail the Continental Army.¹¹⁷ The army could not even agree on the length of time it took to adequately train a raw recruit.

While Garrison and the regulars impaled themselves upon the horns of the Committee on Military Affairs, the National Guard attendees displayed a united front and a much greater degree of political savvy. Major General Clifford Foster, the Florida State Adjutant General and the Chairman of the National Guard Association's Executive Committee, cast the guard as both the Regular Army's and the preparedness movement's greatest supporters. As he stated, "The National Guard does now and always has advocated better preparedness for national defense" and assured the committee members that the guard was ready and willing to correct any deficiencies that impaired its readiness to serve as the nation's wartime reserve.¹¹⁸ In a similar vein, the New Jersey Adjutant General, Wilbur Sadler, whose comments drew the applause of the audience, noted that he had given his life to improving the National Guard and challenged the

¹¹⁶ Army War College, *Personnel Verses Material Plans for National Defense* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916). Under Wood's estimates the army would need to raise 133,000 officers to lead an army of four million; it actually took 200,000 during World War I, a difference of 67,000. Neither general seemed to understand the daily "wastage" of leaders that modern war entailed.

¹¹⁷ Lane, 197-9.

¹¹⁸ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 1 February 1916, 84-100.

Congress, “You give us the money and you take control of us and then you watch us [improve].”¹¹⁹

The strongest testimony against the War Department’s plan came from John F. O’Ryan. He admitted that the state forces had problems, but challenged the Congress to “fix the standards” to be achieved by the guard. He then evoked the spirit of George Washington to make his point,

Washington was some soldier, and he knew what had been and what could be. So when it came to discuss the subject of national defense he advocated what we are advocating here now... We know from our experience that we will never develop a proper National Army enthused with this spirit unless we put into it the spirit of the Regular Army, and make their interests and our interests as identical as it is possible...¹²⁰

Who could argue with George Washington, or the guardsmen’s constant praise of the Regular Army? In a few hours of testimony, the National Guard’s leaders undid months of work by the War College and the General Staff, and, unfortunately, left the regulars with no real plan for raising a cadre of wartime leaders or overcoming the other challenges of mass mobilization.

It is interesting to note that in all of the regular’s studies and testimonies, the issue of raising NCOs for an enlarged army seldom arose. After going into excruciating details over the looming officer shortage, one of the few Continental Army studies that mentioned NCOs at all merely stated, “The indicated shortage in trained officers will exist in approximately the same degree in trained noncommissioned officers.”¹²¹ When pressed by a committee member about the army’s plan to expand the NCO corps, Leonard Wood laconically replied, “That is a problem we have not yet tackled. We must approach it sometime, but I think first we should get a reserve

¹¹⁹ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 2 February 1916, 256.

¹²⁰ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 1 February 1916, 120-121.

¹²¹ Army War College, *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of Volunteers Under the Act of April 25, 1914* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 18.

corps of officers...”¹²² Unfortunately, “sometime” never came prior to the nation’s entry into the war. Congressman Greene more presciently noted, “The public generally has been led to be indifferent to the status of the noncommissioned officer, having only in mind the commissioned officer, and forgetting that without the organization which the noncommissioned officer maintains under himself the personnel would go to pieces.”¹²³

In the end the Continental Army plan was a disaster, and one which the War Department could have avoided. Facing a tough reelection bid in 1916, and unwilling to expend political capital to counter the growing opposition of the plan in Congress and from the National Guard Association, Wilson quashed any further discussion of a reserve-based “Continental Army.” This, and other disagreements with Wilson over “preparedness,” led Garrison to resign on 10 February 1916. Garrison and his Regular Army supporters were blind to the fact that Congress and the nation did not see the threat of a foreign invasion that the Continental Army was designed to counter as being that great and thus worth the money and changes to defense policy that the plan would entail. As one historian noted, “There was about as much chance for the United States to create a 500,000-man field force in 1916 as there was for Congress to make Mohammedanism the state religion.”¹²⁴ The real significance of the plan for this study was that it diverted the General Staff and War College’s time, resources, and brainpower from finding solutions to the concrete issue of how the nation could actually create a corps of junior leaders for a growing wartime army.

It is clear from the questions asked by the members of the Committee on Military Affairs that they were amenable to some reform of the military system and were attentive to the regulars

¹²² Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 January 1916, 299.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹²⁴ Finnegan, 191-2.

who raised problems with the Land Grant College system of military training. Had the regulars spent less time tilting at the windmills of UMT, they may have gotten a ROTC-type reform of the old system a year prior to its establishment by the National Defense Act of 1916. In fact, the only good that came of the debate over the Continental Army plan was that the General Staff was able to present the committee a draft recommendation for the establishment of a Reserve Officers' Training Corps.¹²⁵ The draft legislation was designed to correct the many faults that existed in the military training conducted in the nation's colleges by instituting a two-year compulsory military education course for Land-Grant colleges, standardizing training for all institutions, and establishing a baseline competency for commissioning. Although these reforms were made law in the National Defense Act of 1916, they came far too late to have any real effect on the training of officers for the war.

With the failure of the Continental Army concept, in the winter of 1916, the War Department's efforts to craft a coherent mobilization plan were in tatters. For all of its vehement and self-defeating criticism of the National Guard, it remained the only force that even approximated a military reserve. Unfortunately, events on the Mexican border quickly and dramatically highlighted the fact that the Regulars may have been correct in their assessment that the guard was a fragile reed with major problems with the professional competency of its leadership.

The already strained relations between the United States and Mexico took a decisive turn on 9 March 1916 when Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico. In response to the raid the Wilson Administration ordered a large-scale redeployment of the Regular Army to the borders as

¹²⁵ Major P. D. Lockridge included the General Staff's draft legislation for the ROTC in his testimony before the committee. Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 1 February 1916, 38-42.

well as the formation of a 12,000 man punitive expedition under the command of John J. Pershing. Even though sixty percent of its forces were dedicated to the border guard and punitive expedition mission, the army's requirements quickly overtaxed the stretched regulars. On 10 May 1916, the Chief of Staff of the Army, Hugh Scott, ordered the Staff College and the other Leavenworth schools be closed so that the college's students and faculty could be returned to their regiments in order to support the Mexican operations. Although the Army Service Schools' Commandant, Brigadier General H.R. Greene, hoped that the schools would be reopened in late 1916 or early 1917, America's entry into the First World War ultimately kept the college shuttered until 01 September 1919.¹²⁶

With the regulars overextended, on 16 June 1916 Wilson mobilized the entire National Guard to assist in securing the southern border. This deployment quickly highlighted glaring deficiencies in the guard's organization, manning, training, and leadership. The greatest challenge the guard faced was mere numbers. At the time of the call, many Guard units were at only 42% of their authorized wartime strengths.¹²⁷ The Militia Bureau stated that it had approximately 95,000 soldiers on its rolls in May 1916, but over 47,657 of these dropped from their list between the call for mobilization and the transfer of the units to federal service. This shortfall was mostly due to guardsmen failing to report for muster or found physically disqualified at the mobilization stations.¹²⁸

One of the greatest contributing factors behind the shortage of troops was the tendency of the state National Guard leadership to be very lenient in granting discharges to officers and soldiers claiming business or personal hardship due to the deployment. This drain did not stop

¹²⁶ Army Service Schools, *Army Service Schools Annual Report for 1916* (Fort Leavenworth: Army Service Schools Press, 1914), 5-7.

¹²⁷ MG William H. Carter, "Our Defective Military System," *North American Review*, March 1917, 364;., and Mahon, 141, 151-152. For the problems of National Guard units on border duty see Lonnie J. White, *Panthers to Arrowheads: The 36th Division in World War I* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1984), 10-15.

¹²⁸ U.S. National Guard Bureau, *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States 1916* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 95-6.

when the guardsmen came under federal control. The Army Adjutant General reported that between May and November 1916 the army accepted the resignation of 482 National Guard officers.¹²⁹ Not only was the guard not living up to being the Regulars' reserve of wartime officers, the guard could not even fill its own leadership requirements.

Other factors further eroded the guard's numbers in the summer of 1916. The Dick Act required guardsmen to pass a physical examination prior to mustering into active service, but in some cases the states had not adopted the standard physical used by the Regular Army. Overall, state physicals were not as rigorous as those of the Regulars, and the mobilization of the National Guard led to a number of discharges for physical disabilities. Of the 35,834 guardsmen the army examined, 5,526 (15%) were rejected for active service due to physical reasons. The greatest reasons for rejection were poor physique (31.4%), defective vision or eye disease (13.4%), heart or lung problems (13.1%), flat or deformed feet (7.4%), and hernia (7.1%).¹³⁰ Since guard officers at the battalion level and below tended to be older than the regular counterparts and thus more prone to physical disabilities, their rate of discharge further eroded effective leadership at those echelons.

In a 26 October 1916 report to the War Department, the Commander of the Western Department, BG William Silbert, noted, "Some confusion existed due to the fact that several officers in some organizations had been found physically disqualified for service and their places had to be filled by others with little or no military experience or knowledge of the duties required of them."¹³¹ Lieutenant McIlroy, a regular assigned to training guard units caustically noted, "To a regular officer interested in seeing an efficient national force, the situation here has ceased

¹²⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 53-7. The staff officer compiling the data noted that the numbers of discharges continued to rise, thus his numbers were merely a snapshot at the time of the printing of the report.

¹³¹ Ibid., 141.

to be amusing- to think that the Federal Government must pay such enormous sums of money for so much inefficiency!”¹³² Although some regulars may have enjoyed a brief moment of *Schadenfreude* at the plight of their guard comrades, the “I told you so” moment quickly waned as both parties recognized the hard path that lay ahead.

One of the tasks consuming the time and effort of the guard’s junior leaders was recruiting. Company and battalion commanders were forced to neglect the mobilization training and preparation of their commands to try to get their anemic ranks up to their regulation strengths. In far too many cases, this diversion of leaders garnered only lackluster results. The New York National Guard, for example, attempted to bring two infantry regiments from Buffalo up to wartime strength, but the results were disappointing. The recruiting efforts from 7 February to 31 March only raised the ranks of the 74th Regiment from 649 to 678, and the 65th Infantry from 469 to 720; both were far short of the required wartime strength of over 1000 soldiers.¹³³ In a similar fashion, Massachusetts sent out over 20 four-man recruiting parties from 28 July to 26 August 1916, yet only garnered 130 recruits. At the same time, over 700 serving Bay State guardsman refused to take the required Federal oath or declined to show up for their unit’s muster.¹³⁴ By November 1916, only 21 states were able to man their units to at least 60% of their required war strength. Washington did the best, fulfilling 98.9% of its required quota, while Arkansas was only able to fill 31.2 % of its quota.¹³⁵

¹³² Ibid., 104.

¹³³ Ibid., 15-16. For the challenges that the guard faced upon mobilization, also see, Cooper, 156-9.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 132. Of this problem, Major General T. H. Berry, Commander of the Central Department noted “Companies of the National Guard averaged about 40 men at the time of the president’s call on June 18 were recruited to minimum strength by going into the highways and byways and enlisting any men obtainable... One regiment (Eighth Ohio Infantry) had approximately 500 men, who were so enlisted, rejected upon physical examination held after muster in.”

¹³⁵ Ibid., 153-4. Also see Geoffrey Paret, *A Country Made by War* (New York: Random House, 1989), 310-312.

The last minute flight of experienced soldiers and officers and the frantic efforts to fill the depleted ranks of guard units all-to-often left the organizations woefully short of trained and experienced leaders and men. Of the 128,517 enlisted men ultimately recruited or mobilized in 1916, over 20,964 (16%) had less than three months of military service, 21,610 (17%) had more than three months but less than a year of service, and 34,976 (27%) had more than one year but less than three years of service.¹³⁶ This presented captains, lieutenants, and NCOs with nearly insurmountable challenges. In one of the guard infantry regiments that he inspected, Major H. A. Smith discovered that 37.3 percent of the unit's soldiers were green recruits, and that over 50 percent of the unit's members had never attended a training camp or had even participated in field training.¹³⁷ In a 21 September 1916 inspection of a different infantry regiment, Lieutenant Colonel I. G. Winn noted that out of 888 soldiers, 443 enlisted men were green recruits, and another 217 had been in the unit for less than three months (over 74% of total). He also noted that 382 soldiers had never fired their rifles and that "the training has been almost entirely elementary, and that is far from complete. Even in close-order drill the companies do not average fair."¹³⁸ Major General William Carter estimated that at least 60,000 of the mobilized guardsmen had no real military training at all, and 56,813 of the men had never fired a rifle.¹³⁹

The regulars tended to blame the National Guard's leadership for most of its failings and floundering on the border. Much of this criticism was justified. Once mobilized, the lack of experience and their own limited training hindered the efforts of junior officers and NCOs to raise the overall efficiency and readiness of their commands. At the end of the guard's deployment, the Chief of the Militia Bureau admitted that during the mobilization, "some

¹³⁶ Ibid., 95-6., and Mahon, 151-3.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 73.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 75.

¹³⁹ Carter, "Our Defective Military System," 364.

advance was made” in the guard’s readiness, but, “the lack of proper individual training and the limitations of the National Guard officers were serious obstacles to progress.”¹⁴⁰ The Regular Army attempted to alleviate some of the National Guard’s shortcoming by assigning regular officers to train guard regiments. One such officer, First Lieutenant W. G. Murchison reported of his guardsmen, “their lack of training is somewhat deplorable.” He went on to note,

With the possible exception of the two officers commissioned from sergeants of the regular service, there is not one of them fitted for the position he holds. Some of them will make good officers, but it will be a long hard pull for them, because the senior officers are just as inefficient, or more so, than the juniors...Officers in whom I had confidence proved themselves incapable when put to the test. Not that some of them lack native ability, but because of the fact that most of their time has been taken up with making a living in civil life, and, as one officer expressed it, the military part has been a sort of diversion.¹⁴¹

Despite his efforts, Murchison seems to have made little headway with his new charges. In August 1916, he reported, “I still find a great many companies with their small arms completely covered with rust, inside out.”¹⁴²

Other regulars echoed Murchison’s critique of the abilities of the National Guard’s junior leaders. After inspecting a guard infantry unit Major H. A. Smith stated that since “The officers are trained only in a small degree” and “Their ideas of discipline are crude and unformed,” the “regiment is loosely held together.”¹⁴³ Of another regiment, Smith reported that its leaders lacked “serious military training,” and because of this, “the limit of officers and noncommissioned officers in disciplinary control, leadership, and as instructors must soon be reached.”¹⁴⁴ In July 1916, another regular officer reported that in the guard unit he inspected, “The spirit of the officers and men is particularly good, and they all seem anxious to learn”;

¹⁴⁰ *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States 1916*, 5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, Also see Cooper, 159-167, for a discussion of the problems with the guard’s training and the tensions between guardsmen and regulars,

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

however, he went on to warn that “The state of discipline among the officers leaves much to be desired. It is believed to be better among the enlisted men, but it must exist among the officers if progress of any kind is to be made.”¹⁴⁵

Both the regulars and the guardsmen took steps to correct the deficiencies in the National Guard’s junior leaders. Regular officers held separate classes and courses for guard officers and NCOs. Most guard commanders were willing to support these efforts. For example, at their camp in Laredo, Texas, the commander of the First Missouri Brigade mandated that one hour be dedicated to the training of his junior officers and NCOs daily.¹⁴⁶ Brigadier General James Parker, the commander of the regular’s First Cavalry Brigade, noted that he and his superiors issued “sixty-six instruction bulletins, seventeen general orders, thirty-six memoranda, and six letters of instruction...dealing with the instruction of the National Guard.”¹⁴⁷ With the conclusion of the ten days of maneuvers that he held for the guardsmen in November 1916, Parker concluded that they were “fit to take the field in active campaign.”¹⁴⁸ Few of Parker’s Regular Army comrades agreed with his assessment. Although it was quite easy for headquarters to issue a flurry of directives and orders, it was another thing indeed for them to be carried out.

Unfortunately, the lack of regular officers and NCOs to assist in the training of the National Guard prevented all guard units from receiving the quality and quantity of training that they required to make a marked improvement in their readiness and efficiency. After inspecting thirty-one National Guard units, Lieutenant Colonels Hemlick and P. A. Wolf argued that “...it seems hopeless to expect that any satisfactory degree of efficiency can be reached by National

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ First Missouri Brigade General Order 7 dated 8 July 1916 and General Order 10 dated 26 July 1916, in the Joseph J. Koch Collection, Combined Arms Research Library Archives, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

¹⁴⁷ James Parker, *The Old Army: Memories, 1872-1918* (New York: Stackpole Books, 2003), 426.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 426-7.

Guard troops in a reasonable amount of time unless the commissioned personnel contains a sufficient number of officers of the Regular Army to act as instructors for the mass of untrained men comprising the regiment.”¹⁴⁹ One regular officer was more sympathetic to the challenges that the guard leadership faced and noted,

The privates being largely ignorant of their duty a disproportionate amount of work is required of the noncommissioned officers. The same ignorance on the part of the noncommissioned officers cause a disproportionate amount of work to fall on the shoulders of the company officers. The ignorance of the company officers operates in the same manner with respect to their superiors, and so on up, causing a great amount of effort to produce meager results, with inevitable consequent disgust among all grades. Too often their superiors are unable to teach them, and this ignorance is readily found out, causing loss of respect and discontent.¹⁵⁰

Although the officer correctly gauged the depth of the guard’s leadership challenges, the fact remained that the border mission highlighted the unreadiness of its NCOs and officers to face even the most basic logistical, administrative and tactical challenges of modern war.

Far too much of the guard’s training on the border focused on close order drill, route marches and the basics of guard duty. Although this training certainly toughened the soldiers and gave them the basics of how to live in the field, it was still a far cry from the type of instruction needed to realistically prepare them for modern warfare. The guard was too short on machine guns, heavy artillery, and the other implements of modern war, and the regulars were too short on instructors to fill in the yawning gaps in the guardsmen’s knowledge.

For far too many guardsmen, boredom, rather than meaningful training for war, made up their daily routine. In September 1916, one Maryland guardsman complained that “we have been

¹⁴⁹ *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States 1916*, 72.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 152 and 58. Some regulars tried to correct the guard’s problems in a more direct manner. Section 100 of the National Defense Act of 1916 allowed Regular officers to accept commissions in the National Guard. During the border crisis one regular lieutenant colonel, two majors, 25 captains, and 15 lieutenants accepted transfer. The colonel and majors became brigadier generals, 11 captains became colonels, 14 captains and 10 lieutenants became lieutenant colonels, and the remaining five lieutenants became majors.

taught everything there is to teach us and are now going over it again, I cannot understand how it is that they are keeping us here for so long and [there are] no [military] activities at all.”¹⁵¹ Two months later he reported that his time was taken up with monotonous route marches, guarding two bridges, playing poker, and fishing. Although he was doing a lot of shooting, it was with a .22 caliber rifle hunting game, rather with a M1903 Springfield.¹⁵² Another soldier, Maine guardsman Russell Adams, recalled,

We would check cars crossing over from Mexico around Brownsville, looking for arms going in or out. The papers down in Maine were playing it up big, like we were in a war, but really it was a picnic. My station was at a place called Powder Ranch. We had about twenty men here, just enough for two baseball nines, so we played a hell of a lot of ball. Our lieutenant was a man name of Coolidge, but hell, there t’weren’t (sic) anyone but us around for miles...so you could say he was just one of the boys down there. It was great fun for awhile; then we started to get bored.¹⁵³

Clearly, for Adams and his companions the baseball fields of Powder Ranch, Texas, were a far cry from the Duke of Wellington’s “playing fields of Eton” when it came to realistically preparing them, and more importantly, Lieutenant Coolidge, for the trauma of war.

Some historians have argued that the National Guard’s deployment to the Mexican border in 1916 was a vital stepping stone for preparing it for the challenges that it would face in World War I. John Mahon, for instance noted that the experience was invaluable for not only preparing individual guard soldiers and officers for war, but also for giving senior guard officers the vital experience they needed in conducting a mass mobilization.¹⁵⁴ Edward Coffman has asserted that “the three months or more service which these citizens had on border duty provided them with

¹⁵¹ Letter from Corporal Charles D. Adams to “My Dear Mr. Lyle,” dated 27 September 1916 in Charles D. Adams, 5th Infantry, MD National Guard, Mexican Border file, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey.

¹⁵² Letter from Corporal Charles D. Adams to “My Dear Mr. Lyle,” dated 13 November 1916 in Charles D. Adams, 5th Infantry, MD National Guard, Mexican Border file, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey.

¹⁵³ Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 189, 339-341.

¹⁵⁴ Mahon, 152-3.

much more training and experience than they ever would have received in their annual two week encampments” and that the deployment had created a core of 110,000 “comparative veterans.”¹⁵⁵

There is much truth to these arguments, and the National Guard certainly gained a degree of training and experience from the mobilization that they would not have gotten without it.

However, the quality and quantity of that training and experience is what remains in question.

At the conclusion of the National Guard’s mobilization, Brigadier General William Silbert, the commander of the Western Department, remarked,

In general the instruction on the boarder can not be said to have been satisfactory... The greatest fault was the lack of systematic instruction, which, covering 8 or 10 hours a day, should commence first with the individual and progress, by successive steps to the squad, platoon, company, battalion, regiment, brigade, and division. In many cases this was undertaken, yet the progress was made too fast- was not based on proficiency. Precision, uniformity, and thoroughness were lacking in the successive stages, and the final result could not be other than unsatisfactory. In general at the end of five months’ service, with few exceptions, the organizations as a whole were reported as still not ready and fit for active field service against a well-trained enemy.¹⁵⁶

As Silbert realized, it was going to take a lot of effort, time, and money to turn the National Guard into a viable wartime force, and its NCOs and junior officers into capable combat leaders. Even with these efforts, the guard would not be totally successful. The lack of leadership and professional competency in some guard officers led one enlisted man to later remark, “We had some beaunts (sic) from the N.G. that should have been with the boy scouts.”¹⁵⁷ Ultimately, the War Department called 12,115 Guard officers to active duty in 1917. Between 5 August 1917 and 10 May 1918, the army had discharged 511 of these officers for physical disability; efficiency boards had removed 352 more, and 648 had been encouraged by the army to resign. During the war, only six percent of the army’s officers were to be National

¹⁵⁵ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 14.

¹⁵⁶ *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States 1916*, 146.

¹⁵⁷ Harry House, 320 MGB, 82 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey File 2705.

Guardsmen.¹⁵⁸ In the final analysis, historian Timothy Nenninger was on the mark when he noted, “The National Guard of 1917 was nearly as unprepared for war as the state militias had been in 1898.”¹⁵⁹

With their distrust of using the National Guard as a reservoir of wartime troops and leaders, some Regular Army officers pinned their hopes on gaining potential officers from more novel sources. One of the provisions of the Dick Act allowed the War Department a means for raising a cadre of non-Guard reserve officers that could be mobilized in time of war to lead volunteer units. The Dick Act’s Section 23 allowed the army to hold boards to identify those men “specially qualified to hold commissions in any volunteer force which may hereafter be called for and organized under the authority of Congress.”¹⁶⁰ It also mandated that the army maintain a list of those selected so that they could be mobilized in time of a national emergency. To qualify, all candidates had to pass physical and professional examinations, be United States citizens, and be under 30 years old for a commission to second lieutenant, under 35 years old for first lieutenant, and under 40 years old for a captain.

Until 1914 the army took no major steps to implement the provisions of Section 23. From 1906 through 1914 the army issued only 77 certificates to hold reserve commissions. This number also included 51 Regular Army enlisted men who wished to be commissioned upon the outbreak of war.¹⁶¹ However, in 1913 Leonard Wood seized upon the languishing provision as a means of building a reserve cadre of junior officers free from the “taint” of the National Guard. Wood proposed the creation of a pool of reserve officers who would be commissioned after completing at least two years of standardized military education in their colleges. These men

¹⁵⁸ U.S. Department of War, *Annual Report: 1918*, Vol 1., 1109., Mahon, 162., and Leonard Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 22.

¹⁵⁹ Nenninger, “The Army Enters the Twentieth Century,” 222.

¹⁶⁰ General Order number 7 dated 24 January 1903.

¹⁶¹ Reports of the Adjutant General for 1906 through 1914 in the War Department *Annual Reports*.

would serve one year on active duty to complete and certify their training, and then be returned to civilian life as a ready officer reserve. While Wood's plan was never implemented, in the spring of 1913 he organized two five-week-long Students' Military Instruction Camps at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and Monterey, California to demonstrate its feasibility.

Although Wood's stated goal of the camps was to "increase the present inadequate personnel of the trained military reserve of the United States by a class of men from whom, in a time of national emergency, a large portion of the commissioned officers will probably be drawn, and upon whose military judgment at such a time the lives of many other men will in a measure depend" the army had a deeper and, to them, a more important agenda.¹⁶² Wood admitted that the training in the camps was insufficient, but countered,

The benefit to the country (is) in the fostering of a patriotic spirit, without which a nation soon loses its virility and falls into decay; also the dissemination among the citizens of the country by the return of the students who attended the camp of a more thorough knowledge of military policy, the true military history of our country, and its military needs, all necessary to the complete education of a well-equipped citizen in order that he may himself form just and true opinions on military topics.¹⁶³

Although the training given to the students focused on increasing the discipline and health of the participants and in providing them a rudimentary introduction to military drill, tactics, and shooting, Wood's intent of indoctrinating "right thinking" in the attendees remained the larger focus of the camps. One of the regular officers who organized the training noted with satisfaction that, "The students left the camp with the fixed idea of doing missionary work at their colleges."¹⁶⁴ Thus, effective military training would be secondary to the creation of

¹⁶² Major Charles Gerhardt, "Student Camps of Instruction," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. X, No. 5 (March-April 1914), 672.

¹⁶³ War Department, *Annual Report, 1913*, 190-1., Gerhardt, "Student's Camps of Instruction," 672-687., Lane, 180-1., and Clifford, 14-15.

¹⁶⁴ Gerhardt, "Student Camps of Instruction," 686.

“student-missionaries” trained to spread Wood and Upton’s gospel of preparedness and “a sound military policy.” This underlying agenda remained a touchstone of all the subsequent citizen’s training camps held until the entry of the United States into the war.

Both Wood and Secretary of War Garrison proclaimed the 1913 camps to be a great success. In his annual report to Congress, Garrison boasted that the attendees obtained, “a healthy, active, out-of-doors life for the summer vacation at less expense than that usually required when away from home and acquire habits of obedience, command, self-control, order, and personal hygiene.”¹⁶⁵ The 1913 camps’ achievements encouraged the army to expand the number and size of the camps for the summer of 1914. Wood used his friendship with Lehigh University president Henry Drinker to publicize the camps to the presidents of other educational institutions. Drinker viewed the camps mainly as a means of promoting civic virtue, patriotism, and “muscular Christianity,” and was the earliest and one of the most enthusiastic boosters of the program. In the fall of 1913 he, along with the presidents of Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and other prominent college leaders, formed the Advisory Board of University Presidents for the National Reserve Corps. With the active encouragement and support of Wood, these leaders ensured a large turnout of their students for the 1914 camps. In the end, the army trained 667 students in camps at Ludington, Michigan; Ashville, North Carolina; Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, and Monterey, California.¹⁶⁶

The success of the 1913 and 1914 camps and the outbreak of the war in Europe encouraged the army and civic leaders to examine ways to expand civilian military training.

¹⁶⁵ War Department, *Annual Report for 1913*, Vol. I, 19-20. For discussion of the moral and physical benefits of the camps see, Francis Frothingham, “Plattsburgh Lessons,” in *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. LVIII (1916), 198-201.

¹⁶⁶ Military Training Camp Association, *Roster of Attendants at Federal Military Training Camps 1913-1916* (New York: Anderson & Ruwe, 1916), V and XI., and Clifford, 18-29. Drinker and most of his fellow college presidents on the Advisory Board of University Presidents for the National Reserve Corps would later serve on a similar advisory board for the Military Training Camp Association.

Greenville Clark, an influential and well connected New Yorker who was practicing law with the son of Elihu Root when the war began, became a driving force for further extending the number, size, and complexion of the camps in 1915 and 1916. Like Drinker, Wood, and Theodore Roosevelt, Clark was a passionate advocate of preparedness and a critic of Wilson's neutrality policies. Although this mighty quartet would serve as the midwives of the famous "Plattsburg Movement," their partisanship ultimately meant that the training of civilians became merely another political football in the contentious preparedness debate.

As was the case with the Continental Army plan, the purpose of the citizen's training camps became lost or confused in the larger debate over universal military training, the responsibilities of citizenship, the need to instill civic virtue in the nation's youth and immigrants, and the conflict between preparedness and neutrality. This duality of purpose meant that while the army continued to tout the camps as a means for identifying and training potential reserve officers, they would also serve as a way to rally upper and middle class businessmen, students, and educators and direct them towards achieving the army's goal of a "proper military policy" for the nation. As late as November 1916, Army Chief of Staff Hugh Scott reiterated that the purposes of the Plattsburg camps was both to "furnish practical training to these citizens of good character and sufficient education to qualify for commissions in the Officer's Reserve Corps" and to "spread amongst the citizens of the country some knowledge of military history, military policy, and military needs, all necessary to the complete education of a well equipped citizen in order that he may form just and true opinions on military topics."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum for Secretary of War from the Chief of Staff, dated November 1916 (no day given) titled, "The Federal Training Camps and the War Department." in "Letters, Memorandums, reports, etc of the Citizen Training Camps, Officers' Training Camps, Central Officer's Training Schools and Student Army Training Corps," RG 165, Correspondence of the War College Division, 1903-1919, Microfilm finding guide M1024, File 9226, Roll 261.

This dual agenda for the training was not lost on the camp attendees. One cadet admitted to his Regular Army instructor, “I am here as a silent protest against our unpreparedness.”¹⁶⁸ While another camp attendee, John Barnes, took a more tongue-in-cheek approach to the training, he still light-heartedly confessed that since the “preparedness bug has nipped me” he had given up “active membership in the Old Guard of Club Warriors whose total labors for national defense have consisted of free advise and liberal contributions to the internal revenue on booze.” Despite his mock heroics, he still proclaimed that by attending the Plattsburg camp in June 1916, “I am doing my bit to put our puny military establishment on a stable basis.”¹⁶⁹ One of the businessmen attending attended the 1916 Plattsburg camp reported with approval the preparedness comments made by Leonard Wood during a visit to his encampment. He related, “...when the General asked us, as I suppose he has asked previous regiments, to vote in favor of universal training, every man of us shouted Ay!”¹⁷⁰ The citizen’s training camp attendees were well on their way to being the foot soldiers and acolytes of preparedness.

On the surface the dual nature of the camps should have furthered the army’s goal of increasing its readiness for war. However, the conflation of the camps with universal military training served to lull some officers into a false sense of security over the ease at which it could raise and train a mass army. Major M. B. Stewart noted that when he first arrived at the Plattsburg camp to serve as an instructor,

The mere thought of field service after three weeks of training conjures a vision of unwieldy mobs, led about by hand, nursed, valetted, and personally conducted. To many of the officers who were on duty at the camp during the past summer, the idea of attempting such a performance with six or seven thousand men

¹⁶⁸ MAJ M. B. Stewart, “The Military Training Camps,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (November-December 1916), 250.

¹⁶⁹ O. N. E. [John B. Barnes], *Letters of a Plattsburg Patriot* (Washington D.C.: United States Infantry Association, 1917), 5.

¹⁷⁰ Allen French, *At Plattsburg* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917), 294.

brought a sinking of the heart. However, that feeling disappeared with the first day of the march.¹⁷¹

With only a cadre of 16 regular officers and no regular NCOs, he marveled at the progress made by his nascent soldiers. Stewart gushed, "Thirty days [of training] does not sound impressive," but argued that the quality and quantity of the training that the civilians endured was actually better than the "actual military training that the average regular soldier receives in any period of three months."¹⁷² Of course the point seemed to have been lost on the major that he was supposed to be turning out men fitted to be officers and not Regular Army privates. Stewart also bowed to the other purpose of the course by admitting that, "Whatever else [the students] may have gained from the experience, they were in a position to consider the military needs of the Country in a broad, intelligent way." To him, the most important result of the camps was the fact that, "They make missionaries...In other words, each one of them goes home a self-constituted apostle of the Doctrine of National Preparedness."¹⁷³

Stewart was not alone in succumbing to the seductive allure of training camps filled with ideologically motivated and internally dedicated citizens. It is interesting to note that a Regular Army captain had confidently asserted in 1911 that it took "thirty-two weeks, or eight months in all then as the total time needed for making of our foot-soldier, regular or volunteer. And this is provided there is a trained officer for every 50 men, and a trained non-commissioned officer for every 12 men, working hard five hours daily."¹⁷⁴ In December 1915, other experienced officers maintained that based on Canada's wartime experiences it would take "a minimum of ten

¹⁷¹ MAJ M. B. Stewart, "The Military Training Camps," 253-4.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 252.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 250-1.

¹⁷⁴ CPT A. J. Dougherty, "The Making of A Soldier," in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. VII, No. 5 (March 1911),

months, and preferably one year” to train inexperienced men to be soldiers.¹⁷⁵ Yet only a month later Leonard Wood told a Congressional committee that the Plattsburg citizen camps demonstrated that given intelligent men as recruits and a cadre of “officers of marked ability as instructors” it was possible to “train those particular men very well in three months.” Although he readily admitted that the attendees of the camps were exceptionally well educated and enthusiastic, and thus learned at a rate “6 to 8” times faster than the contemporary Regular Army recruit, “The men we should probably get as recruits under the continental army plan could be trained very well in six months if assembled in large training camps alongside of full-strength organizations of regular troops and under the instructions of carefully selected officers of the Regular Army.”¹⁷⁶ Given the caveats that Wood enumerated in his response, why did he feel compelled to evoke the Plattsburg camps at all? Although Wood was using the Plattsburg camps as a means to push forward his universal military training agenda, this continued conflation of a camp for training officers with the requirements for training enlisted recruits again merely confused the reasons for the camps and needlessly politicized the issue of building a cadre of reserve officers.

Whatever uses the Plattsburg camps were put to, there can be no doubt that they struck a responsive cord among certain middle and upper class elements within American society. With war raging in Europe, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and tensions building on the Mexican border, the popularity of the “Plattsburg Idea” steadily grew in 1915 and 1916. Although Greenville Clark tried to expand the social classes from which the pool of attendees came from by encouraging supporters to donate to “Plattsburg scholarships,” the camps retained a rather

¹⁷⁵ Editorial Staff, “Infantry Training,” in *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (December 1915), 508.

¹⁷⁶ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 January 1916, 264.

narrow spectrum of candidates.¹⁷⁷ There is much truth in historian Michael Pearlman's characterization of the camps as "a Sparta for the rich."¹⁷⁸

Much of the exclusiveness of the camps derived from the fact that the candidates had to foot nearly the entire bill for their month of training. The Congress made no appropriations to conduct the citizens training camps. While the army provided free instruction, billeting and equipment, the candidates had to pay for their meals, uniforms, and transportation to and from the camp. In a letter to applicants from the headquarters of the Southern Department to those men wishing to attend the summer camp at Fort Sam Houston in 1916, the army warned that those attending would be expected to pay \$15 for rations and sundry items and \$12.50 for their uniforms.¹⁷⁹ Additionally, the candidate had to be able to afford taking a month off from work to attend the camp.

Although Wood and other regular officers paid lip service to the "democratization" of the camps, it is clear that they were unwilling to stray far from the Regular Army's long-standing preference for drawing its potential officers from the pool of college students and graduates. In the autumn of 1915, Wood made a great show of working with the labor leader Samuel Gompers to demonstrate that the camps were not merely a club for rich boys.¹⁸⁰ However, in the letter that the general sent to potential camp recruits on 17 January 1916, he stressed,

You will note, first, that applicants are desired principally from those who have college, university, high school (or corresponding school) education. Non-graduates are not excluded, but each case will be decided on its merits with a view of maintaining a level in the progressive scheme of development. The training given at these camps is very intensive, covering in a period of four

¹⁷⁷ Clifford, 156-164.

¹⁷⁸ Pearlman, *To Make Democracy Safe for America*, 58.

¹⁷⁹ Letter dated "March 1, 1916" from Headquarters, Southern Department, entitled, "Citizen's Training Camp to be held at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Under the Direction of Major General Frederick Funston, Commanding the Southern Department U. S. Army," in "Letters, Memorandums, Reports, Etc of the Citizen's Training Camps, Central Officers' Training Camps, Central Officers' Training Schools, and the Student Army Training Corps," NARA Records Group 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁸⁰ Clifford, 156-9.

weeks as much as possible of the fundamental education of an officer. This calls for a well trained mind. In the second place, past experience has shown that this class of young men is the first to join the colors in time of war and many of them regardless of their skill in military matters receive commissions.¹⁸¹

For all of the army's flirtation with Samuel Gompers, at no time prior to the war did it ever seriously consider admitting any more than a handful of non-college men into the ranks of the regular or reserve officer corps.

Given the support of the citizen training camps among ranking college presidents and their students, the army also saw no great need to expand the camps' attendees outside of the bounds of "the right sort." John Hibben, the president of Princeton University, reported to both his students and their parents, "It is in my opinion infinitely better to devote one's time in this way during two summer vacations of a college course than to the lazy life of the ordinary summer hotel. The consciousness of making some sacrifice for one's country in the midst of a season of pleasure is in itself of incalculable value."¹⁸² In 1915 the collegian Lucian Howe assured the readers of the *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States* that the institutions of higher knowledge could supply their needs because, "The young men who went to college would...be graduating at a rate of a little over sixteen thousand a year, most of them with good physique and training for officers."¹⁸³

On 17 November 1915, the presidents of 14 distinguished universities, to include Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Vanderbilt, and the University of Michigan, sent an open letter to their peers praising Plattsburg's accomplishments and asking for their assistance in recruiting students for the 1916 camps. They stated, "We believe that the training and instruction which the

¹⁸¹ Letter from Leonard Wood dated "January 17, 1916" from "Headquarters Eastern Department" to "Dear Sir," in "Letters, Memorandums, Reports, Etc of the Citizen's Training Camps, Central Officers' Training Camps, Central Officers' Training Schools, and the Student Army Training Corps" NARA Records Group 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁸² Lucien Howe, "A Brief for Military Education in Our Schools and Universities," in *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. LVII (1915), 24-5.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 28.

students attending receive not only emphasize the dangers and losses of wars lightly and unpreparedly entered into, but we also believe that the training given is excellent, and a great benefit, mental and physical, to the students attending.”¹⁸⁴

The avid support of the educators and the seeming crush of college men willing to attend the camps reinforced the army’s predilection for college educated officers, but also perhaps blinded it to the limitations of drawing its leaders from such a shallow pool. Only 35,372 American males received bachelor’s, professional, master’s or doctoral degrees in 1916, and there were only a total of 294,711 bachelor’s degrees awarded to American males in the ten years prior to the nation’s entry into the war. The 1910 census stated that there was a total of 13.8 million white native and foreign born males between the ages of 20 and 34, the prime ages for junior officers. Although the comparison of the total bachelor’s degrees from 1907-1916 and the 1910 census data for white males between the ages of 20 and 34 does not cover the range of possibilities for potential junior officers, it does give a ballpark idea of the self-imposed challenges that the army created by preferring college men for its officers. This comparison reveals that roughly two percent of the male population fit the army’s ideal model, and this percentage was probably lower if the race, health, and personal desires of the college graduates were factored in.¹⁸⁵ The question that remained was would these relatively small number of men be willing and able to meet the army’s officer manpower needs?

Despite the army’s inclinations for college-educated officers, the civilian leaders of the Plattsburg movement were still able to expand the training camps beyond college students. The

¹⁸⁴ “Report of the Advisory Committee of University Presidents on the Summer Military Instruction Camps for Students,” dated, “November 17, 1915” in “Letters, Memorandums, Reports, Etc of the Citizen’s Training Camps, Central Officers’ Training Camps, Central Officers’ Training Schools, and the Student Army Training Corps” NARA Records Group 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁸⁵ The statistics cited for this comparison were all drawn from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), 16, 383, 386.

preparedness debate had encouraged businessmen and other non-students to clamor for their own military training camps. Since Wood and other officers viewed these people as natural allies in preparedness and supporters of their goal to implement a “proper military policy” for the nation, they supported the establishment of “Businessmen’s Camps of Instruction” to be held in the summer of 1915. Since many of these businessmen were college graduates, had some college under their belts, or had demonstrated proven leadership in the business world, the army still viewed them as the “right kind” of people to serve as officers.

In the summer of 1915, the army held six “Businessmen’s Camps of Instruction”: two at Plattsburg, New York; and one each at Fort Sheridan, Illinois; Landsdowne, Pennsylvania; American Lake, Washington, and the Presidio of San Francisco. These camps trained 2,666 men. Additionally, the army held three student training camps at Plattsburg, the Presidio of San Francisco, and Ludington. These camps trained 975 college and high school students.¹⁸⁶

The end result of these camps was a dramatic spike in the number of applications for reserve commissions. In 1915, Hugh Scott reported that he had a “list of approximately 1,400 names of students of civil institutions of learning who have been recommended as qualified, subject to future physical examination, for appointment as Volunteer officers.” He also noted that the army had received over 5,000 additional applications for reserve commissions that were pending the certification of an examination board.¹⁸⁷

The camps also led to a large increase in the number of certificates of qualification to hold a reserve commission that the army issued. As previously noted, the army had issued only 77 certificates between 1906 and 1913. At the student camp held at the Presidio of San Francisco, in 1915 alone, the Regular Army cadre recommended 94 attendees for volunteer

¹⁸⁶ From the testimony of Tasker Bliss, Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 10 January 1916, 57.

¹⁸⁷ War Department, *Annual Report for 1915*, Vol. I, 146.

commissions.¹⁸⁸ Ten months later the army commissioned another 658 reserve officers after holding a special board to clear the backlog of Plattsburg applicants.¹⁸⁹

Buoyed by the success of the 1915 camps, and hoping strike a blow for preparedness by making the camps a permanent fixture of the military system, Grenville Clark, Henry Drinker and other training camp boosters gathered to form the Military Training Camp Association (MTCA) on January 1916. The purpose of the MTCA was to assist the army in publicizing and coordinating camp attendance and in using its members' political clout to advocate for the camps in the halls of government. The most valuable service that the MTCA ultimately served for the army was its ability to compile records on past and potential camp attendees. This meant that when the nation entered the war in 1917, it had rosters of potential officer candidates readily at hand.

The MTCA also flexed its political muscle during the crafting of what would become the National Defense Act of 1916. Its support led to Section 54 of the act which authorized funds to pay for the transportation and ration costs for the camp attendees. The act also mandated the establishment of an officer's reserve corps and reformed the Land Grant College system by imposing a uniform standard for the training and commissioning of college students under the provisions of the new Reserve Officers Training Corps.¹⁹⁰ Although the reforms came too late to effect the training camps held in the summer of 1916, and had little impact on the training of college students prior to the war, it gave the president (and hence the army) the power to set the qualifications for the commissioning of reserve officers during World War I and also gave the

¹⁸⁸ CPT Allen J. Green, "Student Camps of Instruction: The Presidio Camp," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (November 1915), 394.

¹⁸⁹ War Department, *Annual Report for 1916*, Vol. I, 252-3.

¹⁹⁰ *Act of 3 June 1916*, also published in War Department Bulletin No. 16, 22 June 1916., also John Dickinson, *The Building of an Army* (New York: The Century Company, 1922), 45-8.

army the power authorization that it later needed to establish its wartime Officers Training Camps.

With the vital support of the MTCA, the army further expanded the student and businessmen's camps for the summer of 1916. To gain more regional diversity and cast a broader net for potential officers, the army established twelve Plattsburg-type training camps across the nation. Although some National Guard officers argued that the Plattsburg camps undercut the guard's standing and siphoned-off potential recruits, others, like John F. O'Ryan, saw a long term benefit in sparking the citizen's interest in military matters. In a letter written in January 1916 to aid the MTCA in its recruitment efforts, O'Ryan hailed the fact that the camps had encouraged many attendees to later join the National Guard, and that it also offered men whose personal or business commitments precluded them from serving in the guard an avenue for some degree of military training.¹⁹¹

With the MTCA, army, and some elements of the National Guard working together, attendance at the 1916 camps was greater than the three previous years of training combined. In the thirty-day-long courses, over 16,000 civilians received military instruction, including Theodore Roosevelt's sons, Theodore Jr. and Archie, and the popular New York City mayor, John Purroy Mitchel. The only downside to the 1916 camps was that the large scale deployment of the Regular Army to participate in the Mexican Punitive Expedition or to guard the border led to some shortages in instructors and equipment.¹⁹² These shortages often meant that the graduates from the previous year's camps played an active role in the training of the rookies. Although some of the camp's leaders maintained that 85% of the "veterans" of the 1915

¹⁹¹ Open letter from Major General John F. O'Ryan, dated January 17, 1916 in "Letters, Memorandums, Reports, Etc of the Citizen's Training Camps, Central Officers' Training Camps, Central Officers' Training Schools, and the Student Army Training Corps" NARA Records Group 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁹² For the shortage of instructors, see Clifford, 164-170.

Plattsburg camp returned for the 1916 camp, this merely meant that in too many cases the half-trained were instructing the untrained.¹⁹³ One 1916 attendee remembered, “we taught each other how to stack arms; and finally from one argument we could only be rescued by appeal to the drill regulations. We knelt around the little blue book, while the opponents of the two apparently conflicting ideas eagerly debated, until of a sudden each saw the other’s point, and discovered that they meant the same thing.”¹⁹⁴ Despite the best intentions of both the attendees and the Regular Army cadre, the 1916 camps would exhibit much of this fumbling toward the light of military knowledge.

With all of the time, treasure and toil that the Regular Army devoted to the summer camps between 1913 and 1914, one of the key questions remains: what did it get for its investment? Since the end of the Civil War, the army had suffered from a lack of funding and from the general apathy or disdain of the American public. The citizens’ training camps and the support of the preparedness movement by a number of the nation’s elites brought an increased awareness of the army’s plight and undoubtedly gave the service some added clout in its battles with the Congress. However, when one examines the stated intent of the camps; to train a cadre of reserve officers, the results were less successful.¹⁹⁵

The camp held at Ludington, Michigan from 5 July to 8 August 1915, for example, trained 148 students from 61 different colleges and universities. Two companies of Regular soldiers and ten Regular officers set up and administered the camp for the college students. During the first week of training the students learned close order drill and the school of the soldier. During the second week they focused on extended order drill and basic offensive

¹⁹³ Clifford, 167, 169-170.

¹⁹⁴ French, 39-40.

¹⁹⁵ War Department, General Order No. 38, 22 June 1915. This order stressed that the purpose of the camps was to identify and train potential officers. The army issued similar orders for the 1916 camps.

tactics. The third and fourth weeks of training were devoted to basic rifle marksmanship, firing for record, practice marches, and sports. In the fifth and last week of training, the cadets learned field entrenchments and the basics of handling a company in extended and close order drill. Despite this seemingly full training schedule, one of the Regular Army instructors noted that the students still had time to play rounds of baseball and, “a tennis tournament, some golf playing, and a great deal of swimming and boating.” He also wryly noted that the students also “gradually acquired some idea of our military history, military policy, and the necessity of national defense.”¹⁹⁶

The camp held at the Presidio of San Francisco for 214 students from 10 July through 15 August 1915 (under the command of future AEF general James Harbord) followed a different training schedule than did the Ludington camp, but also focused more on physical fitness and basic military skills. The high point of the camp was a visit by Theodore Roosevelt. The former president pushed for a system of universal training and “most emphatically urged national preparation for defense.”¹⁹⁷ Although General Order 38 mandated that the training in both camps was to focus on “the instruction and demonstration of principles of tactics and field maneuvers,” the level of instruction was only slightly higher than that given to a Regular Army enlisted recruit within the first months of service.¹⁹⁸

This situation did not markedly improve in 1916. The training in the camps continued to stress close order drill, route marching, basic marksmanship, and the bare basics of field craft and tactics. A training schedule for one of the 1916 camps revealed that during the 30 day training period the students spent nearly as much time in administrative tasks such as in-

¹⁹⁶ 1LT Roy A. Hill, “Student Camps of Instruction: The Ludington Camp,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (November 1915), 388-6.

¹⁹⁷ CPT Allen J. Green, “Student Camps of Instruction: The Presidio Camp,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (November 1915), 392-4.

¹⁹⁸ War Department, General Order No. 38, 22 June 1915.

processing, equipment issue, and immunizations as he did in basic tactical training. Marching and field craft accounted for 25 percent of the training time while marksmanship was less than 19 percent of the overall schedule.¹⁹⁹

Perhaps the greatest problem with the Plattsburg camps was the lack of leadership training. Little was done in the way of training the attendees in the tactical skills required of a company-grade officer or in a serious evaluation of their leadership abilities. For the vast majority of their time at the camps, the students and businessmen took on the role of the “high private of the rear rank.” Although this role undoubtedly gave the attendees the essential leadership knowledge of the trials and tribulations of their future soldiers, and somewhat accomplished the hoary maxim “he who would lead must first learn to follow,” this was not offset by enough opportunities for the students themselves to serve as platoon leaders and company commanders. Candidate Allen French recalled that much of the tactical training he received only reinforced his belief that “the private soldier knows but little of what is going on.”²⁰⁰

The camps were too short and attendance was generally too high to accomplish the goal of giving the candidates further leadership opportunities. Unfortunately, the failure to do so meant that those graduates of the camps largely remained an unknown quantity to the army. The army also seemed to assume that attendance at the camps also reflected a desire by the attendees for a commission or to serve as a military leader. At least one candidate at the 1916 Plattsburg camp informed his astonished squad mates that he did not want to serve as a student NCO because, “I came here tired to death from a long hard worrying year in getting that factory of mine in good running order. I don’t want to have anything to do, for the whole of this month,

¹⁹⁹ 1LT O.O. Ellis, “Hints for Service at Training Camps,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIII, no. 6. (March 1917), 577-9. Ellis and E.B. Garey went on to publish *The Plattsburg Manual: A Handbook for Military Training*, one of the most popular books for officers and aspiring officers used during the war.

²⁰⁰ French, 219.

with managing a stupid gang of men.”²⁰¹ This man was not alone in viewing the camps a merely a vacation of sorts to enjoy the outdoors and the “strenuous life.”

The training that the students did receive at the camps was problematic. Although Hugh Scott defended the training in the camps by noting, “Camp life with its marches, maneuvers, and target practice has long been recognized as the most important part of a soldier’s instruction,” and that the instruction “approximates somewhat the conditions of warfare and furnishes the atmosphere most conducive to rapid progress in military training,” how well it approximated warfare was in the eye of the beholder.²⁰² Little in the training reflected the realities of modern war as was being waged on the Western Front. In fairness this oversight was perhaps somewhat understandable. Few officers, pundits, or politicians in 1915 or 1916 envisioned sending an expeditionary force to Europe and much of the discussion of any possible war centered on Mexico or repelling an invasion of the United States.²⁰³ This being said, the tactical training within the camps still fell victim to the Regular Army’s lack of appreciation for the effectiveness of trenches, machine guns, and artillery, and, as such, provided the students a poor grounding in the challenges that they would face as junior officers against most potential foes.

Although the army practiced a system of progressive training within the camps where the candidates steadily moved from the individual School of the Soldier to the regiment in the attack in ever larger and more complex tactical evolutions, the depth and realism of this training was severely constricted by time, available resources, and the inherent shortcomings within the army’s doctrine. Some of the maneuvers amounted to little more than flights of tactical fancy.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 58.

²⁰² Memorandum for Secretary of War from the Chief of Staff, dated November 1916 (no day given) titled, “The Federal Training Camps and the War Department,” in “Letters, Memorandums, reports, etc of the Citizen Training Camps, Officers’ Training Camps, Central Officer’s Training Schools and Student Army Training Corps,” RG 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, 1903-1919, File 9226, Roll 261.

²⁰³ Garrison’s Continental Army plan was built on the need to repel an invasion of the nation. When Woodrow Wilson read that army staff officers were planning for a potential war against Germany in 1915, he threatened to have the guilty parties cashiered from the General Staff and removed from Washington.

The candidate Allen French, for instance, noted the ease at which his side in his camp's maneuver was able to overcome their mock foes even though their erstwhile enemies had the camp's only two machine guns.²⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that the machine guns that his side supposedly captured were not even army property, but were, in fact, purchased by a group of the more wealthy young gentlemen attending the camp. He also described a simulated attack on a trench line that he was defending and how the attacker's irresistible moral force had allowed them to seize the defenses. He later wrote,

There was nothing that I could do but peep through my loophole, and think how silly it was. I heard a roar from the captain, an outburst of yells, the crash of bushes, and- there was the captain coming like a bull, and a long rank of men rising behind him and rolling on toward me like a wave. Oh, Frances dear, there is something awful about brute force! I felt the ground shake, the noise of shouting seemed to burst my ears, the faces in front of me were like those of angry demons...it...was too much for me, and I turned away and put my hands to my ears.²⁰⁵

As he was writing those passages the Battles of the Somme and Verdun were raging in France. Seldom were the defenders in those battles so cowed by the rolling waves of the attackers that they faced.

It is also clear from French's observations and experiences that his training in 1916 mirrored the current army doctrine with its focus on direct fire artillery, use of cavalry, and maintaining the controlled fire and maneuver of infantry skirmishers.²⁰⁶ French also commented with approval the offensive focus of the army's drill regulations. As he stated, "As soon as you got beyond the mere parade-ground work...the [Infantry Drill Regulation] book brings you to a region where nothing else is considered than one thing, attack, attack, attack."²⁰⁷ Another camp

²⁰⁴ French, 198-202.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 87-8.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 66, 77-8, 202-4, 214-220.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 77.

participant, with a more jaundiced eye than French, boiled his tactical training down to, “Our scout and patrols pay peek-a-boo with him (the enemy) awhile, and then up boys and at them! or words to that effect- real military terms forgotten for a moment- any way we all dash forward and the horrible carnage is on.”²⁰⁸ The experiences of both participants highlighted the problems with the tactical instruction in the Plattsburg camps and the inability of the army to provide realistic combat training for its potential officers. The shortcomings of the Plattsburg camps offered a preview of the challenges that the army would later face in training its wartime officers.

Given the length of the course and the training that the candidates received, it is no surprise that some soldiers questioned the ability of the camps to produce trained and ready officers. Although an ardent supporter of the Plattsburg movement, Major M.B. Stewart admitted,

The average military man is inclined to be skeptical, to look on the movement as a new kind of fad, valuable in a way because it serves to attract men who could not otherwise be interested in military matters, but nevertheless a fad that can lead to nothing practical in the way of real military training or preparedness...Most military men are willing to acknowledge the educational value of these camps, but they are likely to balk at the idea that they are productive of any military training of practical worth. They are inclined to discount the idea that anything worth while from a military standpoint can be accomplished in thirty days.²⁰⁹

The ambivalence of the army toward the citizen’s training camps resulted from the inherent tension between what the Regular Army officers wanted in the training of its reserve officers and what they could actually accomplish given the realities of manpower, resources, and the national mood.

Army officers displayed this ambivalence during their testimony before the

²⁰⁸ O. N. E. (Barnes), 37.

²⁰⁹ Stewart, “The Military Training Camps,” 249- 252.

Congressional Committee on Military Affairs in early 1916. When committee members asked Leonard Wood if the Plattsburg Camp produced men “equipped to serve as officers of the United States Army in case of emergency,” he replied, “Not at all; [however] they would be better equipped by far than any men we have ever had as officers of volunteers at the beginning of a war...these men had thorough basic training as far as that went, but were prepared to take hold of and commence the training of men in the schools of the soldier, squad, and company.”²¹⁰ When the committee asked him if the student training camps were the best way to train officers, War College Division’s Major P. D. Lochridge responded, “I do not believe that you can get the best training for them, but I believe that by utilizing these camps and the civil education institutions...you could supplement West Point sufficiently to meet our needs.”²¹¹ Even though Wood was the father of the Plattsburg movement and Lochridge was an avid booster of the citizens training camps, it could not be said that they offered a ringing endorsement of the camps for training officers.

Other Regular Army and National Guard officers were much blunter in their assessment of the camps as a source for officers. One War College staff officer lamented the systemic problems associated with the army’s training of officer candidates and noted,

Imperfectly trained troops must pay with their lives for their own mistakes and for those of imperfect leadership. The more efficient the leadership the better will be the training, and the better the training the fewer will be the mistakes, and the less will be the cost of any results sought to be obtained by the war. Any system of training, however good in itself, will fail to bring the desired results unless there are available a sufficient number of trained instructors...The blind cannot lead the blind.²¹²

²¹⁰ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 27 January 1916, 265.

²¹¹ Congressional Committee on Military Affairs, *To Increase the Efficiency of the Military Establishment of the United States*, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 1 February 1916, 43-4.

²¹² Army War College, *Organization, Training, and Mobilization of Volunteers Under the Act of April 25, 1914* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 17.

The author also offered a bleak appraisal of the future of officer training if the nation faced a large scale mobilization. He accurately noted that upon the outbreak of war, at least one-fourth of the existing Regular officer corps would be sent for foreign service with their units, and many of the those remaining would be quickly promoted to fill vital command and staff positions in regular and volunteer formations. He argued these postings would make it impossible for the Regulars to provide the degree of expert knowledge and leadership required to train any new contingents of officer candidates.²¹³

It is interesting to note that although the army had granted nearly 8,000 Plattsburgers reserve commissions prior to 1917, it was so unsure of the quality of their training that it still required them to attend the three-month-long Officer Training Camps after the war began. In a damning indictment of the quality of screening and training of the Plattsburg officers, the army noted that many of them were “found entirely unqualified for commissioned grades and . . . were reduced in grade.”²¹⁴ In many cases the army demoted or removed these officers for incompetence or unsuitability to command.

One of the harshest critics of the Plattsburg camps was Captain Richard Stockton. As a New Jersey National Guard officer, it was no surprise that he bristled at the implied or implicit criticism of the guard that was at the root of the preparedness movement and the training camp system. Despite this prejudice, Stockton still presented a number of valid criticisms of the Plattsburg idea. In an August 1916 article in the *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, he caustically compared the different definitions of “valuable military training” held by the National Guard (and he implied the regulars) and the Plattsburgers by noting,

Princeton University seems to think that it consists of some dozen or more disconnected lectures by officers of the army...The National Guard has assumed

²¹³ Ibid., 17-18.

²¹⁴ War Department *Annual Report for 1919*, p. 300.

that it may be gained by a system of weekly drill supplemented by theoretical schools and a week or more of camp annually. The business men find that it should be a month's 'intensive training.' West Point decides that it takes four years of hard work... At present the nation is in actual danger from the well-meant enthusiasm of the men who plan to 'save the day.'...It is time to realize that military training which is stripped of its most valuable attributes is really worse than none at all, insofar as all military measures which lull the nation into a false sense of security are more harmful than such an entire absence of preparedness that the nation is awake to its needs.²¹⁵

Stockton also blasted the graduates of the camp who arrogantly believed that their training has fitted them for immediate commissioning. He denounced those who presumed, "A private in the Business Man's Camp at Plattsburg, after marching around as Number Three Rear Rank for a month or two, has decided that he might take a commission as low as captain in the National Guard, but he could not possibly lower his standing by taking a lesser rank."²¹⁶ The guardsman concluded that when it came to the student camps, "It is important that we should realize that it is impossible to educate a boy and turn out a finished officer at the same time" and that the army and the camp graduates had to admit to the yawning gaps in attendees' military knowledge and leadership skills.²¹⁷ Although Stockton offered valid criticism of the Plattsburg system, he failed to offer any better alternative other than having the would-be officer join the regulars or the National Guard.

Other officers were more constructive than Stockton when it came to solving the officer training dilemma. Reflecting the regular's ambivalence toward the Plattsburg system, the editor of the *Cavalry Journal* admitted that he supported the camps if for no other reason than "the

²¹⁵ CPT Richard Stockton, Jr., "Military Training- Valuable and Valueless" in *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. LIX, No. 202 (July-August 1916), 1-3.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

troops need ‘em” but also acknowledged that the end result of their training regimen was to “throw the man overboard to teach him to swim”²¹⁸ He bewailed the painful fact that,

Anyone who has observed the pathetic and oftentimes pitiful efforts of the boy lieutenants from civil life to get to the bottom of things military during the first rough months with the colors, cannot but help be convinced that the system is not good. It is unfair to the embryo officer, and a waste of potential energy in the military system. The boy tries hard enough; he usually bends over backwards in his efforts to please. But he usually works at cross purposes, he is subjected through his woeful ignorance and many mistakes, to a certain amount of humiliation in the eyes of his own soldiers, and the ideal of his company commander.²¹⁹

However, this officer did offer a solution to the problems that he raised. The editor favored the establishment of three-month-long training camps where the candidates “would spend most of their time in learning to march and ride and the theoretical and practical work involving guard-duty and the drill regulations of their arm, in hearing talks on various useful subjects not always found in books, and in such elementary problems in minor tactics as would ordinarily fall to the lot of a young officer who has never before commanded even a corporal’s squad.”²²⁰ While this solution was still far from optimal, it did offer a viable way to train potential officers and to evaluate their leadership potential in a more systematic and effective way. The three-month-

²¹⁸ Editorial staff, “Probationary Officers,” in *Journal of the Cavalry Association*, Vol. XXVII, No. 112 (November 1916), 165.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 165-6.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 166-168. The *Cavalry Journal* editor was not the only regular officer proposing plans to overcome the officer training problem. Lieutenant Dale McDonald recommended that the army appoint new officers as “probationary second lieutenants” that would require all candidates to take one three month course on military history and policy, administration, troop leading procedures, marching and equitation. A second three month course for all lieutenants, except for graduates of West Point and military colleges, would focus on close order drill, minor tactics, field fortification, bayonet and sword fighting, and reconnaissance. All officers commissioned directly from civil life would have a third three month course that expanded on the instruction given in the second course. If the officer failed any of the courses, he would be commissioned only as a first lieutenant of reserves. While this plan would have been the optimal solution to the problem, it would only have been feasible in a peacetime army as it failed to account for the time constraints of a wartime mobilization. 1LT Dale McDonald, “Training and Promotion of Second Lieutenants,” in *Journal of the United Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. LIX, No. 202 (July-August 1916), 210-211.

camps would combine the enthusiasm of the Plattsburg movement with the Regular Army's desire for a greater degree of depth in the training of its junior officers.

In his annual report to Congress in 1917, Secretary of War Newton Baker maintained that the "Plattsburg experiment" had been the basis upon which the army's wartime officer training system was based.²²¹ This was only partially the case. Although the Plattsburg camps had shown the benefit of massing together officer training at a handful of central locations, and had validated in the minds of regular officer the correctness of their desire for college-educated officers, few of them believed that such camps could turn out suitably trained officers in only one month. Evidence of this can be found in the way that the regulars chose to train their own class of provisional Regular Army second lieutenants in the winter of 1916 and 1917. In late 1916 the army held examinations to select 250 provisional second lieutenants to fill the new officer allocations authorized by the National Defense Act of 1916. Despite the legacy of the Plattsburg Camps, once selected, these provisional lieutenants had to attend a three-month-long officer course at Fort Leavenworth.²²²

Thus in the final analysis, the legacy of the Plattsburg movement was mixed. The MTCA and the Plattsburg boosters had been effective in publicizing the nation's lack of preparedness to wage war and the shortage of reserve officers, but the camps were neither long nor rigorous enough to overcome those shortages with adequately trained personnel. Although the regulars gained some experience with the mass training of officer candidates, and the attendees gained a degree of military training that they otherwise would have missed, the success of the camps camouflaged both the problem of obtaining suitable officers and the difficulty of

²²¹ War Department, *Annual Report for 1917*, Vol. 1., 21.

²²² War Department, *Annual Report for 1919*, Vol. 1., 307. The army ultimately trained two classes of provisional second lieutenants in the winter and spring of 1917.

training a massive number of NCOs and soldiers. In the end, the Plattsburg camps did little to truly prepare anyone for the demands of mobilization or combat leadership in modern war.

In conclusion, the Regular Army had no coherent plan for selecting, mobilizing, and training a wartime corps of junior officers and NCOs prior to April 1917. The Land Grant College system was plagued by tensions between the college faculty and the officers assigned to their institutions and a lack of standardized, realistic, and rigorous training regimens. Although the regulars saw the colleges as the best potential source of officers, it was largely unsuccessful at systematically tapping this resource of potential reserve officers. The reforms mandated by the National Defense Act of 1914 sought to correct these deficiencies, but they came far too late to ameliorate the training of potential officers prior to the war.

The National Guard had also been proven to be a rather brittle reserve. While reforms of the Dick Act and its 1908 and 1914 revisions undoubtedly increased the military effectiveness of some guard units and their officers, the improvement in the National Guard tended to be localized in certain regions and almost absent in others. Despite joint maneuvers with the guard and the Regular Army, and the assignment of regular officers to serve as instructor-inspectors with guard units, the limited time that guardsmen could devote to training, and the baleful influence of the elective system for junior officers on unit discipline and instruction, simply proved to be too great of an obstacle for most state soldiers to surmount.

Even taking into account the regular officer corps' prejudice against the National Guard, there seems to be much honesty in their generally harsh assessment of the guard's readiness and abilities as exhibited on the Mexican border in 1916. The advent of the citizen's training camps and the Plattsburg movement between 1913 and 1916 went a long way towards highlighting the nation's poor military readiness, but only a short way toward addressing the glaring lack of a

ready reserve of trained junior officers. Although the regulars had done a superb job of creating “apostles of preparedness” during the camps, most also realized that the camp’s graduates were woefully unprepared to lead soldiers in the maelstrom of modern war. In short, none of the institutions that the army had looked to supply a reserve of wartime officers were ready, able, and in some cases, willing, to pick up the gauntlet. It should also be noted that few officers, politicians, or boosters gave any thought to the equally pressing need for a system for identifying and training potential NCOs.

It is interesting to ponder that given the political and fiscal realities of the time, could the army have done better at planning for the mobilization and training of a wartime reserve of officers prior to April 1917? Without the willingness of Congress to fund an expansion of Plattsburg-type training camps to cover at least three months or more of training and paying candidates to attend them, the citizen’s camps were never going to be more than a publicity stunt with the minor trapping of officer training. More funding for National Guard training and the assignment of more regular officers to guard units may have incrementally improved the readiness of some guard units and officers, but still would not overcome the systemic problems of the era’s part time soldiering. Prior to 1916, there was not enough political will or public interest to accomplish any of the above.

The one route that may have offered hope was in a general reform of the Land Grant College military training systems. The army already had much of the cadre for the system in place and only required a tightening of the statutory requirement for military instruction and some increase in funding for training by the Congress to make the colleges a viable reservoir for reserve officers. In many ways the Regular Army could only blame itself for this failure. Had it focused its efforts on reforming the Land Grant system instead of playing Don Quixote to the

Continental Army plan's windmill and serving as drillmasters to the Plattsburg dilettantes, it is possible that the army would have had a more coherent, logical, and effective plan for mobilizing officers than it did in the spring of 1917. Ironically, in Leonard Wood failed to listen to his own 1913 warning that creating a reserve of officers should not be "left to the rush, hurry, and confusion proceeding a war."²²³

²²³ War Department, *Annual Reports 1913*, Vol. 1, 152.

Chapter 6 “We Find Ourselves in Need of a Vast Army of Officers” The Stateside Selection and Training of Officers

After the United States had been at war for over eight months, the editor of the *Infantry Journal* had grown tired of the constant carping in the officer corps about the training of officer candidates for the wartime army. He rebuked his readers by reminding them, “We find ourselves in need of a vast army of officers. Two alternatives present themselves- to follow our old policy of selecting men for social, personal or political reasons, or of selecting on a basis of individual merit.”¹ His remark highlighted the great break from historic practice that the army had engineered in its plans for selecting and training its wartime officer corps.

Unlike previous wars where units were largely officered by men selected by state governors, elected by the men of the organization, or directly commissioned by the federal government (all perhaps with little to no thought as to the candidate’s previous military experience or training) the majority of the company-grade line officers for the AEF would be subjected to a more or less standard system of selection and training, *all created and controlled by the Regular Army*. The Great War was to be the grand Uptonian moment: the chance for the regulars to prove the superiority of their methods and their “proper military policy” over that of the National Guard or other ad hoc methods of obtaining officers. But in 1917 and 1918, the question that haunted the regulars remained: was their system working?

This chapter will examine how the army selected, trained, and evaluated its cadre of company-level line officers during 1917. It will discuss the challenges the army faced in establishing the first officer training camps, and the revisions that it implemented between the

¹ Editorial Staff, “Reserve Officers’ Training Camps,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 6 (December 1917), 467.

first and second OTCs. The chapter will also evaluate the effectiveness of the first OTCs in preparing the army's junior leaders to meet the challenges they would face on the Western Front.

From the moment the United States entered the war in April 1917, the crush of time and events overseas influenced the way the nation mobilized its forces and trained its officers. French Marshal Joseph Joffre and British General George Bridges arrived in Washington in April to inform their new allies about the state of their respective war efforts and to beg for fresh American soldiers. Pershing confirmed their sobering assessments of the Allied situation upon his arrival in France in June. This sense of "hurry and dread" was only reinforced by the worsening Allied conditions in 1917. The eight months between April and November witnessed the repulse of the Nivelle Offensive and subsequent French army mutinies, the bloody disappointment of the British offensive at Passchendaele, failure of the Kerensky government against the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the Italian disaster at Caporetto. The perception of Wilson and the War Department was clear: get an army to France to stabilize the Allies or risk losing the war.²

Within weeks of the United States' declaration of war the Wilson administration made the decision that the nation would send an expeditionary army to fight in France. The bulk of this force would be composed of draftee "National Army" units with the remainder made up of existing National Guard and Regular Army units brought up to strength with volunteers and conscripts. Congress passed the Selective Service Act in May to fill the enlisted ranks of the mass army, and assumed that the measures that it had authorized in the National Defense Act of 1916 provided the War Department with the means for raising an officer corps. However,

² John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 1. (New York: Frederick Stokes Company, 1931), 30-4, 55-6, 60-3, 73., David Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking: 1917-1918* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 5-11.

authorizations on paper are not the same as warm bodies in uniform, and the administration's order to build an expeditionary army of two to four million men brought the issue of who would lead the legions to a head. As Leonard Wood had predicted in 1913, the war found the army short of many thousands of officers, and the "rush, hurry, and confusion" that he had feared had become a bewildering reality in 1917.

A decade after the war, Huger Scott, the Army Chief of Staff in early 1917, wrote that the War Department was far from being overwhelmed by the officer problem. He noted, "The truth was that intense study had been given to every phase of the problem before the war broke, and everything was done that the law allowed, with much that it did not allow, and all the preliminaries were out of the way or in the process of elimination."³ Scott stated that one of his few concerns when it came to mobilizing leaders was to ensure, "that the new officers must be commissioned only after making good physically and every other way at some of the various officer's training camps."⁴ In actuality, the situation was far from being as settled as Scott had remembered. The only major thought that the army had given to mobilizing officers had been the reports that the General Staff had written to support Garrison's Continental Army plan and some tentative steps towards commissioning provisional officers for the Regular Army. From this beginning, the army still had to improvise a system of identifying, selecting, training, and evaluating officer candidates.

In his Annual Report to Congress for 1917, Secretary Newton Baker admitted that the plan that the army adopted for its training of officers was based on the system developed during the prewar "Plattsburg experiment."⁵ Baker's statement was a stretching of the truth. As was

³ Huger Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), 565.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 555.

⁵ War Department, *Annual Report for 1917*, Vol. I, 21-2.

noted in Chapter Five, the regular officer corps fully understood the great limitations of the Plattsburg camps in turning out trained and ready officers. In the end, the only similarity between the prewar Plattsburg camps and the wartime Officers' Training Camps (hereafter OTCs) was the type of candidates that the camps drew. The length and focus of training, as well as the standard for admission and graduation, were completely different.

Shortly before the United States had entered the war, the army had taken its first hesitant steps towards developing a more coherent and reasoned approach to commissioning an increased number of non-West Point officers. In the fall of 1916 and the winter of 1917, the army held two officer training camps at Fort Leavenworth to instruct and commission provisional lieutenants for the Regular Army. Like the subsequent OTCs, the course was three-months in duration and the General Staff intended that "The system of discipline and preliminary training adopted followed that of West Point as far as was practicable."⁶ The first class, which ran from September through November 1916, commissioned 386 provisional lieutenants, and the second, which was held from January through April 1917, commissioned 338 more.⁷ Lieutenant Colonel James McAndrews, the camp commandant, admitted that these first two camps provided a means for working out some of the problems with the later OTC courses.⁸ Thus, these camps, more than the shorter Plattsburg encampments, were the major model for wartime officers' training.

⁶ "Schedule of Training and Instruction of a Class of 338 Newly Commissioned Second Lieutenants of Infantry, Cavalry, and Field Artillery at the Army Service Schools, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, January 3, 1917 to April 1, 1917" in NARA RG165, Correspondence of the War College Division, Microfilm M1024, Roll 142, File 7541-17.

⁷ MAJ Frederick Lafferty, *Roster of Officers of the First Provisional Class, 1916* (Leavenworth: Privately Published, 1929), 3. It is interesting to note that of the 386 graduates of the first course, 21 were killed in action in France, and 220 were still on active duty in the Regular Army in October 1929.

⁸ LTC J. W. McAndrews, *Address to the Second Class of Provisional Second Lieutenants, April 17, 1917* (CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.), 3.

However, few regular officers had any illusion that these first tentative steps were a panacea for the ills of officer training, nor a solution to the overwhelming issue of scale. It was one thing to train 724 provisional lieutenants in six months, it was quite another to identify and train 200,000 more to fill ranks and positions ranging from lieutenant to major, and from platoon leaders to battalion commanders. From the beginning, few regular officers deluded themselves that ninety days of training would produce a finished product. As McAndrews warned the second class of provisional officers on 17 April 1917,

There is much hard work before you if you will obtain the results desired of the course here. The time given you is all too short for the ground that must be covered. Officers fitted to command first-class troops cannot be the product of a course of three months' training and instruction, no matter how strenuous it may be. But if you do your part, three months are long enough to give you a good start in your profession, to give you something of an insight into the duties of subalterns and above all to give you a safe foundation upon which to build your future efficiency.⁹

The best that could be hoped for was to give the officer aspirants a sound start and then pray that, as had been the custom in the Old Army, the novices would have the time to hone their leadership and tactical skills with their units prior to being committed to combat.

Although the training camps for provisional regular lieutenants had allowed the army to sort out some of the issues of officers' training, the spring of 1917 was still marked by rush and confusion. This was reflected in the steady stream of messages that flowed from Brigadier General Joseph Kuhn, the Chief of the War College Division, to Army Chief of Staff Huger Scott. As the War College did double duty as a school for staff officers and as a planning agency of the General Staff, Kuhn was responsible for developing the mobilization and training plan for officers. Kuhn's first report to Scott on the status of officers' training offered a gloomy assessment. Kuhn reported,

⁹ Ibid., 4.

Due to the decision of the Secretary of War to add all of the increments to the Regular Army and to the National Guard, and to the scarcity of equipment and available shelter for these organizations, the problem of establishing camps for the training of perspective officers becomes somewhat complicated and must be solved as part of the larger problem confronting the War Department... There will probably not be equipment available for the training of any forces except the Regular Army and National Guard before the later part of next fall. For that reason the establishment of the training camps for reserve officers can well be postponed until the first of June. This will also make it possible to use at these camps officers now detailed to schools and colleges and a large number of officers from the Military academy who will not be required during the summer months.¹⁰

The War College staff recommended that the training camps be established under the provisions of Section 54 of the National Defense Act of 1916, and that the period of training was to be for three months with the course “to be based on that given to provisional second lieutenants at Fort Leavenworth.”¹¹ This was not an auspicious start to the mobilization of officers; although Kuhn’s assessment was accurate and logical, the ugly press of time meant that the officer camps would start much earlier than he had either wanted or anticipated.

Only four days after Kuhn’s initial report, the Adjutant General, Brigadier General Henry McCain, sent a warning order to the commanding generals of each geographic department advising them to begin work to establish 16 total OTCs at the 14 posts and camps within their anticipated divisional areas. The OTCs were to be located in camps whose locations could serve a number of regional division mobilization sights. Each OTC was to train a maximum of 2,500 candidates, and thus, provide enough officers for at least one division.¹²

¹⁰ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Joseph Kuhn, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Training Camps for candidates for the Officers’ Reserve Corps, dated 13 April 1917” in RG 165 “Letters, Memorandum, Reports, etc. of the Citizens Training Camps, Officers’ Training Camps, Central Officers’ Training Schools, and Student Army Training Corps” RG 165 Correspondence of the War College Division, NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261. (Hereafter, RG 165, “Letters,...etc Officers’ Training Camps”).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Telegram from Adjutant General to Commanding General, All Departments in the United States, dated 17 April 1917., and Telegram from Adjutant General to Commanding General, All Departments in the United States, dated 24 April 1917, in War Department, *Special Regulations No. 49: Training Camps for Reserve Officers*

On 23 April, McCain sent the commanders additional guidance on establishing the new camps. It mandated that the first OTCs would open on 8 May 1917 and that the camps had to be ready to receive the candidates by 1 May. This only gave the camp organizers a week to get their sites up and running. The Adjutant General reiterated that the camps would each be limited to 2,500 men and lamented that, “The War Department would prefer a larger attendance, but the serious shortage of Regular Officers makes it unwise to attempt more at this time.” McCain stated that the intent of the first OTCs would be to provide the required officers for the first 16 divisions “by the time the necessary machinery can be put in motion for procuring the enlisted men.”¹³ In other words, the officer candidates were to be trained, commissioned, and posted by the time that the first enlisted draftees arrived at their mobilization camps. That meant that the departmental commanders had only fourteen to fifteen weeks to establish, mostly from scratch, a system for screening applicants, receiving and in-processing those selected, building the camp infrastructures, training and evaluating the candidates, and commissioning and posting the graduates.

From the beginning, the War Department had to fight off those who would bypass the training camp system and return to the former ad-hoc methods of directly commissioning officers. Huge Scott recalled,

Tremendous pressure was put on Secretary Baker for commissions...In all previous wars, commissions were part of the political spoils...This was all forestalled in this war by the secretary’s one answer to all applications: ‘Go to some officers’ training camp and earn a commission if you want one’... The secretary’s close adherence to the policy of making applicants for commission earn them in camp, kept our corridors so free from politicians and their

and Candidates for Appointment As Such, May 15- August 11, 1917, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 5 May 1917)., 11-13, 22-23.

¹³ “Adjutant General Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, dated 23 April 1917” in RG 165, “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

constituents that it was as quiet in my office as on a Sunday morning in time of peace.¹⁴

Not all of the departmental commanders were in full agreement with Baker's resolve or Scott's desire to retain a quiet Sunday-like office. The officers responsible for establishing the camps certainly understood the monumental tasks before them, and some believed that the press of events demanded the army follow an easier path to officer mobilization. The Commander of the Southern Department, for example, telegraphed Kuhn that he was, "overwhelmed with applications for commissions as lieutenants on [the] active list and for reserve officers commissions with active duty in view." He further noted that 90 graduating students from Texas A&M had expressed a desire to become officers and that "probably thousands from similar schools would respond if called upon." The general stated that "These would make [the] best officers we could get for immediate commission into regular service and would be efficient for any class of troops."¹⁵ With the backing of Baker and Scott, Kuhn stuck by his recommendation that all such applicants for commission still be required to attend an officers' training camp as a precondition for commissioning. Whatever the lure of expediency and easy solutions, few in the higher echelons of the War Department were going to let the overwhelmed local commanders disrupt the army's great Uptonian moment.

The War Department was never able to completely withhold commissions from non-OTC graduates. During the early months of the war, a number of men were still able to gain commissions in the National Guard without any prior experience. This process had in fact started even before the war began. The large number of resignations of National Guard officers during the Mexican border mobilization had opened a number of slots for civilians seeking

¹⁴ Scott, 564-5.

¹⁵ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Joseph Kuhn, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Appointment of provisional second lieutenants in the Regular Army, dated 23 April 1917" in RG 165, "Letters, ... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

commissions, and as the tensions with Germany grew over the winter of 1917, promotions in the National Guard could come very rapidly. H. A. Honaker, a civil engineer by profession, enlisted in the 1st Louisiana Infantry on 5 February 1917. He was promoted to sergeant on 23 March, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant on 28 March. Honaker had no previous military experience when he entered the National Guard and received no specific officer training afterwards.¹⁶ However, cases like Honaker's were comparatively rare. In raw numbers, those commissioned out of the OTCs accounted for 48 percent of all wartime officers, while National Guardsmen accounted for only six percent. After factoring out physicians, chaplains, and those civilians given direct commissions on account of their technical skills, the OTC graduates made up 74 percent of the war's officers, and the vast majority of the army's company combat leaders.¹⁷

Although the War Department senior staff was unwavering in its determination to follow through on the training camp system, it was a bit more vague in its guidance in describing the attributes that local commanders should seek in the applicants to their camps. In selecting candidates, the Adjutant General advised,

These should be preferably mature men and the most experienced natural leaders that the country possess... With the basic experience [of the OTCs] supplemented by natural aptitude for handling men as demonstrated in business or otherwise, a splendid corps of 10,000 reserve officers should be available by the middle of July. It is necessary the "THE FIRST TEN THOUSAND" should be the best that the country has. In planning our military forces we must assume that the war is by no means drawing to a close and that the country must expand its military forces as rapidly and effectively as the resources of the country permit. (original emphasis)¹⁸

¹⁶ H. A. Honaker, AEF North Russia and 142 MG BN, File WWI 2318, MHI WWI Veteran Survey,

¹⁷ Leonard Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), 21-2. Ayres maintains that only one out of every six officers had some form of prior military service when they were commissioned.

¹⁸ "Adjutant General Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, dated 23 April 1917" in RG 165, "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

The only hard rule was that the candidates had to be American citizens between the ages of 20 years and nine months to 44 years to attend the camps. However, following long-standing army preferences, McCain did recommend that the commanders seek college students as they were “especially fitted” for selection to attend the camps.¹⁹

The Department Commanders and their divisional area sub-commanders had to shoulder most of the responsibility for selecting the camp attendees. This task would have been all but impossible in the short amount of time that they had if it would not have been for the efforts of the Military Training Camp Association (MTCA). Shortly after the declaration of war, Genville Clark and the other members of the MTCA’s executive committee offered the War Department its files of past and prospective Plattsburg candidates and its administrative assistance in recruiting and communicating with potential officer candidates. As the War Department had been woefully negligent in even maintaining lists of those students who had received military training in college, Baker jumped at the MTCA’s offer.²⁰

Although the actual military value of prewar Plattsburg camps was doubtful, there can be no argument that the Military Training Camp Association played a vital administrative role in advertising the War Department’s OTC plan and in assisting in the enrollment of the first class of candidates. The MTCA’s branch offices across the United States sent Plattsburg graduates and potential officer candidates packets containing the forms, and outlining the process that they would need to go through, to qualify for the May OTCs. For example, the MTCA’s Kansas and West Missouri Division of the Central Department based in Kansas City, Missouri, informed

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ John G. Clifford, *The Citizen Soldiers: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement, 1913-1920* (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1972), 228-234; and Adjutant General’s Office, *The Personnel System of the United States Army*, Vol. 1, *History of the Personnel System* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 318-320.

applicants that they had to submit the standard application form listing their age, race, and citizenship status, as well as a detailed description of their education, employment, and previous military service. They also had to include at least three letters of recommendation attesting to the applicant's character and abilities and a record of a physical examination by "one of the physicians appointed for the purpose," or at least, "the best physician available." The MTCA's representative warned the candidates that they had to "comply with every detail carefully to avoid having your application returned by the War Department for correction or thrown out entirely."²¹

One of the applicants following the local MTCA's guidance was Knox Alexander of Independence, Missouri. Upon receiving the application packet, he rushed to complete his required tasks. On 25 April he was duly examined by his local physician and had asked town notables for his required letters of recommendation. One of these notables, Major E. M. Stayton, of the Missouri National Guard, wrote on 30 April 1917 that he was "pleased to recommend Mr. Knox Alexander for a commission in the Officers Reserve Corps." Stayton noted that the young man, "comes from one of the very best Missouri families, is well educated and will measure up to the highest standard that can be set for a gentlemen and officer." The Guardsman concluded that while he was serving as the commandant of cadets at Independence High School, that Knox, "was one of the very best cadets in the corps."²²

Despite the best efforts and good intentions of the MTCA, the inherent problem of the army's "contacting" of the application process for the OTCs sometimes came to the fore. In the frenzied crush of events in April of 1917, the local MTCA occasionally failed to provide the

²¹ Circular from Jay M. Lee, Secretary, Military Training Camp Association, Central Department, Kansas and West Missouri, "To Applicants," undated, circa April 1917, in Knox Alexander Papers, author's collection.

²² Letter from Major E. M. Stayton to "Whom Concerned," dated 30 April 1917, in Knox Alexander Papers, author's collection .

proper paper work for the required physical to the applicants. This glitch prevented Knox from meeting the deadline for attending the first series of OTCs. Knox again applied for admission to the second series of OTC, only to be informed on 13 July that his application was being returned because his physical examination had not been recorded on “the proper army blank.”²³ What is amazing in this case was that despite the fact that from an educational, social, and military standpoint Knox was an ideal candidate to attend an OTC, and that the army was desperate to find every qualified candidate for officers’ training, parts of the army continued to operate under the dead hand of peacetime bureaucracy. In the confused spring and summer of 1917, all too often, the army was its own worst enemy.

Notwithstanding the missteps of the MTCA or its own bureaucratic officers, the army was able generally to attract a very high quality of officer candidates for its 1917 OTCs. It is possible to gain an idea of the general education and experience level of the candidates who attended the first two OTCs by examining the backgrounds of a random sample of the graduates of the Fort Sheridan OTC. In 1920, the Fort Sheridan Association, a mutual aid and social organization formed by the fort’s OTC graduates, published *The History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps*. This publication contained biographic sketches for most of the 267 OTC’s candidates who died while in military service between 1917 and early 1920. From these sketches one can gain an idea of the ages, education, professions, and previous military experiences of those who sought to become officers in 1917.²⁴

²³ Letter from CPT Paul A. Barry, Examining Officer, Second Training Camp, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, to Knox Alexander, dated 13 July 1917, in Knox Alexander Papers, author’s collection.

²⁴ The randomness of this sample is based on the randomness of death in wartime. However, when examining this sample, by branch and rank, the breakdown of the dead was generally in line with the statistics for officer deaths by branch given in Ayres, *The War With Germany*, 121. All of the statistical information in the proceeding paragraphs is drawn from biographical sketches in, Fort Sheridan Association, *The History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps* (Chicago: Hawkins & Loomis Company, 1920), 40-172.

Of the graduates of the first two series of OTCs at Fort Sheridan who died in the war, three were majors, 25 were captains, 103 were first lieutenants, 129 were second lieutenants, six were candidates who washed out of the course but later became NCOs, and one was a candidate that died during the training due to an accident. The average age of the candidates that were promoted to major was 31 to 32 years old in 1918. The average age of those who rose to the rank of captain was 29 to 30 years old, and the average age of the first and second lieutenants was 27 to 28. The youngest captain was age 22 and the oldest was 43 years old. The youngest lieutenant was 22 and the oldest was 42. In most cases these ranges in ages fell within the optimal range for the level of maturity and personal experience that one would want for company-grade officers.

In education, two of the majors were college graduates and one was a graduate of public school. Of the captains, 71.4 percent had some college education with 62.5 percent being college graduates. Nearly 79 percent of the lieutenants had some college education with 57.5 percent being college graduates. The difference between the number of captains and lieutenants who had graduated from college was due to the number of younger men who had left school when the U.S. entered the war to attend officers' training. Slightly over 20 percent of the lieutenants and eight percent of the captains listed their profession as "student" when they entered the OTC.

The selection of this high percentage of men with some degree of college education to attend officer training was in line with long standing Regular Army assumptions regarding the attributes and characteristics required of officership. As stated in the previous chapters, the army assumed that education conditioned the officer's mind to absorb and process knowledge, and thus gave him the faculties to continue to learn their professional skills and overcome any

shortcoming in their initial training. It also assumed that college education and experience in professions and business had imbued candidates with the leadership skills needed to lead men. Ralph Perry, the Secretary of the War Department Committee on Education and Special Training, reflected this belief when he noted that the OTC candidates were “civilians who were by education, experience and natural aptitude especially qualified for leadership.”²⁵ He also admitted that while “the men who were finally commissioned were not trained officers,” they were still, “picked men who had mastered the rudiments and knew how to profit by the experience and ordeal that awaited them.”²⁶ These sentiments were not limited to army officers and War Department functionaries. In his 1917 report to Congress, Secretary Baker praised the fact that,

When the first camp was opened, the colleges, military schools, and high schools of the country poured out a stream of young men whose minds had been trained in the classroom and whose bodies had been made supple and virile on the athletic field. They came with intelligence, energy, and enthusiasm and, under a course of intensive training, rapidly took on the added discipline and capacities necessary to equip them for the duties of officers. They have taken their place in the training camps and are daily demonstrating the value of their education and the adaptability of the spirit of American youth. A more salutary result would be impossible to imagine.²⁷

Although few in the War Department questioned the assumption that being white, college educated, middle or upper class, and experienced in business or the professions somehow belied an innate ability to lead soldiers, no one also considered the long term effect that this assumption would have on the army’s ability to maintain these high standards in its officer candidates over

²⁵ Ralph B. Perry, *The Plattsburg Movement* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1921), 202.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁷ War Department, *Annual Report for 1917*, Vol. I, 23. Not everyone was in agreement with the army bias toward college educated officers. In 1919, an engineer colonel argued, “I think in the selection of officers too much attention was paid to the college education and not enough to their training in the ‘University of hard knocks.’” from “Replies to Officers’ Questionnaires” from Morale Branch of the War College and War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, dated 5 November 1919, in NARA, RG165, NM84, Entry 378, Box 6 (here after cited as Morale Branch Officers’ Survey), 34. I would like to thank James “Ty” Seidule for providing me a copy of this intriguing report.

the long term.

The occupations of the officers in the Fort Sheridan sample also reflect the army's existing assumptions about the social class and job experiences it wanted in its reserve officers. Tables 6-1 and 6-2 list the occupations for the OTC's graduates by the ranks they achieved in the war. Although it is difficult to exactly pigeon hole the graduates into precise class grouping, after factoring out the students and those candidates whose occupations were unknown, approximately 84 percent of captains and 93 percent of lieutenants could be classified as having been employed in upper or middle-class professional or white collar jobs.²⁸

Table 6-1: Occupations of Graduates of the First Two Fort Sheridan OTC in the Rank of Captain

Businessman- 4	Manufacturer- 1	Salesman- 1	College Administrator- 1
Engineer - 3	Lawyer- 1	Insurance- 1	Real Estate- 1
Student- 2	Sales Manager-1	Lumberman-1	Newspaperman-1
Farmer/ stockman- 2	Pipeline Gauger- 1	RA enlisted - 1	Advertisement- 1
Unknown- 1			

Table 6-2: Occupations of Graduates of the First Two Fort Sheridan OTC in the Rank of First and Second Lieutenant

Student- 48	Stock Broker- 6	Architect- 2	Printer- 1
Businessman- 24	Office/Sales Manager- 6	RA Enlisted – 2	Patent Clerk-1
Lawyer- 22	Accountant/Auditor- 6	School Administrator- 2	Plumber-1
Manufacturer- 13	Engineer – 5	Lumberman-1	Physician- 1
Teacher- 10	Real Estate- 5	Postal Worker- 1	Unknown- 11
Salesman- 11	Chemist- 5	Police Chief-1	
Insurance- 9	Secretary- 4	Policeman- 1	
Clerk/Office work- 8	Advertising- 3	Industrial Foreman-1	
Farmer/dairyman- 7	Industrial Worker- 3	Railroad Worker- 1	
Bank Worker- 7	Newspaperman- 2	Purchasing Agent- 1	

One of the majors, four of the captains, and 20 of the lieutenants had served in the National Guard before the declaration of war (a total of 9.3 percent). Nine other candidates had served in the Regular Army or Navy as enlisted men prior to the war (3.3 percent). One candidate, Neil

²⁸ The occupations that I classified as tradesman or blue collar jobs are industrial worker and foreman, railroad worker, postal worker, policeman, printer, pipe guager, and prewar military enlisted man. When in doubt as to the classification of an occupation into blue or white collar, such as was the case of farmers and salesman, I erred toward the middle class or white collar designation.

Pavey, had been a National Guard officer during the Spanish American War but had accepted a commission as a captain of U.S. Volunteers in 1899. After fighting in both the Philippine Insurrection and the Boxer Rebellion, Pavey resigned from the service to go into business. Two other officers had served in foreign armies, and four others had attended one of the Plattsburg camps prior to attending OTC. Only two men, Walter Pinger and John P. Slade, were identified as having enlisted in the army after the war broke out and thus entered the Fort Sheridan OTC as war service enlisted men. All tolled, only 16 percent of the candidates in the sample had any degree of military training or experience prior to attending the OTC, and in a number of cases, even the military experiences of these few men had been decidedly limited.

All-in-all, the sample of the Fort Sheridan OTC graduates seems to indicate that those drawn to the first two series of training camps were the caliber of men that the army had long sought as its officers. Based on antidotal evidence from candidates from other OTCs and the comments of later candidate school commanders, on the whole, the Fort Sheridan sample is a fair representation of the men who flocked to officer training in 1917.²⁹

Whether attending Fort Sheridan or the other original OTCs, the available evidence also indicates officer candidates of 1917 were some of the most enthusiastic soldiers to serve in the war. William M. Briggs, for instance, recalled that he and his classmates from Valparaiso University, like most of the candidates of the first OTCs, were driven by “an impelling desire to get in the service as soon as possible.” All of his fellow law school senior classmates signed up to attend the OTC at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. He was so eager to go to the camp, and so afraid that

²⁹ For example, see, “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Lytle Brown, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Enlisted Candidates for the 4th Officers’ Training Camps, dated 5 August 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261., Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Pike, Arkansas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report Ending August 24, 1918, dated 26 August 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 186, Entry 310, “Camp Pike, Ark, Infantry COTS.”

he would not make the army's minimum weight standard that he drank two to three quarts of milk daily before his report date to add some bulk to his slight frame.³⁰ In the fall of 1917, John E. Hull was a medical student at Miami University. He recalled that "Everybody in college became interested in getting into the army one way or another," and noted that at least 75 percent of his university's football squad went to the training camps. He later stated that, "My ambition was to get a commission and get into the Army. If they'd have sent me a commission as a paperhanger I probably would have accepted it." Hull was only slightly exaggerating; he had been offered a commission in the Ohio National Guard, but accepted a provisional one in the Regular Army in hopes that in doing so he would "get to France a lot faster than you would if you hung around to be drafted or went into the National Guard."³¹

The motivations and actions of men like Briggs and Hull were far from unexpected. Since the nation's colleges were hotbeds of pro-Allied sentiments, Anglophilia, and the preparedness movement, it was no surprise that college men would flock to the training camps. German actions in Belgium and France, often exaggerated by Allied propaganda, and their sinking of the *Lusitania* had outraged the mostly Anglo-Saxon Protestant college population and encouraged a nationalistic zeal in the officer candidates.³²

³⁰ 1LT William McKinley Briggs, Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky, 159th Depot Brigade, File WWI 2655, USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Briggs was not alone in his fear of passing the entrance examination. Although all candidates had been certified as fit by their local doctor as part of their application, the army took no chances, and again subjected the candidates to a disorienting and rapid assault by army physicians and medics. As Gus Dittmar recalled, "a medico sprang at the alarmed examinee and began popping instructions so fast that he felt somewhat like a puppet being operated by someone with St. Vitus dance." When the battery of examinations was complete, the candidate "felt as though he had been pulled through a key hole crosswise." Gus Dittmar, *They Were First* (Austin: Steck-Warlick Company, 1969), 25-7.

³¹ Transcript of Interview of General John E. Hull by LTC James W. Wurman on 22 October 1973 in Washington D.C., in USAMHI Oral History Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

³² Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva*, 25-7, 52-6, 62-4., Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 15., Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 114-5.

The First World War was a period of hyper-patriotism in the nation, and the war struck many Americans as a crusade to protect civilization against barbarous “Prussianism.” As one machine gun officer wrote home upon his departure for France,

We are finally on the way to show the Huns that the Americans are not too proud to fight, to make the world safe for democracy, to assure supremacy of Freedom of the Seas and the rights of Smaller Nations.³³

The hyper-patriotic crusading fervor was especially pronounced in the middle and upper class men who made up the majority of the wartime officer corps. The majority of these men came of age during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, and visions of his charge up San Juan Hill shaped their perceptions of war as an exciting, manly, and glorious endeavor. These young men of the Progressive Era generally shared his passion for the “strenuous life” and his belief that education and social standing brought with it the duty of *noblesse oblige*.³⁴

Although these tendencies were most pronounced in the candidates of 1917, much of this spirit continued to motivate officer aspirants throughout the war. Reflecting both the spirit of Progressivism and Theodore Roosevelt’s quest for a “strenuous life,” a student at the Camp Gordon Infantry COTS stated his personal goal for the camp was to, “make every hour bring dividends in increasing knowledge or helpful, constructive recreation,” and “to play the game like a man- to fight against nothing so hard as my own weakness and endeavor to grow in

³³ Letter from Reggie Bradley to Adelaide Bowen, dated 1 June 1918, Entry 435, Box 1, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University. Similar idealistic and patriotic views are common in the letters and diaries of the AEF’s soldiers. Some of the best can be found in James Luby, ed., *One Who Gave His Life: The War Letters of Quincy Sharpe Mills* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1923), 346-7, 356-7. In a March 1918 letter to his mother Mills admits, “The more I see of what the Germans have done over here, the more I long to kill some of them.” For descriptions of American hyper-patriotism see David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 42-3, 55-7, 66-9.

³⁴ Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 117-8., Berry, 128, 133-5, 263n., Nathan Miller, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Life* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), 330-2., H.W. Brands, *TR: The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 752-3, 812-5.

strength- a true soldier and gentleman.”³⁵ In the end, most of the young college and middle class men who flocked to the OTCs during the war were generally highly motivated to serve and ideologically committed to the cause.

Whatever their backgrounds or motivations, the one thing that the majority of the candidates needed was a great deal of training. On 5 May 1917, the Adjutant General finally published Special Regulations Number 49: the definitive guide for the establishment and conduct of the first training camps. This regulation included all of the previous correspondence related to the OTCs that had been sent from the War Department since 17 April 1917, the final regulations for who could attend officer training, and the three month training plan for the May OTC class. The final plan was to give all candidates a one-month common core of training, followed by two months of focused training in the candidate’s arm or branch of service. The total course of training for an infantry officer candidate was to be 625 ½ hours. The branches of service that required more technical training of their candidates ultimately squeezed more training time in the schedule. The first OTC for Field artillery candidates, for example, was to consist of 700 total hours of training.³⁶

All the wartime OTCs and later Central Officers’ Training Schools (COTSS) followed the same overarching goal. As *Special Regulations 49* specified, “The prescribed courses are designed to teach, as thoroughly as possible in the short time available, the duties of an officer as...,”

(a) Instructor: by subjecting our future officers to the same drills and individual training that they in turn must give to their future commands, with the rigid discipline and attention to detail that they must exact when they become officers

³⁵ Francis Spears, et al, ed., *Damitall: Twentieth Company, Central Officers’ Training Camp, Camp Gordon, Georgia* (Atlanta: Privately Published, 1918), 6.

³⁶ War Department, Special Regulations No. 49: Training Camps for Reserve Officers and Candidates for Appointment As Such, May 15- August 11, 1917, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 5 May 1917), 32-55.

of an organization that is to be trained.

(b) Manager: by subjecting them to the same mode of life that will obtain with respect of their future commands, supplementing the same with instruction in the proper method of supplying, messing, administering, and disciplining organizations, and caring for [the] health, welfare, comfort, and sanitation [of their soldiers].

(c) Leader: by illustrating the tactical employment of troops and by giving each the opportunity for practice in tactical leadership.³⁷

By producing officers who could simultaneously serve as instructors, managers, and combat leaders, in theory, the graduates of the OTCs would serve as the ideal solution to the army's great challenges of mobilization. Given the scarcity of Regular Army officers, these young OTC graduates would be the ones who were to train, sustain, and deploy the legion of draftees that would descend on the army beginning in the fall of 1917. They would also be the ones who would physically lead the legions into battle. The Regular Army banked on the ability of the OTCs to accomplish this, and, in 1917, the army had no other choice.

The first series of OTCs were held from 15 May to 11 August 1917. They consisted of 16 camps that trained over 30,000 selected civilians and 7,957 officers who were previously commissioned in the Officers' Reserve Corps after attending a prewar Plattsburg camp or having been recommended by a board of officers. While civilian applicants were paid \$100 per month and 75 cents per day for meals, the reserve officers attending the camps were allowed the full pay and allowances for their commissioned rank. Ultimately, the first series of OTCs commissioned 27,341 officers, of which only 238 were appointed to ranks above captain. Over

³⁷ Ibid., 10. It is clear that this intent was briefed to the candidates and remained in force throughout the war as a direct reference was made to it in a number of graduation books, reports, and memoirs of the war. For example, see, Dittmar., Fort Devens OTC Yearbook Committee, *The Pick: 3rd O.T.C., Camp Devens, Mass* (Boston: George H. Dean, 1918), 9.

half of the new officers (14,484) were commissioned in the infantry. Field artillerymen made up the second largest group of officers, with 4,565 men commissioned at the end of the camps.³⁸

The performance of the reserve officers in the first OTCs highlighted the failure of the prewar Plattsburg civilian training camps to both identify those qualified to hold a commission or to provide any meaningful military training. Colonel Henry Cabell, the Chief of the Adjutant General Department's Appointment Section, maintained that the camps revealed the prewar, "fallacy of appointing Reserve Officers upon the recommendation of Boards of Officers," without requiring the applicant to attend a rigorous training process.³⁹ He noted that during the course of the OTCs, "Many officers previously commissioned in the Officers' Reserve Corps were found entirely unqualified for commissioned grade, and many were reduced." He went on to note that in far too many cases, "Men who had been commissioned in the grades of Captain and Major were not even appointed 2nd Lieutenants."⁴⁰

From the beginning, many regulars doubted the OTC's ability to train officers in three months, but most also realized that the situation presented them with no other option. Reflecting this "wait and see attitude," an officer in June 1917 mused,

When the war was declared we were confronted with a condition and not a theory; with a problem whose solution demanded immediate attention- we needed officers, and we needed them at once. Not everyone will agree that the solution

³⁸ Report from Colonel Henry C. Cabell, Chief, Appointments Section, Adjutant General's Office, to The Adjutant General of the Army, Subject: Report of line officers' training schools from the declaration of war to the discontinuance of schools," dated 28 February 1919, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Section, G5 Schools, 7-52.8-52.9, Box 201, NM-84, Entry 310. (Hereafter The Cabell Report.), 3-5. The 16 original camps established in divisional areas were at Plattsburg Barracks, New York (2 camps); Madison Barracks, Wisconsin; Fort Niagara, New York; Fort Myer, Virginia; Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia; Fort McPherson, Georgia; Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana (2 camps); Fort Sheridan, Illinois (2 camps); Fort Logan Roots, Arkansas; Fort Snellings, Minnesota; Fort Riley, Kansas; and Camp Funston, Leon Springs, Texas (not to be confused with the later Camp Funston located at Fort Riley). Of the 27,341 officers commissioned from the first OTCs, two were commissioned as colonels, one as lieutenant colonel, 235 as majors, 722 as captains, 4,452 as first lieutenants, and 18,929 as second lieutenants. The break down by branch was: Infantry- 14,484, Field Artillery- 4,565, Quartermaster Corps- 3,067, Engineers- 1,966, Cavalry- 1,660, Coast Artillery- 1,062, Ordnance- 385, and Statistical- 152.

³⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

adopted was the best, and undoubtedly there are many men in the regular service who have been hit hard by the methods employed, while time will show whether all the officers who have come from the training camps in fact measure up to their responsibilities. But it must be remembered that those methods were adopted because the Army itself had not provided for such an emergency.⁴¹

A few months later, the editor of the *Infantry Journal* addressed the continued doubts in the regular officer ranks about the purpose of the camps and their final human products. He wrote,

The trained soldiers finds difficulty in reconciling himself to the idea that the profession in which he has spent a lifetime of work and study can be mastered by another in the short period of three months. Let such remember that the object of the work is to not make finished soldiers, but to produce practical fighting men. The fundamentals of the fighting man's art, when boiled down and stripped of all their niceties is simple. They amount to the machine-like business of taking human life, today more than ever. Men who have been accustomed to the application of business methods to other problems ought not to find it difficult to apply them equally as successfully to this simple task...Their training, as far as it goes, has been uniform and thorough.⁴²

Despite the editor's positive, if somewhat resigned, reassurance, those regulars with doubts over the effectiveness of the training given the candidates at the first two series of OTCs were justified in their skepticism.

An examination of the training plan for the first two OTCs reveals a number of the missteps that the army made in training its candidates to lead and fight on the modern battlefield. The subjects, and the time the War College devoted to them, demonstrate the army's continued adherence to obsolete tactical ideas as well as its overall lack of preparation to teach a large influx of men. Tables 6-3 and 6-4 illustrate the subjects taught in the first two series of OTCs as well as the hours that the War College staff intended to be devoted to the topics.

⁴¹ Editorial Staff, "The Products of the Training Camps," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, no. 1 (July 1917), 468.

⁴² Editorial Staff, "Reserve Officers' Training Camps," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 6 (December 1917), 467.

Table 6-3: 1st Month Common Core Course for all Candidates (1st and second OTCs)

Subject	Hours of TNG	% of total TNG
In processing	8 hours	4 %
Conferences (lectures)	64 hours	29.2 %
Evening study	46 hours	21 %
Physical training	11 hours	5 %
Practice marches	9.5	4.3 %
School of Soldier and Squad	7.5 hours	3.4 %
School of the Company (Half close, half extended order)	17.5 hours	8 %
School of the Battalion	2.5 hours	1.1 %
Bayonet training	4.5 hours	2 %
Saber training	1 hour	.5 %
Signaling	20.5 hours	9.3 %
Musketry sighting practice	7.5 hours	3.4 %
Gallery range practice	9 hours	4.1 %
Interior guard duty	2.5 hours	1.1 %
Field craft and patrolling	7.5 hours	3.4 %
Total training hours:	218.5 hours	

Table 6-4: 2nd and 3rd Months of Training for Infantry Candidates (1st and second OTCs)

Subject	Hours of TNG	% of total TNG
Conferences (lectures)	102 hours	25 %
Evening study	64 hours	16 %
Physical training	10.5 hours	2.5 %
Company Drill	21 hours	5 %
Battalion Drill	10.5 hours	2.5 %
Pistol Training	2.5 hours	.6 %
Tent Pitching	2 hours	.5 %
Bayonet training	5 hours	1.2 %
Range firing practice	38 hours	9.3 %
Field Tng Patrolling & Scouting	10.5 hours	2.5 %
Field Tng Battalion in Attack and Defense	12 hours	3.1 %
Field Tng Battalion overnight camping	12.5 hours	3.2 %
Field Tng Battalion in trench Defense	5 hours	1.2 %
Field Tng Company on outpost, advance and rear guard	5 hours	1.2 %
Field Tng Company in Attack and Defense	5 hours	1.2 %
Machine Gun Drill	4.5 hours	1.1 %
Platoon combat firing	4 hours	1 %
Company combat firing	4 hours	1 %
Battalion combat firing	2 hours	.5 %
Trench warfare (included grenades, gas and trench ATK and DEF)	19 hours	4.6 %

Three-day maneuvers	60 hours	14.7 %
Lectures on infantry, cavalry, and artillery	8 hours	1.9 %
Total training hours:	407 hours	

The “hands on” training conducted during the common core phase focused mostly on building the physical stamina of the candidates and on the fundamental skills required of all soldiers: formation drilling, route marching, and basic rifle marksmanship. The core course was also intended to provide the students with the theoretical basis of the tactical employment of units. However, most of the theoretic instruction throughout the entire three month course was to be given during scheduled conferences. These conferences were intended to be seminars where the instructors guided the candidates through a discussion of the tactics, skills, or concepts which the students would practice during the week of training. During the first month of the OTCs, the conferences focused on the *FSR*, *IDR*, *Manual of Interior Guard Duty*, and Army Regulations. For example, candidates at the first OTC at Fort Sheridan attended conferences consisting of “lectures by the instructors on American methods of warfare, continuing into the present day methods of foreign armies” to “establish a comprehensive understanding of the subject in the minds of the candidates.”⁴³ Conferences held during the last two months of training delved deeper into the doctrinal material related to the candidates’ branch, as well as studies of the law of land warfare, field sanitation, the *Manual for Courts Martial*, and other subjects related to officership and administration.

Unfortunately, far too many of these conferences consisted merely of the instructor reading from the given manual or lecturing, rather than a seminar intended to elicit any meaningful degree of student interaction. Despite the fact that the conferences accounted for nearly 30 percent of the training in the core phase, and 25 percent of instruction in the branch

⁴³ *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps*, 208.

phase of the course, their overall value was questionable. One veteran of the first OTC at Leon Springs, Texas, Gus Dittmar, recollected that he and his comrades gained little from the lectures and conferences that occupied their evenings. He noted, “The classes were held in the mess halls, which were crowded and hot,” and, “everyone was tired and full of food and little interested in the dry language of the manuals.”⁴⁴ This reality did not truly change over the course of the war. In its guidance for the upcoming fourth OTCs, in April 1918 the War College warned instructors that,

Formal set lectures should be resorted to very infrequently, as they become tiresome to the student and nonproductive in results. Better results are obtained when practical work is interspersed with short informal talks or conferences. The most important prerequisite to an interesting talk is that the speaker know his subject thoroughly.⁴⁵

Apparently, this admonition did not take, and it seemed to be rather rare for a lecturer to retain the attention of his students throughout the war. A candidate attending the fourth OTC at Camp Dodge (15 May-1 September 1918) who was so surprised at receiving an effective conference session that he was moved to exclaim, “The day of miracles is not past. For within a fortnight have we witnessed the phenomena of an instructor’s holding the attention for two-hour periods of five hundred young men, all of whom are possessed of a proclivity for drowsiness.”⁴⁶

Another reason for the failure of the conferences to be a more effective medium for educating the officer aspirants was the lack of time that the students had to prepare for the instruction. The evening study period was to be the candidates’ time to read the materials to be discussed during the conferences or to prepare for the next day’s training. Unfortunately, the

⁴⁴ Dittmar, 88.

⁴⁵ “Advance Extract Copy of Program of Training for Training Camps for Candidates for Commission in the Army of the United States, May 15 to August 31, 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁴⁶ Carl Wilhelm et al, *Pass in Review: The Book of the Fourth Officers’ Training School, Camp Dodge, Iowa, 1918* (Camp Dodge: Privately Published, 1918), 27.

candidates spent this time preparing their boots, uniform, equipment and rifle for the next morning's inspection rather than using it for any deep study of the mysteries of the military art.

This dilemma of time management was satirized by one late-war candidate-turned-poet.

Police the room and sweep the floor,
Shine each piece and clean the bore,
Scrub your neck, align the cot,
And wash your clothes before they rot,
Each tiny "Fob" must wear a shine,
But do these things in your Spare Time.

Pace o'er the hill and down the side,
Then make a scale to fit your stride,
Make a map of all you see,
And learn the *Field Service* from A to Z.
Estimate distance, do not resign-
But do these things in your Spare Time.⁴⁷

Although cadre members seemed to be aware of this evident problem with their pedagogy, they remained unable or unwilling to do anything to eliminate the problem. Thus, while conferences and evening study accounted for nearly half the training time allocated for the first two series of OTCs, what the students actually gained from this theoretical tactical discussion is open to debate.

The type and quality of the practical "hands on" that the candidates received during the core phase was also problematic. All too often the training was nearly identical to that given to recruits, and little time was devoted to leadership development. One attendee noted that the School of the Soldier and the School of the Squad occupied most of the training in his first month in camp.⁴⁸ In a letter home, second OTC candidate Charles Sorust provided a thumbnail sketch of his daily schedule that highlights the basic recruit training approach that his cadre used during the first month of the course. On 20 November 1917, he wrote,

⁴⁷ Spears., *Damitall*, 9.

⁴⁸ Dittmar, 75.

AM, We get up at a quarter to six, have physical exercise at 6:15 AM, breakfast at a quarter to seven, drill at 7:30 AM, then comes bayonette (sic) exercise at 8:30 then medical hygiene . . . at 9:40 AM, then drill and then locker inspection at 11:30 AM, and dinner at 11:45, then a[t] 1 o'clock we have bomb and hand grenade throwing, we only throw bricks, and at 2:40 PM we dig trenches, and at 3:25 PM we have French class until 4:15 and then supper at 4:45 PM. . . After supper I am either washing clothes or cleaning my rifle, because at 6 PM it is very dark.⁴⁹

Another candidate at Fort Riley described his training as merely “throwing a gun around and hiking out in the country, taking bayonet exercise jabbing imaginary enemies through imaginary bodies, waving the semaphore signals and drilling in squads.”⁵⁰

Although candidates with no prior military experience did need to experience and understand the basics of soldiering, close order drill and bayonet practice were given far too much emphasis by the cadre. The frequency which candidates mentioned close order drill, bayonet practice, and “wig wag” flag signaling in their letters and memoirs suggest that they spent more time in these areas, and less time in field training than was specified in the War Department’s central training curriculum. John Hull, for instance, admitted that while his OTC, “didn’t teach you everything,” it at least, “gave you a start [so] you didn’t feel like a complete stranger when you joined a regiment.” Nonetheless, he still characterized much as his training at the camp as, “quite a bit of close order drill.”⁵¹

These deviations from the proscribed War College curriculum were due mainly to problems with instructors, equipment shortages, training area restrictions, or other issues that were specific to individual camps (to be discussed below). The biggest problem with these variations in training was that when the candidates became officers responsible for the training

⁴⁹ Letter from Charles Sorust to Adelaide Bowen, dated 20 Nov 1917, Entry 435, Box 1 Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University.

⁵⁰ Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript “The World War As I Saw It” in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 21.

⁵¹ Transcript of Interview of General John E. Hull by LTC James W. Wurman on 22 October 1973 in Washington D.C., in USAMHI Oral History Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

of their own soldiers, they tended to fall back upon their initial training, and thus also displayed a great penchant for marching and bayonet practice. The differences in the training regimen of the various OTCs also meant that there were often great variances in the experience levels of the graduates when they reported to their units. Since the early OTCs tended to feed officers to specific divisions, this accounted, to some extent, for the differences in training and readiness from division to division.

Some of the practical training in the core phase also highlighted problems with the army's prewar doctrine and the inconsistencies within its emerging tactical thought. One of the great ironies of officers' training was that while John J. Pershing proclaimed that the tactical doctrine of the American army would be built upon individual rifle marksmanship, the OTC students' marksmanship training was only conducted to the level that the army had considered to be the bare minimum for a regular army recruit in 1916.⁵² Since these novice officers were to be the primary trainers for the National Army, this did not bode well for the future.

The signal training was also problematic. This training consisted of the students learning how to send and receive messages using visual signals; mostly using "wig wag" signal flags. Prewar doctrine had stressed that these types of signals would be one of the primary means of command and control in battle at the battalion level and below. Given its doctrinal importance, the students spent nearly ten percent of their time in signal training. Unfortunately, this training had little to no practical value. As one candidate later stated, "Those who got to France were never able to recall having seen a semaphore flag used for anything other than a scarf around the neck of some mademoiselle, or as a pillow top in a French farm house."⁵³

⁵² *War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 313-314.

⁵³ Dittmar, 74.

The practical training during the last two months of the OTC was to instruct the candidates in the tactical, technical, and leadership skills they would use in their respective branches in combat. This phase would also introduce the candidates to the weapons and tactics of trench warfare. The War College staff intended that the average infantry candidate would spend 25.5 percent of the training time of the second phase of the course practicing platoon, company and battalion tactics. Seven percent of the remaining time would be spent on learning the weapons and tactics of trench warfare (to include trench construction and machine gun drill), and 13 percent of the time would be devoted to rifle practice and unit firing. With over 45 percent of the candidate's training time committed to "hands on" tactics and skills of trench and maneuver warfare, on paper the War College training plan was focused and logical. In practice, however, the training far well short of the War College's goal.

There can be no doubt that the second phase of training was rigorous and physically demanding. Dwight Eisenhower, an instructor at the Fort Oglethorpe OTC, noted, "The training was tough- designed as much for weeding out the weak and inept as to instruct."⁵⁴ In fact, the pace of instruction was so rapid, that in his first letter to his wife after being reassigned from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Oglethorpe in late September 1917, Eisenhower wrote,

First of all I'll explain why I have not written. I arrived Sunday (23 September), and was sent immediately to the trenches, and didn't get out until tonight. I could leave them under no circumstances. It was wet, cold, and it rained the whole time. To complicate matters, my baggage has not yet arrived so I had nothing except what I had on when I left home.⁵⁵

The frenetic pace of the second phase was also noted by the candidates themselves. Gus Dittmar recalled, "the fact that some men, who had been barely holding on by their finger nails and their teeth, now had to relinquish that hold, brought regret for these unfortunates and considerable

⁵⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 132.

⁵⁵ Daniel D. Holt, ed., *Eisenhower: The Prewar Diaries and Selected Papers, 1905-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 13. The letter to his wife was dated 25 September 1917.

concern for themselves, from those that were still in the running.”⁵⁶ But, rigorous and physically demanding training does not always equate to effective training.

Although the tactical training at the OTC was demanding, in many areas it failed at adequately preparing the students for the tactical and leadership challenges that they would face in France. Part of this problem was that the War Department never fully understood exactly what skills and training the candidate needed to be sound combat leaders. Throughout the war, it wrangled with the issue of finding the right balance between training for trench warfare and “open warfare.” Although Pershing constantly criticized the state-side army for failing to properly train France-bound officers and soldiers for “open warfare,” as we shall later see, the iron commander never truly defined the exact meaning of his term, nor the skills required to wage it.

In forming its training plans for the OTCs, the War College made the valid assumption that trench warfare would be the predominate condition that American forces would face throughout 1917 and 1918. As late as April 1918, the staff officers writing the War College’s training plan for the fourth OTCs, maintained,

An increased armament and the more highly organized defenses has, to a very great extent, modified the methods of combat, maneuver, or open warfare, for which we have prepared so extensively in the past, [and] have given place, at least temporally to a trench or positional warfare. We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that there has been no change of basic principles—merely a change in the method of employing them...Nor must we allow ourselves to forget that although the contestants are at present engaged in trench or positional warfare, it may later develop into an open warfare or a combination of the two. To prepare for one class, then, to the utter exclusion of the other, would be the height of folly.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Dittmar, 105.

⁵⁷ “Advance Extract Copy of Program of Training for Training Camps for Candidates for Commission in the Army of the United States, May 15 to August 31, 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

Even Pershing believed that the AEF would not be fully deployed and trained until 1919, and thus assumed that all of his units would spend some time in the trenches.⁵⁸ Consequently, there was some consensus among the U. S. Army's senior leaders that the AEF would have a period of time to fill in its units' training gaps and to have them learn some of the aspects of trench warfare by actually serving at the front. Despite all of Pershing's carping, officer candidates throughout the war actually spent much more time training for maneuver warfare rather than trench warfare.

Regardless of the type of warfare the training focused on, the greatest problem with the tactical instruction that the candidates received was that it failed to replicate the conditions that they would face in actual combat. Not surprisingly, tactical training for infantry candidates in the last two month of the course was based on concepts pulled directly out of the *IDR*. One student at Leon Springs noted that during his field training and maneuvers, his unit concentrated mostly on moving forward as skirmishers under the direction of the platoon commander's whistle to build up firing lines and gain fire superiority in a manner specified in the regulations.⁵⁹ In a similar vein, the training at Fort Sheridan consisted of advance by a "forward attacking line" that rushed ahead and then, "flopped to the ground and opened up with rapid flashes." Command was exercised by "crouching figures" who, "ran haltingly back and forth along the line." As at Leon Springs, these maneuvers were done in the manner proscribed by the *IDR* for building up a firing line in preparation for an attacker's assault upon an entrenched defender.⁶⁰ Throughout all of this training, recalled a Fort Sheridan candidate, the instructors emphasized

⁵⁸ Donald Smythe, *Pershing General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 146-17., Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking*, 78-9.

⁵⁹ Dittmar, 112-114.

⁶⁰ *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers' Training Camps*, 208-13.

that, “Bayonet work was an important branch of infantry specialization” and a vital part of the attack.⁶¹

The problem was these tactics and assumptions had long been proven invalid on the battlefields of France. The building up of skirmish lines and attempts to gain infantry fire superiority before assaulting had been shown to only stall attacks short of their objectives and thus subject the attacker to higher casualties as their units remained for longer durations in areas swept by artillery, machine gun, and rifle fire. This point was not lost on those officers who later commanded in combat. Looking back on his officer training, one combat veteran noted,

...Our army had learned no lessons of modern warfare as developed in Europe in the two years the war had been going on. This was again in evidence in the 1st Training Camp for officers... much time (was) wasted in learning methods. . .which were useless in Europe.⁶²

The lack of realism at the Camp Root OTC led F. L. Miller to dismiss his training as “three months spent...learning wig-wag and semaphore signaling and reenacting Civil War combat problems through the mosquita (sic) filled swamps of Arkansas.”⁶³

Even the training in trench warfare left a lot to be desired. Much of the time devoted to this subject was actually spent by the candidates physically digging the trenches they would use in training. Although there was some value in the future officers understanding the intricacies of sighting trenches and the time and physical exertion it required to dig them, the value of this experience was not in line with the time and effort devoted to it. After being set to dig trenches one Fort Sheridan aspirant bluntly asked, “What is the use of my learning to do this? I could get a Dago to do it better than I could for a few dollars a day and it will cost me more than that to get

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 52.

⁶³ F.L. Miller, unpublished manuscript “The War to End All Wars,” Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, 3.

fixed up after this mess.”⁶⁴ Some of the candidates at the Leon Springs OTC in 1917 also wondered at the utility of physically digging trenches. One wit offered that at least, “When you get discharged from this man’s army you can always get a job as a grave digger.”⁶⁵

Once the candidates completed the trenches, the tactics they learned in attacking and defending them were also flawed. The tactics used for attacking trenches were those listed in the *IDR*, and generally the same that the candidates had learned for open warfare: waves of attackers steadily building up a firing line to gain fire superiority over the defenders. As Candidate Dittmar noted,

After the fundamentals of attacking a trench system had been mastered, the companies staged simulated attacks on the enemy positions. These followed to the letter the latest techniques extracted from secret War Department manuals. The instructors emphasized the necessity for ferocity in action, which the students accepted as a release for their exuberance and possibly as a palliative for the resentment they held against the rocky soil that had made trench digging so unpleasant. With wild yells, gritted teeth and much colorful language they poured into the trenches, sticking, knifing, and clubbing the simulated defenders. It was a bad day for the defenders.⁶⁶

Although he mentioned “secret War Department manuals,” it is clear from his other descriptions of his training that the tactics stated in these unnamed guides must have differed little from the *IDR* or not been followed as intended. Also, his simulated attack was not met with the shell and small arms fire that had tended to make more “bad days” for the attackers than for the defenders of the Western Front. This lack of realism was not localized at Leon Springs. In a letter written shortly before his graduation from the Fort Riley OTC, Milton Bernet wrote,

For the past week we have been studying barbed wire entanglements and trench warfare as it is now fought in Europe; and believe me it is some study. We

⁶⁴ *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps*, 353.

⁶⁵ Dittmar, 187. Also see *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps*, 208-9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 193-4.

charge from one trench to the next, stabbing the dummies as we go in with our bayonets, occupying and investing the trench and then go on to the next.⁶⁷

It is interesting to note that no mention was made by either candidate of any supporting fires by artillery, trench mortars, or machine guns to aid them in their assaults. However, the fact that both wrote of wild bayonet attacks on the “enemy” speaks volumes of the focus and assumptions of their training.

The one real attempt to add some realism to the trench warfare training at Leon Springs actually fizzled. In an effort to demonstrate how large mines had been used in France to destroy strong points, at the culmination of the trench warfare training, the cadre exploded a mine consisting of several hundred pounds of TNT under the trench works that the candidates had constructed. Unfortunately, most of the candidates were worn out from a lack of sleep and from their week in the trenches, and were fast asleep in the warm Texas sun when the mine exploded.⁶⁸

The War Department’s leadership was not unaware of the problems with training at the first OTCs. On 1 August 1917, Brigadier General McCain warned the Chief of Staff that, “The men in the present Officers’ Camps have not received adequate instruction in the methods of modern war by officers familiar with [the] new conditions.”⁶⁹ As a stop-gap measure, he recommended the establishment of divisional schools for musketry, grenades, trench mortars, trench construction, and gas protection, where at least one officer per company would be trained to be instructors in those subjects for their own soldiers. One officer, Major General William Snow was so disgusted by the training at the OTCs that he acerbically observed, “The only

⁶⁷ Letter written by Milton E. Bernet to “Sue,” dated 26 July 1917, in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, file WWI 2340.

⁶⁸ Dittmar, 207-8.

⁶⁹ “Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, to Chief of Staff, Subject: Special Training for Officers, dated 01 August 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

uniformity among them was that each was distinguished for its wholly inadequate course of instruction, its incompetent instructors, and its insufficient equipment.”⁷⁰

The sad reality of this lack of realism and effectiveness in training was that this was in an area that the army could have easily addressed. As was shown in the last chapter, the army had indications that its tactical doctrine was being called into question by events in Europe even before America entered the war. Once in the conflict, there were several sources that continued to repudiate many of the Americans’ tactical assumptions. In early 1917, Harvard University succeeded in having a French officer, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Azan, assigned to its faculty to aid American officers in teaching its ROTC students military science. While at Harvard, Azan published two books, *The War of Positions* (1917) and *The Warfare of Today* (1918). Both of these works offered a stark repudiation of American doctrine and an honest appraisal of the ugly attritional realities of modern war. He informed his young charges,

Hitherto, it was the infantry of the two opposing sides that came into collision; the victory went to the one which at the last moment could avail itself of further reserves to throw in against the troops already exhausted by combat. But today, the effects of artillery on the earthworks and guns of the enemy is the decisive factor in success; victory goes to that army which has guns in good condition and abundant munitions, as against the enemy whose supplies has given out. The flinging of innumerable infantrymen against batteries that are still intact results in nothing but useless slaughter.⁷¹

Azan was unequivocal in his statement that, “Infantry is powerless without the aid of artillery,” and that it “can make no attempt against a position unless the artillery has destroyed the accessory defenses, smashed the trenches and demoralized their occupants.”⁷² He concluded that for an attack to succeed, the infantry must, “advance with prudence and method, with the constant support of its artillery.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Quoted in Byron Farwell, *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917-1918* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 67.

⁷¹ LTC Paul Azan, *The War of Positions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 14.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 23-25.

Warnings also came from other foreign officers inspecting the training conducted at the OTCs. The American officer accompanying a general from the Russian Military Mission passed on the Russian's following observations,

The advance to attack by rushes, the attack both at drill and in the maneuvers which he saw, could be, in his opinion, with one machine gun, properly concealed, entirely wiped out in thirty seconds leaving no one except the dead and wounded. Such training is to his mind worse than a loss of time. It inculcates wrong ideas in future officers...He was quite astonished that no apparent effort was ever made for invisibility, [of] either men, trenches or guns.”

The Russian general further recommended that in addition to resolving these glaring problems, the officer training need more emphasis on methods of conducting relief in place operations, ensuring lateral and rearward communications, the proper employment of barb wire, and night patrolling.⁷⁴

One wonders why, if these shortcomings were so apparent, the War Department did not do more to eliminate them? Part of this problem was due to the Regular Army officer corps' faith that their methods and doctrine were innately superior to the Europeans. Despite obvious evidence to the contrary, nothing shook this fundamental belief in American exceptionalism throughout the war. Nowhere was that more evident than in the words and actions of Pershing and his senior commanders and staff officers. Pershing insisted that the stalemate in France was an aberration and that the American army's superior drive, morale and marksmanship would ultimately force the Germans out of their trenches. Once free from the trenches and into "open warfare," the Americans' greater skill and ability at maneuver would allow them to corner and destroy the inferior German army.⁷⁵ Furthermore, many Americans, from Pershing to the most

⁷³ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁴ “Letter for the Chief of Staff from Maj N. K. Averill, General Staff Corps, Subject: Defects in our training, especially candidates for officers, dated 10 August 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁷⁵ Pershing, *My Experience*, Vol I, 150-4 and Vol II, 237-8.

junior lieutenant, convinced themselves that years in the trenches had blunted the offensive edge of the Allies and had sapped their aggressiveness, initiative and will to win. As one senior GHQ staff officer argued,

In many respects, the tactics and techniques of our allies are not suited to American characteristics or the American mission in this war. The French do not like the rifle, do not know how to use it, and the infantry is consequently too entirely dependent upon a powerful artillery support. Their infantry lacks aggressiveness and discipline. The British infantry lacks initiative and leadership.⁷⁶

Given their high casualty rates, the American could argue, with some justification, that perhaps the French and British tactical methods were far from proven. However, these American attitudes did make it difficult to create training plans for the OTCs, and the rest of the army, that were grounded in the combat realities the Americans would face in France.

Further evidence of these American attitudes, and their baleful influence on officer training, can be found by examining the debates within the General Staff over the use of Allied instructors in the American OTCs. Despite the abiding faith of the officer corps in the superiority of American methods, some senior officers admitted that perhaps it would be wise to have Allied officers at least conduct some degree of training on the unique aspects of trench warfare. In terms that highlighted what he viewed as the “peculiarity” of the military conditions in France, on 16 April 1917, the Adjutant General wrote to the Chief of Staff recommending that,

These training camps should be provided with a corps of instructors competent to teach our prospective officers...those military subjects of the first importance in connection with the character of military operations they are most likely to engage in. This suggests the advisability of thorough and detailed instruction in the

⁷⁶ Memorandum from AEF G-5 to AEF Chief of Staff dated 04 July 1918, in Timberman-Fiske Papers, USAMHI collection. Similar feelings were expressed by Pershing himself and other high ranking AEF officers. See, James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France: 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936), 407-8., Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925), 100-4.

character of warfare now conducted along the west front in Europe. Undoubtedly England and France have hundreds of officers physically disabled but mentally competent, and possessing valuable recent experience in the character of warfare referred to. It is believed that the British and French governments will gladly authorize such officers to visit the United States and be assigned as instructors in our training camps.⁷⁷

When McCain's request was forwarded to Brigadier General Joseph Kuhn, the Chief of the War College Division, for comment, Kuhn agreed with McCain's recommendations but wanted a very circumscribed roll for the foreign officers. He noted that, "Such officers could best be employed in giving lectures and demonstrations to the officers and prospective officers of our forces" on trench weapons and other technical subjects, but noted that the American tactical "organization and methods of administration are so different from the European methods that foreign officers would be at a decided disadvantage if compelled to adapt themselves to a new system." He conclude by noting, "The War College Division has now in course of preparation a series of manuals or pamphlets covering the methods and devices of trench warfare, and it is probable that by this means we should be able in time to give the necessary instruction to our forces."⁷⁸

Not all members of the War College Division agreed with the recommendation to use foreign instructors in even a limited manner. The General Staff's Colonel William Johnston argued that employing French and British officers would be "a decided reflection upon the ability of officers of the United States Army to teach the duties of company officers to candidates for the Reserve Officers' Corps." Johnston maintained that the candidates "will have ample

⁷⁷ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, Subject: Foreign officers as instructors at Officers' Training Camps, dated 16 April 1917" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁷⁸ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Joseph Kuhn, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Foreign officers as instructors at Officers' Training Camps, dated 27 April 1917" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

[material] to learn of an elementary nature, without attempting to acquire personal expertness in throwing bombs and other arts peculiar to warfare on the Western Front.” He stressed, “To give instruction of this character would be equivalent to teaching chemistry and philosophy by lecture to one not yet able to read.” Johnson concluded that “After our forces have had the year’s training essential, according to all previous plans, and if there is then contemplated sending an expedition to the Continent, the peculiar training now useful in France can be given [to] our forces after landing there” (original emphasis). A vote by the 15 staff members of the War College Division on the proposal to use foreign instructors laid bare the passions that the subject evoked. Johnston and five other officers (40%) dissented from Kuhn’s recommendation.⁷⁹

Both Kuhn’s and Johnson’s positions offer insights into the attitudes and prejudices of the Regular Officer corps. Any thought that the American doctrine was flawed or any admittance that foreign officers had something important to offer the U. S. Army seemed to them as a stain upon the professionalism that they had striven so hard to build since the late 1800s. The down side of these attitudes was that they continued to hobble the training of American leaders, both in the United States and in France, throughout the war. As late as August 1918, the commander of the Infantry Central Officers’ Training School at Camp Lee, Virginia, Colonel Harry Eaton, wrote to the Chief of the War Plans Division’s Training and Instruction Branch complaining about the assignment of two veteran British officers to his unit to serve as tactics instructors. Eaton reported that, “it is not practicable to use these officers to advantage in this kind of instruction.” He went on to state,

Really British officers are not desired for purposes other than bayonet and physical training, gas, and scouting and patrolling. Inasmuch as the policy is now to develop our own instructors, work is progressing along that line and the one

⁷⁹ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from Col William Johnston, General Staff Corps, Subject: Foreign officers as instructors at Officers’ Training Camps, Dissent of Colonel W. H. Johnston, General Staff, dated 27 April 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

British officer on duty to supervise that instruction is sufficient. It is recommended that these two officers be relieved and sent to some place where their services can be utilized to better advantage.⁸⁰

It is amazing that in a time when he and other commanders were hard pressed to find qualified American instructors for their candidate schools, Eaton was so quick to dispense with men with a great deal of combat and instructional experience. However, this action goes a long way toward understanding why the wartime training of officer candidates was not as effective as it might have been.

Although the regular officer corps was reluctant to accept foreign instructors, they showed much less reticence in accepting French and British manuals and doctrinal publications. Ironically, this willingness to use these works contributed to the confusion and lack of focus in the training of American officers and units. In the spring and summer of 1917 both the Army War College and the AEF embarked on a printing spree of foreign manuals. Unfortunately, there seems to have been little thought given to reconciling discrepancies between the various works. For example, the War College's July 1917 translation of the French *Manual for Commanders of Infantry Platoons* describes and illustrates formations and tactics that were completely different from the British ones they printed in *Notes on Recent Operations, Number 3* just a month later.⁸¹ Both of these differ from the tactics and formations printed in the War Department's June 1917 *Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action* and the AEF's August 1917 translation of the French *Manual of the Chief of Platoon of Infantry*.

⁸⁰ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly Report, dated 24 August 1918" in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, "COTS Lee."

⁸¹ Army War College, *Manual for Commanders of Infantry Platoons* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 381-397., Army War College, *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 3* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 11-26. This should not be confused with the AEF's *Notes on Recent Operations*.

To add to the confusion, the War College's *Manual for Commanders of Infantry Platoons* and the AEF's *Manual of the Chief of Platoon of Infantry* come from the same French work. The discrepancies in translation lay with what the two entities chose to omit or emphasize. The War College manual omitted much of the material that the French original had devoted to "the formation and movement" of both the platoon and company.⁸² The little discussion that the manual does include in these areas is sketchy and poorly illustrated. All in all, the manual was much stronger in its discussion of the defense than in the offense. To further muddy the waters, in May 1917, the War College had also translated and printed the French 1916 *Instructions on the Offensive Conduct of Small Units*. While this work was similar to the *Manual for Commanders of Infantry Platoons*, it was poorly illustrated and different enough in the details it illustrated of the attack to sow confusion in any reader of both manuals. By the time the War Department finally resolved this issue in the early summer of 1918 by reprinting the AEF's latest edition of *Instructions on the Offensive Conduct of Small Units* with the supplement illustrating the new formations and deployments (issued by the AEF in April 1918), it was too late to be used in the United States by the majority of American junior officers who saw combat during the war.⁸³

The overarching purpose of any tactical doctrine is to establish a common understanding in the minds of an army's officers and men of how units are to operate in combat. The doctrine tells everyone their roles in battle and provides an outline for how units react to given tactical situations. In the confusion of the battlefield, as units become intermeshed and leaders become casualties, having everyone on "the same sheet of music" is of vital importance. With the AEF

⁸² Army War College, *Manual for Commanders of Infantry Platoons*, 5.

⁸³ War Department, *Instructions on the Offensive Conduct of Small Units* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918). Peyton March approved the publication on 6 May 1918 and by the time it was printed and distributed, most units would not have received it until late June or early July at the earliest.

“freelancing” its own doctrine and the War College printing a host of foreign materials with no effort made to reconcile the discrepancies or illustrate how they meshed with American doctrinal thought, one wonders if it can be said that the U. S. Army never truly had a doctrine during the war.

What did these doctrinal problems mean to the officer candidate training at an OTC? As discussed previously, Gus Dittmar clearly stated that his tactical training was based on the “latest techniques extracted from secret War Department manuals,” and yet in execution, it seemed to have actually mirrored the tactics of the *IDR*.⁸⁴ The War Department itself, and the instructors in the camps, were the culprits responsible for this contradiction. It was also pointless to have manuals describe the employment of weapons, such as the VB rifle grenade and the Chauchat automatic rifle, when no such arms were on hand in the OTCs.

In addition to all of the foreign manuals the army was printing, the War Department never stopped printing its own doctrinal materials. In the spring of 1917, the War department published *Notes on Infantry Cavalry and Field Artillery*. This publication was a compilation of lectures given by American officers to the second class of provisional Regular Army lieutenants at Fort Leavenworth. In mid-1917 the War Department reissued the work as a “special reprint for Officers’ Training Camps” and sent it to the various OTCs. When it came to infantry tactics, Major Harold Fiske asked the rhetorical question, “Will our drill regulations require radical modification to conform to the experience of the great war?” His answer was a confident, “No,” because, “The formations contemplated and the principles taught in our drill regulations have been proven in the main correct.”⁸⁵ He rather melodramatically reassured his readers that while, “All of the pomp and circumstances of war have gone from the battlefield of to-day, but its

⁸⁴ Dittmar, 193-4.

⁸⁵ War Department, *Notes on Infantry Cavalry and Field Artillery 3* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 23.

harshness, cruelty, and brutality are more than ever in evidence,” ultimately, “So much more glorious...is it in the infantry that endures and conquers.”⁸⁶ With this profusion of contradictory official sources, and with no official guidance as to their use, it is no wonder that the instructors at the OTC either attempted to reconcile the sources themselves, thus further fragmenting doctrine, or simply fell back to what they knew: the obsolete tactics of the *IDR*. In the tactics described by Dittmar, the instructors seemed to have merely cloaked old ideas with new terminology.

While on the subject of instruction in the first two series of OTCs, it is also important to discuss how the problem of obtaining qualified instructors contributed to the poor training of the officer candidates. From the beginning of mobilization the War Department knew that it was going to have a problem finding enough qualified instructors for the OTCs. In his 23 April 1917 memorandum to Departmental Commanders ordering them to establish the OTCs, General McCain noted,

In making provision for instructors at these training camps, the resources of the War Department have been taxed to the utmost. The number of instructors is not nearly as great as it should be, but it is hoped and believed that many reserve officers and candidates for appointment as such who will be in attendance at those camps will have special qualifications to teach certain subjects and in this to be of material assistance to the Regular Army officer.⁸⁷

The selection of these reserve and student instructors was left up to the company commanders of the OTCs, and a number of them ended up being recent Plattsburg graduates or regular army NCOs attending the camps as candidates.⁸⁸ The looming teacher problem led General Kuhn to recommend to the Chief of Staff on 25 April 1917 that, “With the probable shortage in

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸⁷ “Adjutant General Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, dated 23 April 1917.”

⁸⁸ Gus Dittmar noted that his company contained a handful of these NCO candidate-instructors. He believed that while they understood the basics of soldiering, their “hard boiled” attitudes and lack of experience with unit tactics at the platoon level and above limited their effectiveness as instructors. Dittmar, 77.

instructors, and these instructors differing widely in experience and ability, the schedule must follow rather definitely certain prescribed text-books to obtain any sort of uniformity in instruction.” Unfortunately, in the same memorandum, he noted that the army would also be very short of the exact manuals needed to attain his desired uniformity.⁸⁹

In the excitement of the early days of mobilization, a number of regular officers were actively searching for exciting jobs and chances for advancement. This frenzy of requests for transfer led one colonel to denounce the fact that, “At present there is an hysterical desire of many officers to teach anybody anywhere, something technical or unusual.” He was angered by the fact that these officers expressed, “no anxiety to stay with our Regular regiments and discharge the duties for which line officers are authorized and paid.”⁹⁰ The colonel’s statement reflects one of the great challenges that came with mobilization: where could the army best employ its active officers? The Adjutant General had to juggle the competing demands of providing officers for existing and new regular army units, new National Army units, National Guard units short of their commissioned ranks, and the OTCs and other new entities created by the war. There were simply not enough regular officers to go around.

The Adjutant General did the best he could in reconciling the various calls for regular officers, and the first OTCs did get a large cut from the personnel pie. The number of regular officers assigned to a given OTC varied according to the number of classes held at the post, and the general availability of officers obtainable for reassignment. At Leon Springs, Texas, for example, the OTC cadre consisted of 101 Regular, National Guard, and reserve officers. The

⁸⁹ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Joseph Kuhn, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Text-books and maps required for use at Officers’ Training Camps, dated 25 April 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁹⁰ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from Col William Johnston, General Staff Corps, Subject: Proposed Camp for Field Artillery Officers’ Reserve Corps at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Dissent of Colonel W. H. Johnston, General Staff, dated 17 May 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

camp administrative staff consisted of 28 officers under the camp commander, a Regular Army full colonel. The other members of the staff included a camp adjutant, Quartermaster, Ordnance, and mess officers (generally from the regulars), each with their own assistant officers, two Regular Army sergeants major, three medical officers and twelve corporals.

The instructional staff consisted of 73 officers under the direction of a Regular Army Senior Instructor in the rank of lieutenant colonel or major of infantry or field artillery. The Senior Instructor, aided by two Regular Army Assistant Senior Instructors, oversaw the training given by 16 infantry, five field artillery, one engineer, and two coast artillery instructors all drawn from the regular officer ranks. These instructors, in turn, were supported by 32 infantry, five field artillery, and four coast artillery assistant instructors consisting of officers from the National Army or Reserves.⁹¹

The first OTC at Fort Sheridan was commanded by a Regular Army colonel, had a regular lieutenant colonel as the senior instructor, and two regular majors as the battalion commanders. Each of the 28 companies of candidates was commanded by a Regular Army captain or first lieutenant. The company commander was the senior instructor of his company and was supported by two assistant instructors drawn from the ranks of the recently created reserve officer corps. Most of these reserve officers were graduates of the pre-war Plattsburg camps, and few had any real military experience to draw upon in their instruction.⁹²

Although the regular officers took pride in their professionalism, being a good officer did not necessarily make for a good instructor. This meant that even in the first two series of OTCs,

⁹¹ Memorandum from Chief of Staff, MG H. L. Scott to Department Commanders, Subject: Composition of Officers' Training Camps Cadre, undated (circa August 1917)" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261. This memorandum listed the cadre composition from the OTCs at Plattsburg, Fort Meyers, Fort Oglethorpe, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Leon Springs, Fort Snellings, and the Presidio of San Francisco, with recommendations for the Department Commanders for selecting cadres for their OTCs.

⁹² *The History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers' Training Camps*, 186.

in camps with the largest cadres of regular officers during the war, the quality of instruction could vary wildly from company to company. Some candidates spoke admiringly of their Regular Army cadre. A Fort Sheridan candidate recalled that, “The men were quick to perceive in them qualities of real leadership and an unusual loyalty developed between the Regular Army officers who had showed any distinguished characteristics and the men who were to be the leaders of the new National Army.”⁹³

Other candidates were much more critical of their Regular Army cadre members. In May 1917, future World War II general Lucian Truscott was a private serving in a cavalry regiment on the Mexican border when he decided to apply for officer’s training. Truscott later admitted that, “Military education at the training camp had been austere and elementary” and “It had been conducted for the most part by instructors who seemed to know little more than the candidates.”⁹⁴ William M. Briggs’ experience was similar to Truscott’s. He recalled that while his training company commander and instructor was a West Point graduate and a dedicated officer, “he was still going by tactics learned in the Civil War.” He noted that some of his regular officer instructors “were strict to the point of ridiculousness,” and that “the old West Pointers and regular army men were more interested in drilling, and were not aware of the newer means of carrying on a war as was going on in Europe.”⁹⁵ Edwin Engleman thought that the officers conducting his training were “rather domineering at times,” but also believed that this tendency was worse among the reserve officers than among the regulars. He also believed that many made poor instructors. Engleman recalled that during his first attempt to fire the .45 caliber Colt pistol, the recoil of the weapon, “jumped up” in his hands. As a result, his

⁹³ Ibid., 345.

⁹⁴ Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *The Twilight of the Cavalry: Life in the Old Army 1917-1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 4.

⁹⁵ 1LT William McKinley Briggs, Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky, 159th Depot Brigade, File WWI 2655, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

instructors pulled him from the firing line and made him clean pistols, “rather than explaining what to do to prevent such action” in the future.⁹⁶

Poor instruction left a lasting impression on the officers who went through the first OTCs. When the War Plans Division’s Morale Branch surveyed officers returning from France in 1919, many remained bitter over the poor training that they had received at the OTCs. One artillery first lieutenant noted that “officers acting as instructors at these camps were often poor judges of men and lacking in knowledge of methods and subject matter.” Another wrote “My instructor in Field Artillery was a Coast Artillery Captain who knew nothing of Field Artillery.” An infantry captain later bluntly recalled, “I have never seen such pathetic attempts at instruction as I saw in the First Officers Training Camp.”⁹⁷

One candidate, Raymond Phelan, was so concerned about the training he was receiving at the first OTC that in July 1917 he wrote directly to Secretary of War Baker. Phelan informed Baker that,

I share the pretty general opinion expressed in many different ways that there is room for improvement in some important directions in conducting our training camps. In the first place, the system of instruction, with the very best intentions...on the part of the officers, has so worked as to encourage belief in the American idea that “getting by” is the proper test of right and wrong.

He roundly criticized the “recitation system” used by many instructors and their lack of “pedagogic skill in questioning.” The candidate concluded that, “It would be better also if all instructors set down, or thought out their questions before coming to class,” and that “much would be gained if officers and other leaders planned out action on problems before the company

⁹⁶ Edwin Earl Engleman, Camp Dodge, 163rd Depot Brigade, File WWI 3164, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹⁷ All quotes from Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 35 and 52. This problem was also noted by March in his *Annual Report, 1919*, 306-7.

falls in.”⁹⁸

Although Baker was aware of the instructor problem, there was little he, or anyone else in the upper echelons of the War Department, could do about it. The pace of mobilization prevented any meaningful effort to find or train competent instructors for the OTCs, and the War Department’s own personnel management system further hobbled this effort. For example, as soon as the first OTC class at Fort Sheridan graduated in August 1917, the War Department reassigned most of the regular officers that served as the camp’s instructors and staff, leaving only a handful of officers to prepare for the next camp. Shortly after the start of the second OTC, the army reassigned nearly all of the remaining regulars and replaced them with reserve officers who had only recently graduated themselves from the first OTC.⁹⁹ This unfortunate process would be repeated throughout the war.

One of the few viable recommendations for coping with the instructor shortage was offered by Colonel Chauncey Baker in July 1917. Baker headed a mission sent to France by the General Staff to observe training in the AEF. He recommended that, “after a limited number of officers have been trained and have had experience of serving in the line in France, they be sent to the United States to assist in instructing troops.” He also asked that the War Department send the AEF 208 “extra reserve officers” to aid in the establishment of the AEF’s school system and to serve as instructors in France.¹⁰⁰ Not surprisingly, Pershing was unwilling to strip the AEF of experienced officers and the War Department had no extra reserve officers readily available to send to France to either establish the AEF’s school system or replace those officers who might

⁹⁸ “Letter to Secretary of War Newton Baker from Officer Candidate Raymond Phelan, dated 31 July 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁹⁹ *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps*, 344-6.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Gen John J. Pershing to the Adjutant General, Subject: Training, dated 11 July 1917. In NARA RG165, Correspondence of the War College Division, Microfilm M1024, Roll 142, File 7541-17.

have left France to serve as instructors in the States. Ultimately, only a small number of officers were ever reassigned from the AEF to teach at stateside schools during the war.

In addition to problems with doctrine and instructors, in the OTCs found that their training was hindered by shortages of equipment and the other growing pains of mass mobilization as all other organizations in the U. S. Army experienced. The army entered the war with no mortars, tanks, grenades, or gas masks, and many of its machine guns and artillery were obsolete. The OTCs had to scrape by using whatever they could borrow from local posts or requisition from the army's overburdened supply system. The shortages were particularly acute in machine guns and artillery. A graduate of the Fort Sheridan OTC recalled that meaningful artillery training was stifled in his camp because "guns and horses were sadly lacking." Given these shortages, artillery instruction denigrated into a series of lectures where,

The dismounting of the gun was explained and also such weird sounding terms as angle of site, mil and corrector. The circle of eager listeners strained eyes and ears in an effort to catch every word. Queer names were scrawled in notebooks. At the end of the lecture, heads whirled like a rotating band blown through a rifled tube.¹⁰¹

All of these shortages contributed to the first OTC's lack of realism and hindered the candidates' ability to fully understand the challenges they faced leading small units in modern war.

In May 1917, nearly all the camps also suffered shortages of basic necessities such as uniforms and shelter. One of the first things that struck Gus Dittmar when he reported to Leon Springs was the confused, hurried, and incomplete nature of training camp. Workmen were still constructing the barracks, so the candidates' first weeks were spent in tents. The lack of uniforms meant that a number of candidates drilled in mud and mire dressed in civilian suits and "light low quarter shoes and silk sock" that were "about as suitable for the conditions as would

¹⁰¹ *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers' Training Camps*, 212-13.

have been a coon skin coat in the Fiji Islands.”¹⁰² Likewise, Edward Chayes noted that upon arriving at his training camp, “everything seemed confused and out of control, the camp was recently constructed and not yet running smoothly.”¹⁰³ Although these problems resolved themselves over time, they do serve to illustrate the unsettled state of most aspects of the army in 1917.

The ultimate problem with the lack of realistic training in the first OTCs was the long term impact that this shortfall had on the overall effectiveness of the American army. As already stated, since the OTC graduates became the primary instructors of the new army, any flaws with their training were redoubled in the instruction of the larger force. This will be discussed at length in Chapter Eight. There was also a psychological price to be paid for failing to present an accurate view of the war in Europe and the harsh challenges that the officers would face as combat leaders in the OTC’s training. The graduating officers of the OTCs often left with an overly unrealistic and romantic view of war in general and warfare on the Western Front in particular. Although the Europeans entered the war with similar false visions of glory, the reality and the thousands of wounded returning from the front made it impossible for their armies to maintain their rosy illusions of combat. Photos from the various OTCs show men training in immaculate trenches and making mock attacks in formations that would have made Frederick the Great smile.¹⁰⁴ A graduate from the Plattsburg OTC wrote in 1917 that America's entry into the war would return the Western Front to "the warfare of the old days, the warfare of our own West and South, when sabers flashed to the beats of galloping horses, and men went

¹⁰² Dittmar, 19-20.

¹⁰³ 1LT Edward Chayes, Officers’ Training Schools, Camp Johnston, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

¹⁰⁴ Good examples of these can be found in *The History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers’ Training Camps*, 350, 381., Dittmar, 112 and 193., Frank H. Ward, ed. *Camp Sherman Souvenir* (Cincinnati: Lambertson Publishing Company, 1918), 55, 58-60.

miles over the top instead of yards."¹⁰⁵ In a similar vein one OTC student wrote home, "Just think of it! The future may hold in store for me the chance to charge with thousands of other horsemen the retreating Germans being hurled back to Berlin."¹⁰⁶

These unrealistic and romantic views even appeared in the semi-official handbooks popular among reserve officers. The *Plattsburg Manual*, which along with Moss' *Officers' Manual*, was one of the most popular semi-official works purchased by wartime officers. They assured young officers that trenches and machine guns could be overcome by a vigorous attack pushed to the point of "bayonet against bayonet, man against man, and nerve against nerve." In the attack the soldier's "clear eye and steady nerves, his soul's blood and iron, constitute a better defense than steel and concrete."¹⁰⁷ The officers' own self-delusions, their sketchy training at the OTCs, and the army's visions of an American *attaque outrance* all combined to overshadow the need for tactical "know how." Unfortunately, this war would not be like the Civil War, where a junior officer's leadership was judged by his personal bravery and ability to keep a dressed line moving forward. It would rather be a war that required a deep understanding of how to combine the effects of a host of weapons, and one where the junior officers often operated in the loneliness and isolation of the "empty" yet deadly battlefield. This lack of psychological preparation for the deadly realities of modern combat would later prove to be disheartening and disillusioning to many officers in France.

The army held the second series of OTCs at sixteen army posts from 27 August to 27 November 1917. As previously noted, there were very few changes to the training programs in

¹⁰⁵ Historical Committee, *The Plattsburger* (New York: Winkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. 1917), 14. Obviously the author was as ill informed of his nation's history as he was of the situation in France.

¹⁰⁶ Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript "The World War As I Saw It" in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 69.

¹⁰⁷ O. O. Ellis and E. B. Garey, *The Plattsburg Manual* (New York: The Century Company, 1917), 144-151.

these camps, though the issue of instructors was more acute than in the first camps. The War Department estimated that it received approximately 70,000 applications to attend the second camps, and it ultimately selected 20,000 to attend. The second series of OTCs commissioned 17,237 new officers, with the infantrymen again accounting for over half of the total number. With the exception of 59 men commissioned as majors, the rest were all company grade officers.¹⁰⁸ The quality of the candidates in terms of education and prior military experience was close to those of the first series. It should be noted that the War Department also established a “special” OTC for African American candidates that overlapped both the first and second OTCs for white candidates. This OTC was opened at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, on 18 June 1917 and concluded on 18 October 1917.

For the applicants to the second OTCs, the War Department was a bit clearer in stating the characteristics that it was seeking in its officers. On 4 June 1917, the Adjutant General issued a memorandum directing the Departmental Commanders to establish the second series of OTCs. In the memorandum, the applicants were asked to list any previous military experience they had in the Regular Army, National Guard, college cadet corps or ROTC, civilian training camps, or with foreign armies. They were also to attest to any “mental training” they had gained from “study in educational institutions, or systematic and extensive study at home, or from constant dealing with difficult, complex, or technical problems in business or professional life,” as well as showing past evidence of “Executive Experience and Opportunities for Leadership” from their business, professional, civic or other practices that indicated the “character of

¹⁰⁸ The Cabell Report, 6-7. The camps for the second OTCs were: Plattsburg Barracks, New York (2 camps); Fort Niagara, New York; Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia (3 camps); Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana (2 camps); Fort Sheridan, Illinois (3 camps); Fort Myer, Virginia; Leon Springs, Texas (2); Presidio of San Francisco, California; and one in Hawaii. Of the 17,237 officers commissioned from the second OTCs, 59 were commissioned as majors, 1,557 as captains, 7,469 as first lieutenants, and 8,125 as second lieutenants. The break down by branch was: Infantry- 10,857, Field Artillery- 3,642, Signal Corps- 1,262, Coast Artillery- 1,001, Ordnance- 382, and Cavalry- 93.

responsibility assumed and success attained.” The army made clear that “every effort will be made to select men of exceptional character and proved ability in their various occupations,” and that, “While it is desired to give full opportunity for all eligible citizens to apply, no man need make application whose record is not in all respects above reproach and who does not possess the fundamental characteristics necessary to inspire respect and confidence.” The only major difference between the first and second camps was a slight change to the ages that the War Department was seeking in its applicants. Although the age limits remained 20 years and nine months to 44 years old, the memorandum noted, “in order to obtain the experienced class of men desired preference will be given to men over 30 years of age [with] other things being equal.”¹⁰⁹

The issue of the ideal age for company officers that the memorandum raised sparked a debate that continued throughout the war. In the planning for the third series of OTC, the Acting Chief of the War College Division, Colonel P. D. Lochridge disagreed with the Adjutant General’s earlier age preferences. He stated that “The peculiar requirements of the present warfare calls for extreme physical fitness and activity, especially on the part of officers in the grade of lieutenant and captain...It is believed that men under the age of 31 years will best meet these extreme physical requirements.”¹¹⁰ Five months later, Leonard Wood weighed in on the subject. Wood argued that,

... fifteen percent of the officers be men from thirty-one to forty-five years of age, -all of course, to be men who are physically and mentally fit. We need a percentage of older officers to give a steadying influence upon the large number of new and only partially trained men who are coming in. The troops are inexperienced and the officers are young,

¹⁰⁹ “Memorandum of Information, Officers’ Training Camps, August 27- November 26, 1917, from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, dated 4 June 1917. “Letters,...etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

¹¹⁰ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from Colonel P. D. Lochridge Acting Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Admission of civilians to the third series of training camps for officers, dated 21 November 1917” “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

inexperienced and only partially trained. A reasonable percentage of older men will have a beneficial effect.¹¹¹

Colonel Charles Miller disagreed with both the Adjutant General and Wood. In August 1918 he argued that no one over the age of 35 should be admitted to officer training due to their physical limitations, the difficulty that an older man had in “adjusting himself in the new life and surrounding,” and the fact that after 35 the individual’s, “enthusiasm and buoyancy of spirit of youth is on the wane.” He further groused that if the older candidate failed at officer training he was of little other utility to the army for he would prove “very likely to be only mediocre material for [a] non-commissioned officer.”¹¹²

All of these arguments had merit, but ultimately they were all moot. As the war went on, the pool of available officer candidates became more shallow, and the army was increasingly forced to take whatever applicants it could get. This eventually meant that the officer candidates became younger over the course of the war.

With two series of OTCs under their belts and 1917 drawing to a close, the army took few steps to change the direction of officer training as it approached its third series of camps. There were certain indicators that the training of the candidates was not as thorough as needed or intended. Hugh Scott later explained,

While these camps did not by any means provide a finished military education to fit an officer for war in the short time possible, they were the utmost that could be provided under the circumstances. Their establishment enabled the sorting out of the unfit, and an enrollment and organization. It gave an opportunity to place men in the positions which they were best fitted to fill and gave them an inkling of discipline and the life of a soldier.¹¹³

¹¹¹ “Letter to Adjutant General from MG Leonard Wood, Subject: Training camps for officers, dated 18 April 1918.” “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA RG 165, Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

¹¹² “Memorandum from Commanding Officer, Central Officers’ Training School, Camp Pike, Arkansas, to the Adjutant General, Subject: Age limits for admission to Central Officers’ Training Schools, dated 6 August 1918, in NARA RG 165 Army General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G-5 Schools, 7-52.8- 52.9, Box 201, Entry 310, “Training Schools for Officers.”

¹¹³ Hugh L. Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), 556.

Although there was much truth in Scott's admission, the army could have done a better job at focusing the tactical training of its candidates more adequately to prepare them for the challenges ahead. Unquestionably, the pace of mobilization and the systemic problems with obtaining weapons and instructors were major obstacles to officer training throughout the war. But, the training of combat leaders at the company level is not just about properly employing weapons; the most important part of their education was conditioning the mind of the leader to react quickly to unexpected situations occurring in a confused environment.

Much of the combat in small units is the execution of tactical drills designed to meet the common challenges presented by a general tactical situation. In other words, in destroying a machine gun position there were (and are) general steps that the leader should take to accomplish that mission without taking undue casualties in his unit. The key to training small unit leaders is thus to ensure that the officer or NCO understands how to identify the drill, or combinations of drills, to meet the given situation. The leaders must also be able to "think on their feet" in such a manner to adapt a drill designed to meet a general situation to the specific realities that confront them in combat. This means that the leader must make a rapid assessment of the situation, taking into consideration the terrain, the strength of the enemy, the strength of his troops, and what he must accomplish to achieve his overall mission, and then issue the proper orders to deal with the problem that confronts him.

It is clear that the army understood this process in World War I. The "estimation of the situation" had been a basic concept of the Leavenworth schools for over a decade. In fact, the schools' 1908 *Studies in Minor Tactics* was written in a manner to lead the student through the

process of tactical problem solving.¹¹⁴ Although the work focused mainly on the operations of battalion or larger units, the thought process for the leader was to be the same at all echelons. Harold Fiske even went so far as to argue that once the leader understood how to properly estimate the situation, any given tactical problem could be solved “without the conscious use of reason.”¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, little in the OTCs encouraged the candidates to achieve this near intuitive level of tactical decision-making.

It could be said that much of this failure to adequately train the candidates in rapid tactical decision-making was due to a lack of time. Both Scott and some of the candidates believed this to be the case. As John Madden, a lieutenant in the 89th Division’s 355th Infantry, admitted, “I became what we called a ninety-day wonder when I was commissioned a second lieutenant by an act of Congress. Well, it could have been by an act of God, but I was still no great military man after only ninety days.”¹¹⁶ However, the problem was not so much of a lack of time for training as it was a problem of how the OTCs utilized the time they had.

Although the press of time in the spring and summer of 1917 may have curtailed the army’s range of options for officers’ training in the first six months of the war, there was no need for it to have continued pursuing a path that so many within its ranks knew was strewn with obstacles. At the request of the War Department, the American Military Mission in France studied the French method of training officer aspirants in the early summer of 1917. In July 1917, Captain Dawson Warrington submitted a report that detailed not only what the French

¹¹⁴ John F. Morrison, et al., *Studies in Minor Tactics* (Fort Leavenworth: Army Service Schools Press, 1908), Timothy Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 90-2.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in, Major Charles E. Kilbourne, ed. *The National Service Library*, Vol. 3. *Principles of Training*, by Major Frank R. McCoy (New York: F.P. Collier and Son, 1917), 198.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in, Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance*, 375-6.

trained at the St Cyr Aspirants' School, but also their philosophy of officer training and their expectations of the skills and attributes that their army needed in their junior commanders.

What impressed Warrington the most was that the French approached officer training “as if it were a branch of business.” With an approval that would have warmed the heart of Henry Ford, Warrington enthusiastically noted, “The best training-school, now, is the one that can be described as the best factory.”¹¹⁷ He noted that the French put little stock in detailed training in the new weapons of war and were content to give their candidates only enough instruction with these tools to be “all-round competent men.” What the French did emphasize, however, was training that forced the candidate to think on their feet in times of duress, and to “develop such steadiness and resourcefulness, such independent reasoning powers, that the most unexpected circumstances cannot take them by surprise.”¹¹⁸ The French accomplished this by constantly placing the aspirants in a series of tactical leadership problems that forced them to make quick estimates of the situation they faced, and then give their units clear orders to react to the dilemma. Under the St Cyr method,

The future aspirant must be a resourceful man, not a machine acting by rule. Therefore the leader of the company or of a platoon is not told, ‘Do this,’ but is informed, ‘You are in such and such a position,’ and is asked, ‘What are you going to do?’ This keeps his mind constantly on the alert... Then the commander must go on to explain how he will utilize the ground and fight effectually. Afterwards, he is questioned as to the lessons to be retained for similar circumstances if they should reoccur... Here, then, there is a double lesson: How to get out of present trouble, and how to avoid trouble another time.¹¹⁹

In other words, the French were training their candidates in a form of “estimating the situation” that would have been readily identifiable to any prewar Leavenworth graduate.

¹¹⁷ Report submitted by CPT Dawson Warrington to BG Mark L. Hersey, Head of the American Mission to France entitled, “The New Method of Training Aspirants and Officers at St Cyr,” dated 17 July 1917, in NARA RG 120, Records of the AEF, G5 Schools- Army Candidate Schools, Box 1637, File 350, “Information in regards to schools and courses.”, 1.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 5-6.

Warrington also noted that the French cadre went to great lengths to have their maneuver training reproduce, as close as possible, the conditions and confusion of the battlefield that their charges would face in combat. They continually updated their curriculum to take advantages of the new tactical, organizational, and technological changes that had developed at the front. However, the key for the French was not only to “manage under conditions as they may develop next week or month, but furthermore to face conditions as they may develop two years hence: because the cadet’s mind has been accustomed to reasoning and to adaptability.”¹²⁰ In combat training, “The actual conditions of modern warfare are minutely reproduced, down to the explosions of shells of firing calibers, barrage fire, bombs, machine-guns, machine-rifles, rifles, and mines. Even the cartridges used are not black cartridges, having cardboard bullets which can hurt at 20 meters.” Under these conditions, he observed, “some of them struggle against the nerve-shattering effects of the smoke, the noise, the vibrations, the flying bits of earth, and I have seen them conquer fear as they would have to conquer it at the front if the lesson had not been taught them at St Cyr.”¹²¹

Unlike the pristine trenches that most American candidates trained in, Warrington observed that the terrain and trenches within the French maneuver area were pock-marked with shell holes and laced with barbed wire and other impediments to tactical movement and weapon employment. The sensory inputs that the cadets were subjected to were designed to replicate those combat realities at the front that hindered effective small unit command and control. As with the cadets’ earlier training, all along the maneuvers, the cadre grilled them on their understanding of the situation and their response to the crisis. Of the cadets, the senior instructor “demanded a clear and simple statement of what was being done, a statement which none of the

¹²⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹²¹ Ibid., 13.

men could have failed to understand, and which at the same time would have sufficed for the information of any officer who had just come up.”¹²²

Since their officer training focused more on the mental rather than the material aspects of warfare, nearly all the elements of the French training were readily able to be replicated by the Americans. So, why wasn't more made of Warrington's report? Like Alcoholics Anonymous, the first step was for the army to admit that it had a problem. However, to do so, and admit that perhaps the French had a more effective system for officer training, would also have been to call into question the professional competence of the Regular Army officer corps. The more intractable problem remained one of instructors. The French placed much more emphasis than the Americans on selecting, training, and assigning the best possible instructors to its officer schools. With the rare exception of officers such as Dwight Eisenhower, the U. S. Army never displayed a willingness to take its best and brightest officers and assign them the role of developing its officer candidates.

In addition to sorting out the issue of training officer candidates, the War Department also had to devise a system for rating and selecting the best students for commissioning. In June 1917 Dr. Walter Dill Scott, of the Bureau of Salesmanship Research of the Carnegie Institution of Technology, approached the War Department with a method for “scientifically” rating the abilities of officers and candidates. In true progressive form, the army jumped at the opportunity to replace its ostensible subjective methods with an equally ostensible objective method for sorting its aspirants. On 11 July 1917, the Adjutant General informed the Fort Meyer OTC commander of the army's desire “to work out a more careful and scientific system” for ranking

¹²² Ibid., 17.

candidates for the second OTCs and that his post had been selected to test the new method.¹²³

The ultimate result of the Fort Meyer experiment was the adoption of an Officers Qualification Card developed by Walter Scott in November 1917.¹²⁴ With some slight modification, the card would be used throughout the war as both a means of selecting candidates for commission and for commanding officers to evaluate the performance of their subordinate officers. The card listed the soldier's age, education, military experience, and previous occupations. More importantly, the card contained the senior officer's evaluation of the soldier using the five categories of the "Scott Scale": physical qualities, intelligence, leadership, personal qualities, and general value to the service. Scott used the following criteria for each of the categories...

Physical Qualities: Physique, bearing, neatness, voice, energy, endurance.
Consider how he impresses his command in these respects.

Intelligence: Accuracy, ease in learning; ability to grasp quickly the point of view of the commanding officer, to issue clear and intelligent orders, to estimate a new situation, and to arrive at a sensible decision in a crisis.

Leadership: Initiative, force, self reliance, decisiveness, tact, ability to inspire men and to command their obedience, loyalty, and cooperation.

Personal Qualities: Industry, dependability, loyalty; readiness to shoulder responsibility for his own acts; freedom from conceit and selfishness; readiness and ability to cooperate.

General Value to the Service: Professional knowledge, skill and experience; success as administrator and instructor; ability to get results.¹²⁵

While the first four categories used a scale of 3 to 15 (the higher the better), the "General Value to the Service" category was more heavily weighted and used a scale of 8 to 40. Although the

¹²³ Adjutant General's Office, *The Personnel System of the United States Army*, Vol. I, *History of the Personnel System*, 47.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 217-222.

¹²⁵ Adjutant General's Office, *The Personnel System of the United States Army*, Vol. II, *The Personnel Manual* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 261.

Scott Scale was little more objective than the ad hoc methods used by instructors in the first OTCs, at least it allowed the army to believe, in the best manner of the Progressive Era, that it had used science to achieve efficiency in its selection of officers.

Every OTC candidate was constantly under the observation of his commander and instructors. These cadre officers were continually on the lookout for any flaws in the candidate's character and abilities, as well as any violation of orders, regulations, or post policies. If they discovered one of these infractions, the cadre member noted it in the candidate's file and meted out punishment for these "skins." One candidate recalled,

"Skins" could be incurred for a great variety of errors, misdemeanors, miscalculations, mental lapses, acts of fate, and ill luck. Regardless of the cause, when a man got "skinned" he was confined to camp for the ensuing weekend; and a mark went against his name in the company commander's "little black book." Too many marks and he received an order to appear before the Benzine Board.¹²⁶

Many candidates considered this system to be too harsh and arbitrary than it needed to be, and marveled at the pettiness that the army system could produce. After one candidate had not been able to go to the firing range because he was in the post hospital, his comrades were astonished when, during the next inspection, the inspecting officer cited the man for having powder residue in his rifle even though he had never fired it.¹²⁷ Often the candidates were put off by the fact that they were charged with a violation of rules that they did not even know existed. Unfortunately, this experience also left the candidates with a skewed idea of "what right looked like" when it later came to enforcing discipline within their own units.

At some point in the candidate's schooling he appeared before the dreaded "Benzine Board." If a candidate had demonstrated a pattern of ineptness, indiscipline, or flaws in

¹²⁶ Dittmar, 71. He gave examples of a man throwing a cigarette butt on the ground and being "skinned" for "throwing litter on the company street."

¹²⁷ *The Pick*, 62.

character during the course, these boards of officers were convened to judge his fitness to continue officers' training. Gus Dittmar recalled, "No inquisition chamber in the Dark Ages ever controlled the destiny of people more completely than did the Benzine Board, as it judged the frailties and capabilities of these aspirants for commission."¹²⁸ He did note, however, that it generally was not a candidate's failure to do well in command or poor tactical knowledge that resulted in him being called before the Benzine Board; rather it was "repeated failure to react properly, physical weakness, lack of confidence, poor cooperation and slack interest, and an inability to adjust to the strange and often harsh environment" that caused a student to be boarded.¹²⁹ He went on to declare that, "Looking back from the pinnacle of fifty years later, it does appear that the Benzine Board was eminently fair, indulgent in minor shortcomings and compassionate to a degree that was never suspected" at the time."¹³⁰

At the end of the course, all candidates also went through a "Benzine Board." The graduation board was the last check of a candidate's suitability for commission and an opportunity for the cadre to test his overall military knowledge. Like much of the OTCs, the quality of these boards varied widely from post to post, cadre to cadre, and OTC series to series.¹³¹ Candidate Fred Wheeler remembered that when he appeared before the "Benzine" final examination board two of the "star" questions were, "What kind of whiskey do you prefer?" and "How many buttons are on your coat?" After those preliminary questions Wheeler described what happened next as,

Finally some officer thinks of some question; the answer to which he desires to know, states it in some new language and the candidate must reply. So he makes an attempt, usually getting by as the officer [who gave the question] chooses to conceal his ignorance. By this time every one of the other officers

¹²⁸ Dittmar, 152.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 120.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 158.

have a question not in Moss's Manual and they open "Rapid Fire" at once... some officer requests a description as to how some simple movement should be executed. It is then the duty of the candidate to give, verbatim, the paragraph from the 1925 paragraphs of the I. D. R. This they meet with approval. Occasionally, however, the senior officer will disagree and it is advisable to concede that he is right.¹³²

The candidates make clear that the graduation "Benzine Board" was one of the most stressful events in their short military careers, and a percentage of those who made it through the course had their hopes dashed for a commission in the last days of the OTC.

Notwithstanding the board's apparent arbitrariness or harshness, they served two vital roles: to weed out the incompetent and to encourage the students to do their best. Given the pace of mobilization, the first function was all important. A wartime battalion commander hailed the fact the "careful selection at the training camps" had "undoubtedly served to weed out the more defective material which presented itself for commissions."¹³³ The second function of the boards was also important. Candidate Largron recalled that when he was tempted to abandon his quest for a commission while at the Machine Gun COTS he would,

...lie on that iron cot and kill a couple of Fatima's and cuss your instructors because you're a bonehead and anyway they demand too much of you. You wonder what that little blond is doing back home, and wonder who the hell is taking her to the "Junior Prom" this year. You wonder why in the devil you ever made this stab for a commission and you recall those happy laborless carefree days spent as a "goldbrick" back at Kelly Field. In the midst of your "beefing" just after you resolved to go up to the orderly room and tell 'em to keep their commission and put you in for a transfer back to your old outfit, a little voice whispers to you "Get busy, 'boy, you got a court martial exam on Wednesday... The little voice goes on to tell you that their is going to be an inspection Saturday and unless you get busy and clean that "gat" you'll be sure to get "skinned" because of a "dirty bore," and that if you flunk those two exams, they'll have you up before the "Benzine Board" and

¹³² Edgemont W. Ruschke, ed., *Lieutie VI: Being the Chronicle of the Battle of Camp Lee as Fought by the Deathless Sixth Battalion, Central Officers' Training School, Camp Lee, Virginia* (Petersburg: Privately published, 1919), 68.

¹³³ LTC Jennings C. Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 11 (May 1920), 929.

then it'll be "good-bye shoulder straps and then what will the folks at home say?"¹³⁴

In a similar vein, Candidate Russell Frazier, of the Camp Lee COTS, half-jokingly stated that,

...we are convinced that the officers simply must be actuated by German propaganda and a desire to break our manly spirit. We are positive to-day that it will be impossible to go on; we will write to our Congressman and get out of it the best we can. We are sorry, of course, but we have overestimated our abilities. It is settled and if we can ever get time to write that letter we will get it off. Two things, however, prevent the carrying out of this resolution. In the first place we never get the time to write followed by the none to gently expressed opinion of the lieutenant on the general subject of "Quitters." The psychic intuition of those shavetails was positively uncanny, now wasn't it? The little talk on quitters always came when you were sick of it all...¹³⁵

The army undoubtedly understood the power of ego and peer pressure. The hash whip of pride and the fear of the "Benzine Boards" proved a powerful motivator for the candidates during the war.

One of the challenges of the training camps was not only to determine who would receive commissions, but also what rank the new officer would hold upon graduation. This was a particularly difficult decision in the first two OTCs because in addition to selecting company grade officers, the camps also had to select those few candidates who would be commissioned as majors and more than likely assigned to command battalions. Only a small handful of major, captain, and first lieutenant slots were available to each graduating class. At Camp Sheridan, only one captain and one first lieutenant slot was allocated to each training company. In making this determination, the instructors weighed, "Age, previous experience and training camp record." When it came to these qualifications, "age was considered of greatest importance" in

¹³⁴ Machine Gun Officers' Training School, *Four Months of Sand* (Augusta, GA: Phoenix Printing Company, 1918), 54.

¹³⁵ *Lieutie VI*, 28.

the selection of majors and captains.¹³⁶

When the selection system was properly working, the training camps seemed to have done a fair job in choosing the best candidates for commission. The whole process was described in an August 1918 report by Major William Gunn, the commander of the Camp Sherman fourth OTC. Gunn noted that his camp selected its final slate of candidates for commissioning after evaluating the soldier's scores on the Yerkes psychological test, his scores on written examinations, the results of his personal interview with the camp's senior instructor, and from the rating he received from his platoon instructor on his overall military and leadership abilities. The last was based on daily observations of the candidate by his chain of command using the "Scott Scale." Gunn maintained, "Each instructor carried at all times a book in which he made notes, from time to time, as he gained impressions of the men under his observations."¹³⁷

Gunn's mentioning of the use of the Yerkes psychological test to evaluate candidates highlights one of the fascinating aspects of the war. For the first time in human history, the U. S. Army used psychological testing on a massive scale to help classify and utilize men by their supposed mental capacity. On the very day that the United States declared war on Germany, a group of experimental psychologists met in Cambridge, Massachusetts to discuss the possible role of the new science in national defense. The driving force behind the meeting, Robert Yerkes, had also invited Captain S. B. Bowen, a Harvard ROTC instructor, to the meeting to gauge the practicality of using psychological testing as an aid in properly utilizing military manpower. The success of the meeting led the American Psychological Association to petition

¹³⁶ *History and Achievements of the Fort Sheridan Officers' Training Camps*, 235.

¹³⁷ Memorandum from, MAJ William K. Gunn, Commanding Officer, Fourth Officers' Training School, Camp Sherman, Ohio to LTC C. R. Lewis, Chief of the Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Summary of Instruction of Candidates, dated 17 August 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, NM-84, Box 186, Entry 310, "Camp Sherman, Ohio Fourth Officers' Training School Summary of Instruction of Candidates."

the Army Surgeon General to adopt the psychological testing of men mobilized for the war by the War Department. After months of debate within the military and the continued refinement of the examination plan, on 24 August 1917, Secretary Baker gave permission to hire or commission psychologists to finalize the test and to conduct experimental evaluations of officers and enlisted men at Camps Devens, Dix, Lee, and Taylor. Yerkes was given a direct commission to major and four weeks of testing to demonstrate the viability of his plan.¹³⁸

Despite initial skepticism, the Regular Army officers at the posts conducting the experiment warmly embraced the psychological tests and sent glowing reports to the War Department encouraging it to expand the program army wide. In many ways it is no surprise that Yerkes' psychological testing gained such an enthusiastic response in what was generally a conservative regular officer corps. The new science was a reflection of the Progressive Era spirit. It allowed the army to use science to help solve some of the pressing problems of society, in this case the mobilization of wartime manpower. The tests promised to replace subjectivity with objectivity in the quest for the great "holy grail" of the Progressivism: *efficiency*. With Yerkes, "Taylorism" came to the army.

During the Second World War, George C. Marshall ruefully noted that in peacetime you have all of the time in the world and none of the money, and in wartime you have all the money in the world and none of the time. This observation was certainly borne out in the summer and fall of 1917. The army was out of time and beset with the pressing need to rapidly "pigeon hole" its legion of new soldiers into the most efficient positions that they could fill. The mental tests seemed to address that need. The commander of Camp Lee's 80th Division, Major General Adelbert Cronkhite, was so smitten by the idea that the psychologists could easily and

¹³⁸ Robert M. Yerkes, "Psychological Examining in the United States Army," in *Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. XV (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 7-12.

scientifically allow him to solve complex personnel problems such as selecting NCOs and officer candidates, that on 26 October 1917 he informed his command that since the exams “are virtually conclusive,” “intelligence testing will play a great role in this division.”¹³⁹

The army also accepted psychological testing because it seemed to confirm the correctness of all of the officer corps’ Social Darwinist prejudices and assumptions about race, character, education, and “native intelligence.” Time and time again, officers scored much higher than enlisted men on the tests. The first wide spread testing of officers was conducted at Camp Lee in the fall of 1917. Of the 1,116 officers tested, 44 percent scored in the “A” or most intelligent category, 32 percent scored in the “B” or superior category, and only 24 percent scored in the “C” or average category.¹⁴⁰ The 76 percent of officers scoring in the “A-B” range was much higher than those scoring in that range from the ranks of the NCOs and privates.

The results seemed incontrovertible; the army had done a fine job of selecting the “right men” to serve as its officers from the first OTCs. If this were true, then the officer corps’ assumptions about the proper education, class, and character needed for leadership must also be valid. As one officer noted, “The results of the psychological tests are fully borne out by actual observations of the abilities and capacity of various officers in the performance of duties assigned them.”¹⁴¹

The Regular Army officers of units mobilizing across the country were quick to grasp the utility of using the mental tests as a means of selecting men for officers’ training. One went so far as to maintain, “It is doubtful whether applicants should be admitted to school who have not, according to the psychological examinations, made a score equivalent to “high average”

¹³⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 21-3.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in, Clarence Yoakum and Robert Yerkes, *Army Mental Tests* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 13.

intelligence (C+).”¹⁴² Another camp commander revealed that in addition to an evaluation of their personal bearing, military knowledge, and physical abilities, applicants for officers’ training in his unit were also given mental tests. He noted that, “If they do not rate A or B in this examination they are rejected.”¹⁴³

This practice of using the psychological examinations as a deciding factor in the selection of officer candidates was so wide-spread, that on 14 August 1918, the War Department issued General Order 74 encouraging commanders to use the tests only as “assisting guides” in their selection boards and also mandated that, “No particular psychological rating shall be declared as a minimum to be attained by any such candidates.”¹⁴⁴ However, this stricture did not keep unit commanders from continuing to place great weight on the mental tests as a tool for weeding out officer candidates. As late as the fall of 1918, the commander of Camp Lewis, Washington reported,

One of the most important services [of the exams] has been to assist in selecting candidates for the officers’ training schools. It was demonstrated that a certain minimum of intelligence was essential to success in the training school, and that candidates failing to reach a given psychological rating failed to receive commissions. Approximately 17 per cent of candidates of the fourth officers’ training school were thus eliminated by purely objective standards with considerable saving to the army.¹⁴⁵

The psychological tests revealed some interesting data on the Army’s officer corps and candidates. Engineer officers performed the best on the examinations with 67.3 percent of its members scoring in the “A” range, and 90.2 percent of its total numbers scoring in the “A-B” range. Artillery officers came in second in highest intelligence, followed by sanitary corps officers and signal corps officers. Machine gun and infantry officers rated in the mid-range of

¹⁴² Ibid., 14.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴⁴ General Order 74, 14 August 1918., Yerkes, “Psychological Examining,” 115.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Yerkes, “Psychological Examining,” 108.

scores for all army officers. For example, 47.1 percent of infantry officers scored in the “A” range, and over 80 percent of the total infantrymen fell in the “A-B” range. The lowest scores for officers were garnered by medical doctors, dentists, and veterinarians. Over 57 percent of veterinarians scored in the “C” range and only 18.5 percent scored in the “A” range. In fact, veterinarians scored lower than the enlisted men in field signal battalions; the branch with the highest intelligence rating of all enlisted personnel.¹⁴⁶

The tests also followed a pattern where test scores all fell out according to rank. In other words, majors scored higher than captains, who in turn scored higher than lieutenants, and so on. Yerkes claimed that this progressive steps in scores based on ranks had nothing to do with education. To prove his point he compared officers with the equivalent of an eight grade education to “native born white recruits of high school and college education.” The end result was that the under educated officers still did slightly better on their intelligence tests than did their more highly educated enlisted soldiers. Yerkes made no real effort to explain this phenomenon other than to assert that, “It is evident that the examination is measuring other qualities, in which officers stand above recruits, to a greater extent than is measuring education.”¹⁴⁷ Although this might invalidate the army’s preference for college educated officers, it could still use these figures as proof that it was a democratic institution where natural talent allowed everyone to rise to their fullest extent.

Psychological testing of officer candidates in the winter and spring of 1918 also showed a trend in regional demographics. The testing of candidates training in the 21 camps of the third OTC series revealed that candidates in camps located in the northeast and the Great Lakes states scored higher than those in the deep South, Texas, and the Mid-West. The highest scoring OTC

¹⁴⁶ Yerkes, “Psychological Examining,” 518 and 521., *Army Mental Tests*, 36-7.

¹⁴⁷ Yerkes, “Psychological Examining,” 779.

was at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, while the lowest was in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. Yerkes noted in passing this regional variation, but again, made no effort to explain the phenomena. Since the OTCs tended to draw their candidates from the immediate region, and Yerkes had ruled out an education-based determinism in his psychological tests, the unstated conclusion seemed evident; northerners were generally more intelligent than southerners or mid-westerners.¹⁴⁸

Of course the greatest problems with Yerkes' psychological tests were that they were culturally biased and, contrary to his assertions, dependent on a degree of general education to correctly answer the questions. The testing consisted of a battery of eight different exams each focusing on a different intellectual skill. Test Two, for example asked the student to answer mathematic word problems such as, "A certain division contains 3,000 artillery, 15,000 infantry, and 1,000 cavalry. If each branch is expanded proportionally until there are in all 20,900 men, how many will be added to the artillery?" This problem would have required both an understanding of mathematics and of the concepts of ratios and proportionality. Test Four asked the examinee to establish whether two words were synonyms or antonyms. Examples included, "vesper-matins," aphorism-maxim, and "encomium-eulogy." Again, the student had to have a well developed vocabulary to score well on these questions. The most culturally skewed of the tests was Test Eight. This test assessed the examinee's ability to recall facts. Questions drawn from one version of these tests included,

The **Wyandotte** is a kind of **horse fowl cattle granite**
"**Hasn't scratched yet**" is used in advertising a **duster flour brush cleanser**
Rosa Bonheur is famous as a **poet painter composer sculptor**
The **bassoon** is used in **music stenography book-binding lithography**
The number of a **Zulu's** legs is **two four six eight**
The **scimitar** is a kind of **musket cannon pistol sword**

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 521-7, 863., *Army Mental Tests*, 36.

The **Knight engine** is used in the **Packard Lozier Sterns Pierce Arrow**
The author of “**The Raven**” is **Stevenson Kipling Hawthorne Poe**
Isaac Pitman was most famous in **physics shorthand railroading electricity**
The **ampere** is used in measuring **wind power electricity water power**
rainfall¹⁴⁹

Given the quality of schools in the South and parts of the west, it is little wonder that some officer candidates and soldiers had trouble answering these questions. Despite its inherent flaws, the psychological tests served a valuable purpose; knowingly or not, it rewarded white, educated, middle and upper class men; men who mirrored the characteristics, and perhaps the social outlooks of, the West Point graduate; men who the army had long stated were their ideal pool of officer candidates.

The candidates themselves seemed rather bemused by the whole process of physiological testing. One candidate at the Machine Gun COTS remembered the red letter day when, “The company easily qualifies in the nut exams, the members showing a high order of intelligence by answering such questions as, ‘How many legs has a Papuan?’”¹⁵⁰ Another wrote in 1918,

For most of us the army psychological examination was the first and only such amusement we have ever had. We distinctly remember, at the officers’ signal how we glanced at the long sheets of questions with foolish interrogations, and how we romped through the examination with a sneaking feeling that we were playing in the kindergarten.¹⁵¹

Playing in the kindergarten or not, the army certainly took the tests seriously, and used them, to an extent, as another scientific means of classifying, typifying, and sanctifying their selection of officers.

Looking back on 1917, the War Department could claim some notable accomplishments in its creation of an officer cadre for its rapidly expanding divisions. The first two series of

¹⁴⁹ *Army Mental Tests*, 207, 211, 218-219., Coffman, *The War To End All Wars*, 59-61.

¹⁵⁰ *Four Months of Sand*, 37.

¹⁵¹ *Lieut VI*, 53.

OTCs had commissioned 44,578 new officers. Given the fact that the army began the war with only 17,000 Regular Army, National Guard and Reserve officers (and many of these had less than a year in service), the OTCs had accomplished a prodigious feat. The army's desire for college men and business leaders for its candidates meant that the overall graduates of the training camps were some of the best educated and motivated officers that the nation had ever been able to commission at the beginning of its wars. Moreover, it can be stated that the army's insistence that all new officers for the National Army have at least three months of standardized (in theory) instruction before commissioning meant that the new officers of 1917 were also better trained than the wartime volunteer officers of any previous American conflict. It is clear that the army endeavored to establish a rigorous system for selecting and evaluating its officer candidates; to the point of turning to the new science of psychology to evaluate their intelligence and mental capacities.

Despite all these accomplishments, however, in the training of these officers, the devil was in the details. Due to shortages of instructors, equipment, and facilities, the training at the OTCs never reached the degree of standardization that the War Department expected. The training itself was too mired in obsolete prewar doctrine and unrealistic views and assumptions about modern war to accurately and adequately prepare the candidates for the tactical trials that laid before them. As these new officers were to be the primary teachers of the wartime legions, this fundamental flaw in their training was redoubled in the tactical instruction of their later units. Given the fact that OTC graduates made up the bulk of the junior officers in the wartime Regular Army, National Guard, and National Army divisions, few units escaped this elemental problem. Unfortunately, the officer training situation only grew worse in 1918.

Chapter 7

“By Improvised and Uncoordinated Means” Officer Selection and Training in 1918

In his annual report to Congress for 1918, Chief of Staff Peyton March accurately noted that the army’s efforts to build a wartime cadre of officers was accomplished only “by improvised and uncoordinated means.”¹ Creating the first OTCs had been a monumental undertaking, and despite their great inadequacies in training, still generally succeeded in bringing to the army a high quality of human material to serve as its new officers. But why did officer training in 1918 continue to operate under the “improvised and uncoordinated means” that March so lamented? This chapter will examine this question by discussing how and why the training of officer candidates, and the men selected for this training, changed between 1917 and 1918. As with the previous chapter, this one will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the army’s training plan for preparing its junior leaders to meet the challenges they would face on the Western Front.

Although some within the Regular Army expressed concern over the training given at the OTCs, most of the regular officer corps seemed to have been either content with the system or resigned to the fact that there were no other viable options open to the War Department. With the army generally satisfied with, reconciled to, or perhaps blissfully ignorant of, the outcomes of the first OTCs, it is no surprise that the third series of OTCs (5 January- 19 April 1918) ushered in only a few minor changes to officer training. Under the continued demand for more officers, the War Department expanded the camps from 16 to 24 schools, with 22 of them now being located at posts where National Army or National Guard divisions were mobilizing or training. The army also opened smaller schools in Hawaii, the Philippines, and the Panama Canal Zone.

¹ War Department, *Annual Report for 1918* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 268.

Other changes to the camps included giving preference for selection to attend the camps to enlisted soldiers, and limiting all commissions granted at the camps' conclusion to company-grade ranks. The only change to the camps' training regimen was to extend the courses by two additional weeks to give the candidates instruction in "Army paper work and company administration."² The army made no material change to the existing OTC plan for tactical training.

The army's desire to admit more enlisted men to OTCs ultimately led to 90 percent of the camps' candidates coming from the ranks. There were also further changes to the requirements and obligations of the candidates entering the camps directly from civilian life. These men could be no older than 32 (rather than 40 for the enlisted candidates) and were now required to enlist in the army as a precondition for admission. The later change had been pushed by Adjutant General McCain as a way of managing the cost of the camps. McCain argued that while the first training camps were successful, they were also expensive. In December 1917, he recommended forcing all candidates to first enlist in the army, because, "camps composed of enlisted men bring practically no expenses additional to those of the normal expenses of training enlisted men."³ While the candidates from the ranks continued to be paid based on the enlisted rank they held prior to entering the camp (i.e. a candidate who was a sergeant continued to be paid as a sergeant while at OTC), the candidates from civil life were now only paid as privates first class (approximately \$33 a month) rather than the \$100 a month stipend enjoyed by previous civilian

² Report from Colonel Henry C. Cabell, Chief, Appointments Section, Adjutant General's Office, to The Adjutant General of the Army, Subject: Report of line officers' training schools from the declaration of war to the discontinuance of schools," dated 28 February 1919, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Section, G5 Schools, 7-52.8-52.9, Box 201, NM-84, Entry 310. (Hereafter The Cabell Report.), 9.

³ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, Subject: Proposed changes in plans for the Third Training Camps, dated 20 December 1917" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

candidates. Also, if the civilian candidate failed to be commissioned, he was required to serve the rest of his term as an enlisted man.⁴

The third OTCs eventually graduated 11,659 candidates: 8,165 in the Infantry, 3,347 in Field Artillery, and 147 in the Cavalry. The War Department originally intended that only a small number of the graduates from the third OTCs would be commissioned immediately. The rest would constitute a reserve pool of trained personnel who would be commissioned as needed when officer slots opened due to casualties, other attrition, or the continued expansion of the army. Until such time as these men were needed, they would return to their units to serve as NCOs. Unfortunately, unforeseen officer losses in the spring of 1918 forced the War Department to commission all of the third OTCs' graduates on 29 May 1918. This left the army with no ready reserve of soldiers qualified for immediate commissioning if the need arose.⁵

As the third OTCs witnessed the first large influx of enlisted men into officer training, there were also some changes to the levels of education, military experience, occupation, and social class of these candidates from that of the first two series. Although it is too limited of a source to draw too many conclusions from, the available evidence from the candidates from the third series OTC at Camp Devens, Massachusetts illustrates some of these changes. The Camp Devens class began with 716 candidates. This number dropped to 625 by the end of March 1918. Of the 91 losses, 31 had accepted commissions in the Engineer and Tank Corps, two had transferred to aviation and Ordnance commissioning schools, and 56 had resigned or failed out of the course.

Due to the preference given to enlisted men for the third OTCs, over 78 percent of the candidates at Camp Devens had prior service in wartime units, with most coming from the 76th

⁴ The Cabell Report, 9. Enlisted men who entered the OTCs as privates were paid as privates first class during the course.

⁵ Ibid.

Division then also training at the camp. One should not make too much of this military experience. Few of these soldiers had been in the army more than a few months, and much of their training had been limited to the School of the Soldier. The remaining 21.3 percent of the candidates were students drawn from local New England colleges and universities. The average age of the candidates was 25, at least two or more years younger than those of the Fort Sheridan sample.

Unfortunately, the education and occupations that the Camp Devens candidates listed in their graduation book were not nearly as detailed as those given at Fort Sheridan. If the available Camp Devens' statistics are representative of other of the third OTCs, the statistics do suggest a steep decline in the education levels of the candidates. Only one of the four companies in the graduate book listed the education levels of its members. The first company stated that 69 (46%) of its 150 candidates had some level of college education; 65 (43.3%) had graduated from high school or preparatory school, and 16 (10.7%) had only a grade school education. If one combines the number of college students, teachers, engineers, lawyers, and professionals for all of the OTC's companies (see Table 7-1), it is a safe inference that at least 38 percent of the all of the candidates had some degree of higher education.⁶ Since the "business" category was so vague, it is impossible to make even the barest guess as to the social class of the Camp Devens students.

Table 7-1: Occupations of Camp Devens Third OTC Candidates

Student- 152 (21.3%)	Farmer- 28 (3.9%)	Not given- 98 (13.6%)
Engineer- 48 (6.7%)	Lawyer- 7 (1%)	
Teacher- 31 (4.3%)	RA Enlisted - 2 (.02%)	
Professional- 31 (4.3%)	Business- not specified as to type- 319 (44.5%)	

⁶ Statistical information drawn from, Fort Devens OTC Yearbook Committee, *The Pick: 3rd O.T.C., Camp Devens, Mass* (Boston: George H. Dean, 1918), 10, 12, 16, 22, 27.

The changing demographics of the OTC candidates illustrate the personnel challenges that the army faced during the war. These statistics in no way suggest that the army was repudiating its long standing preference for college educated officers. In fact, soon after the graduation of the second OTCs, Colonel P. D. Lochridge expressed his belief to the Chief of Staff that, “In the present crisis the best material for officers should be sought from all colleges and representation not limited to those colleges in which military training has been given.”⁷ However, Lochridge also admitted that college graduates were a finite resource and the army would have to be content with the stop-gap measure of sending the best qualified enlisted men to the OTCs.

The commissioning of enlisted men proved to be a double-edged sword. The army had to balance the perceived military experience of the enlisted candidate against the need to have men with the mental training gained from a college education that enhanced their ability to cope with changing circumstances and new knowledge. The army, as an institution, also had to match itself to the expectations of the larger American society. The elitism of education had to compete with the national expectations of equality of opportunity.

Throughout the war, many regular officers claimed that entry into the officer corps was based on merit and natural talent. Eisenhower stated that “In our Army, it was thought that every private had at least a second lieutenant’s gold bars somewhere in him and he was helped and encouraged to earn them.”⁸ Lochridge’s replacement as the Chief of the War College Division, Brigadier General Lytle Brown, went so far as to argue in July 1918 that, “It is true that a college education is an advantage, but many men have made good officers who have not had

⁷ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from Colonel P. D. Lochridge Acting Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Admission of civilians to the third series of training camps for officers, dated 21 November 1917,” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 141.

college education, and it is believed that in the democratic army we are building up under our draft system every man should at least be given the chance, whether he has been so fortunate as to be a college graduate, or has attended only two years of college, or obtained a fair education in some other way.”⁹ The desire for college men had to coexist with the idea that every white American citizen in the ranks carried a field marshal’s baton in his knapsack, or at least a pair of lieutenant’s bars in his pocket.

The belief that the wartime force was a vast democratic army was also held by some of the candidates themselves. Russell Frazier, a student at the Camp Lee COTS in the fall of 1918, recalled,

...as we help that Pennsylvania coal miner with the slope scale, he forgets his labor union and his animosity for the Plute [plutocrat]. Over in the other corner the son of a United States Senator and a former carpenter are stretched out on one bunk telling of their future hopes and fears. All are dressed alike, the snobbery of the first days are gone and all is harmony. We are a little puzzled as we look over this peaceful scene and then the great light breaks; “Gosh!” we fairly shout, “this is what is meant by Democracy, this is what we are going to fight for.”¹⁰

In Frazier’s vision was the stated hope of the prewar progressive UMT advocates: that military service would “Americanize” the nation and bank the fires of class warfare. It is clear that a democratization of the officer corps did occur to some extent during the war, but, this was due much more to the ever-gnawing need for junior officers than from any high minded commitment to equality of opportunity. By the end of the war the army would prove itself more than willing to change its age standards to get men with some college education than to continue down the path of the democratization of the officer corps.

⁹ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Lytle Brown, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Suggestions concerning the use of well educated enlisted men, dated 17 July 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁰ Edgemont W. Ruschke, ed., *Lieutie VI: Being the Chronicle of the Battle of Camp Lee as Fought by the Deathless Sixth Battalion, Central Officers’ Training School, Camp Lee, Virginia* (Petersburg: Privately published, 1919), 28.

Although the army wanted college educated officers, the decision to commission NCOs was not unexpected. As noted in previous chapters, the army had long intended to commission a number of regular NCOs upon mobilization. On 1 May 1917, the Adjutant General placed these plans into effect by notifying the Departmental commanders to activate the commissions of all enlisted men who have previously passed the examination for becoming reserve officers and to bring them into active service on 8 May 1917. Adjutant General McCain reminded the department commanders that since the “need for expansion of military forces is urgent,” they must ensure that the commissioned enlisted men must, “take over legitimate duties of an officer.”¹¹ The commissioning of regular NCOs quickly expanded beyond just those who had taken the officer examination.

In the spring of 1917, the regular sergeant Sam Woodfill was still serving with his unit on the Mexican border. When the war broke out, Woodfill recalled that, “all of us old rookies had visions of being rushed to the firing line,” and that “they’d shoot us across on the next boat.” Woodfill and his comrades soon found out that, “they needed officers and, although we were typical old-time non-coms of the regulation buck private breed, they shot us over to San Antonio for a couple of months’ training and then gave us temporary commissions.” He approved of the fact that “most of the top sergeants in our crowd blossomed forth as captains.” He believed that this rapid rise was justified due to the fact that “they had been as good as captains for years, because during the frequent absences of their company commanders they had run the outfit.”¹² It is interesting to note that despite Woodfill having nearly 20 years of service in the regulars, the army still sent him through an OTC before granting him a commission.

¹¹ Telegram from Adjutant General to Commanding General of All Departments and Staff Corps and Departments, dated 1 May 1917, in *Special Regulations No. 49: Training Camps for Reserve Officers and Candidates for Appointment As Such, May 15- August 11, 1917*, 29-30.

¹² Lowell Thomas, *Woodfill of the Regulars* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1929), 219.

Although Woodfill would be touted by Pershing as the AEF's finest soldier, not all of the enlisted men admitted to the officer corps did as well as he. Comments by some OTC students and cadre members suggest that there were some tensions between the old regulars and the other candidates. Of the regular soldiers attending the Leon Springs OTC with him, Gus Dittmar noted that the old timers brought both experience and humor. Unfortunately,

The humor that they contributed was unintentional, resulting mainly from their volatile language, lack of imagination, and close conformity to the "old army" thinking and habits. They didn't understand this upstart group of civilians who expected to become officers in three months. Their background and years of experience convinced them that this was in the realm of impossibility. They took pride in being tough and rode these new type soldiers as hard as the company commander would permit. Strangely, this conduct never seemed to have the effect on the ridden that the rider expected. This is because they had a much better understanding of the "old regular" than he did of them. They appreciated his knowledge of the fundamentals, sympathized with his effort to gain a commissioned status and, except in a few instances, looked upon him with a casual, objective affection.¹³

In 1918 another candidate penned this ditty poking fun at the supposed superiority of the long service regular NCO going through officers' training...

The Old and the New

He's been in the service for sixteen years,
And he's spent all his days shooting blanks.
At blowing he really has not any peer,
And he's spent all his life in the ranks.

We marched one day to the P. T. field,
And the C. O. called his name.
The shock of the thing made the old boy reel,
But he tottered out just the same.

He tried his best to lead that bunch,
But he lost his poise and grace.
He knew how to act in ranks and at lunch,
But in front he was out of place.

He warbled commands in a dizzy way,

¹³ Gus Dittmar, *They Were First* (Austin: Steck- Warlick Company, 1969), 77.

And shifted from foot to foot.
He talked a lot with nothing to say,
For his mind was not stay put.

“Enough of this,” bawled the O. in C.,
“Next rookie take command!”
A two-months veteran jumped with glee;
To hear this reprimand.

He stepped out front with a vim and snap-
“Attention!” clear and cold.
And he drilled that bunch from the bell’s first tap,
Like a banker counting gold.¹⁴

Another candidate-poet lampooned the regulars’ gruff manners, worldliness, and constant criticism of the new men’s greenness. In his poem “In a Regular Outfit” the new soldier mimicked the old by noting,

Ever heard the expression, men,
‘Bout the ghastly deeds o’ war?
“Why this school here aint nuthin’, men
‘Cordin’ to things that have gone befor.”

“Have you ever been in Panama,
Wheer the sun is hot as ‘ell?
Why men ya don’t know what grief is,
Now, I’m right here to tell.

Why you poor dubs from civilian life
Aint never roughed a bit.
Ya don’t know grief as it really is
In a regular outfit.

Why some o’ you men with your pink tea ways,
That cross yer legs when ya sit;
Would last as long as a row o’ pies,
In a regular outfit.¹⁵

Perhaps the traditional jaundiced American view of the regular enlisted soldier was simply too great for many of the college men to overcome. But, if these sentiments were common, then

¹⁴ Machine Gun Officers’ Training School, *Four Months of Sand* (Augusta, GA: Phoenix Printing Company, 1918), 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

Frazier's barracks room utopia was far from a success.

The college men were not the only ones with patronizing views of the regular soldiers. Regular officers sometimes showed their own prejudices, especially when enlisted men failed to make it through officers' training. One officers' training school commandant disapprovingly noted,

Among the men from the old Regular service there was a large proportion that seemed to have studied but little, outside their military subjects; these men had a hard time with the course and at times seemed to feel they were at a disadvantage, and they were,- the fault was their own; they had never studied when they were young and when called upon for some elementary knowledge requiring figuring, elementary geometry, etc, [they] floundered hopelessly.¹⁶

Officers' training was perhaps less of a democratic meritocracy and more of a Darwinian jungle where the regular officers believed that the jumped-up enlisted men were out of their depths and, all-too-often, destined to fail. This attitude can also be seen in what became of many of the NCOs commissioned during the war after the Armistice. While Lucian Truscott, an officer with a bit of education and no overseas service, retained his commission after the war, the uneducated Medal of Honor winning Sam Woodfill reverted back to being an NCO so as to not lose his pension.

If the college men sometimes held condescending views of the enlisted men, the old regulars also seemed to hold some rather pointed views of the young civilians that filled the OTCs. Dittmar noted that the gullibility of the new men was an endless source of mirth and disgust for the regular NCOs attending the course or assigned to the camp. After one candidate repeated a rumor that the camp was oversubscribed and the determination on who would stay would be based on the candidate drawing a white or black bean from a hat, a grizzled first

¹⁶ "Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 15 November 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

sergeant responded that if it were true, “it’ll be the first time I ever knew a quartermaster to waste a mess of beans.”¹⁷ After another sergeant heard a group of candidates violently debating the origin of the word “latrine,” and concluding that it came from the Latin *lavatrina*, it was more than the regular could take. The NCO noted with disgust, “that building over there is a latrine and not a damn thing else. What makes you young fellows want (sic) put lace drawers on everything?” At the end of the discussion he simply concluded “This damn army is goin’ to plumb hell.”¹⁸ Given the qualifications and training of many of the new officers, perhaps the old sergeant was right.

Whatever the attitudes and prejudices of the various “tribes” in the OTCs, the inclusion of enlisted men in officers’ training presented as many problems as it solved. In selecting enlisted men for officers’ training, the army had to balance the need of retaining good NCOs in its units with the equally pressing need for building a corps of competent junior officers. Throughout the war, the army chose to err on the side of producing officers over retaining good NCOs. On 21 November 1917, Lochridge airily dismissed complaints from field commanders that the War Department’s evolving OTC attendance policies were denuding their units of good soldiers by noting, “The withdrawal of several of the best noncommissioned officers from the companies at the end of the training period will, for the time being, weaken them, but companies must expect to make preparation in advance for the loss of their best men. Part of the duty of the company commander must be the development of officer material in the company.”¹⁹ This

¹⁷ Dittmar, 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁹ “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from Colonel P. D. Lochridge Acting Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Admission of civilians to the third series of training camps for officers, dated 21 November 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

cavalier attitude toward the NCO corps would later have a major impact on the cohesion and effectiveness of the AEF's small units.

Although the third OTCs witnessed the first large influx of enlisted men into officers' training, other aspects of the camps were far less novel. The problem of finding qualified instructors, for example, remained intractable. Following a trend that had begun with the second OTCs, as the regular officer instructors were posted to new assignments, their billets for the third series of camps were being filled by newly commissioned officers with less experience. Of the 21 instructors (out of 22) of the Third OTC at Camp Devens who listed their commissioning sources, two were reserve officers who were commissioned after attending the 1916 Plattsburg camp, 14 were commissioned by the first OTC, three were commissioned by the second OTC, one was a National Guard officer, and one was a Regular NCO commissioned for war service. Sixteen of the instructors had some degree of college education. Half of the instructors also had some level of prewar military experience. Four of the instructors had served in the prewar regulars, with one, John Schweitzer, having served over 18 years in the ranks as an infantry NCO. Seven more had served as enlisted men in the National Guard, but all for less than six years.²⁰ Camp Devens was actually fortunate to have even this amount of military experience in its instructors. The instructors in many other camps were far less seasoned. However, the fact remained that none of the Camp Devens instructors had been officers for more than 15 to 18 months when they began training the camp's candidates.

In addition to continuing problems with instructors, the third OTCs also faced other challenges. Shortages of equipment, especially in machine guns and the new weapons of trench warfare, continued to limit hands-on training. Even the weather seemed to be against the army. The winter of 1917-1918 was exceptionally cold. Even training camps in the deep South saw

²⁰ *The Pick*, 12,16, 21, 26, 30.

accumulations of snow and frigid temperatures that played havoc with the OTCs' training schedules. The harsh weather conditions at Camp Devens led one candidate to recall,

Although our drilling was confined for the most part to the Eighth Brigade drill field, we have tasted of the ice-clad fields of the Yukon, the windswept plains of Siberia, and the mud-flats of Flanders, all on the same drill field, for nothing but a winter at Camp Devens could afford such varied weather. Probably the most dangerous maneuver that was attempted during the entire course was a sudden halt on the ice of the drill field.²¹

In the end, weather, the continued adherence to obsolete doctrine, and the shortages of qualified instructors and equipment all combined to make the third OTCs as ineffective at preparing their graduates to face the realities of combat as had the first two series of camps.

Despite the thousands of new officers commissioned by the first three OTCs, the expanding army's thirst for leaders was insatiable. In April 1918, the War Department directed the commanders of the 24 divisions then training in the United States to each establish an OTC at their posts to provide officers for their units and to serve as a general reserve for all other officer vacancies in the army as a whole. This fourth series of OTCs was scheduled to run from 15 May to 1 September 1918. To fill the camps, the War Department required that all divisions and non-divisional units or organizations (excluding the Coast Artillery) stationed in the United States provide a quota of two percent of their total enlisted strength to attend officers' training. The total enrollment at the schools was 13,114, almost all of whom came from the enlisted ranks. As before, those civilians selected to attend the camps had to first enlist in the army.²²

The War Department hoped to address some of the previous shortcoming in officers' training by adding new classes or adjusting the time devoted to certain subjects in the fourth OTCs. For example, the training time for infantry officer candidates expanded from 625 ½ hours of instruction in the third OTCs to 718 hours of training in the fourth OTCs. Unfortunately,

²¹ Ibid., 19.

²² The Cabell Report, 9110.

much of these additional hours came from expanding the candidates' study time and from adding classes on "practical administration:" paperwork, company supply and mess hall management. Although there was some effort to make the tactical training more focused, "hands on," and realistic, the overall amount of time devoted to minor tactics remained largely unchanged from the previous OTCs. The changes made to tactical training were little more than the reallocation of time from one subject to another. Thus, while the first two OTCs devoted 84 hours to trench warfare (to include 60 hours of maneuvers), by the fourth series OTCs, the candidates were spending 106 hours studying trench construction, weapons, and tactics.²³

The tactical training that the fourth series OTC candidates received remained problematic. Notwithstanding the War Department's best efforts to improve instruction within the camps, local commanders continued to deviate from the standard training plan due to local conditions and shortages or their own tactical proclivities. Ironically, the War Department had actually exacerbated the problem of standardization by making officers' training the responsibility of the division commanders. For better or worse, the individual division commander's personal interest in his OTC often determined the training that the camp followed. Given the systemic problems of raising and training the larger division, many commanders seemed to have followed the path of least resistance in their OTCs. This often meant that close order drill and bayonet practice continued to occupy far too much of the candidates' time. This is evident in a parody of the trench song, "Drunk Last Night" penned by a Camp Dodge candidate,

We drilled last week and we drilled the week before,
We're going to drill next week like we never drilled before;
For when we drill we're as awkward as can be,

²³ "Advance Extract Copy of Program of Training for Training Camps for Candidates for Commission in the Army of the United States, May 15 to August 31, 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

I don't see how the hell they'll make an officer out of me.
Glorious, glorious, the Depot Brigade for the four of us.
Glory be to God that there are some more of us,
So the four of us won't be there all alone.²⁴

Another Camp Dodge student wrote, "We were trained in handling the bayonet until it seemed a part of us."²⁵

The War Department and some division commanders did attempt to make the training of the candidates more realistic and up to date by using the latest tactics used by the Allies. A few of the third OTCs had also experimented with the new tactics in April 1918. Regrettably, these efforts do not seem to have met with much success. With the advent of the "new 2-line formations" that were to replace the old skirmish lines of the *IDR*, one of the candidates acidly observed, "If you don't understand the new formation, ask your officers about it; they don't either." He also noted that under the latest system, "We have two lines of skirmishers in the new formation. This is to prevent one-half of the platoon from finding out what the other half does not comprehend."²⁶ At Camp Dodge, another candidate recalled the confusion that resulted from the French instructor, Captain Pourchot, and his efforts to teach his company the French Army's latest tactical formations for the platoon in the attack.

No responsibility, no thought of where you are supposed to go, and not bothered by the dogmatic rules of the I.D.R. When the command "Columns of half platoons" is sounded, just close your eyes, hang your rifle on the nearest ear of your squad mate and move until halted by some old veteran sergeant of six months. Now wait patiently at "rest" or argue furiously with the man next to you in regard to the objective (neither one of you will know it, it's always a secret) until you hear someone say, "Line of combat groups," when you take a swig from your canteen, resume the action used in the first actions used in the first accident, when you formed half platoons, and wade promiscuously through the woods until halted...After having enjoyed a short nap, you are rudely aroused by the command, "As Skirmishers March," at which time you

²⁴ Carl Wilhelm et al, *Pass in Review: The Book of the Fourth Officers' Training School, Camp Dodge, Iowa, 1918* (Camp Dodge: Privately Published, 1918), 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁶ *The Pick*, 86.

get up, take another swig from your canteen, and run to the front, any front will do just so long as you are five paces from somebody...Now you are in battle formation. Not only is it battle formation, but it was also a battle to get it. You are now ready to advance on the enemy and should be able to inflict fifty thousand casualties without sustaining a single one yourself.²⁷

Although these observations were made for amusement, it is clear that the instructors were unsuccessful at explaining the underlying concepts upon which these tactics were based, and the candidates merely went through the motions of the maneuvers rather than truly accepting them. Despite its obsolescence, the *IDR* remained the paramount doctrine at the OTCs if for no other reason than it was relatively simple in concept, execution, and in its expectations of junior leaders.

By the time that the fourth series OTCs began training, the United States had been in the war for a year. Some regular officers believed that the army's policy of filling the camps with enlisted men had caused a decrease in the quality of its officer candidates. After an inspection of the fourth series Engineer OTC at Camp Lee, Virginia, General Lytle Brown concluded that "the qualifications of the students at this camp are far below the standard previously maintained at other Reserve Officers' Training Camps." He placed the blame for the inclusion of "undesirable men" at the OTC at the feet of division commanders and their subordinates for failing to properly screen applicants for commission.²⁸

An examination of the candidates of the Camp Sherman fourth series OTC provides a glimpse into the changes and continuities in demographics of the officer candidate population and a way to test the validity of Brown's assertion. The average age of the candidates at Camp Sherman in the summer of 1918 was 25, the same average age for the Camp Devens third OTC

²⁷ *Pass in Review*, 56.

²⁸ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Lytle Brown, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Enlisted Candidates for the 4th Officers' Training Camps, dated 5 August 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

students. Of the 362 Camp Sherman candidates that listed their educational background, 249 (68.8%) were college graduates or had some degree of college education, 41 (11.4%) were high school graduates, 64 (17.6%) had some high school education, and eight (2.2%) had only attended grade or common school. If these levels of education were indicative of the other fourth OTCs, then these camps actually witnessed an increase in education of its candidates over those of the third OTCs.²⁹

Other evidence also points to the possibility of a rebound in the quality of candidates between the 3rd and fourth OTCs. Robert Yerkes noted that the psychological testing of over 9,000 candidates attending the third OTC, “seemed to indicate that the student officers in the third series of training schools are inferior to the first and second schools in intelligence.” This trend seemed to reverse itself as test scores for candidates in the fourth OTCs returned to levels similar to the 1917 classes. However, scores for infantry officer candidates going through training in the first COTS class in the summer and fall of 1918 were over ten percentage points lower than the average score for infantry officers the previous year.³⁰

In addition to increases in education, over three quarters of the Camp Sherman candidates had served at least three months as enlisted men prior to attending the OTC (with nearly all of these being wartime enlistments). This was less than the percentage of enlisted men attending the third OTCs. Of these enlisted men, 11 (3%) had been regimental or battalion sergeants major, 12 (3.2%) had been first sergeants, 106 (29.2%) had been sergeants, 33 (9%) had been corporals, and 120 (33%) had been privates. The high percentage of NCOs attending the course

²⁹ Statistic drawn from, Memorandum from, MAJ William K. Gunn, Commanding Officer, Fourth Officers' Training School, Camp Sherman, Ohio to LTC C. R. Lewis, Chief of the Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Summary of Instruction of Candidates, dated 17 August 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, NM-84, Box 186, Entry 310, “Camp Sherman, Ohio Fourth Officers' Training School Summary of Instruction of Candidates.”

³⁰ Robert M. Yerkes, “Psychological Examining in the United States Army,” in *Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. XV (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 863-5

(over 44% of the total class), represented a major drain of junior leadership from the 84th Division and the other units that filled the Camp Sherman OTC. It is interesting to note that 91 of the 120 privates that attended the course were either college graduates or had spent at least a year in college. The same could be said of the 82 men who were admitted to the camp without any prior military service. Only 14 of these men (17%) lacked any college education.³¹

The detailed records of the Camp Sherman Fourth OTC also allows us to draw some tentative conclusion on the social class of those seeking commissions after a year of war. Table 7-2 shows the occupations that the Camp Sherman candidates listed upon entry into the course.

Table 7-2: Occupations of Camp Sherman Fourth OTC candidates

Student- 44	Industrial Worker- 8	Real Estate- 1	Editor-1
Salesman- 33	Office/Sale Manager- 7	Contractor- 1	Plumber-1
Clerk/Office work- 31	Banker- 5	Advertising- 1	Lineman-1
Teacher- 28	Insurance- 3	Watchmaker-1	Buyer- 1
Farmer/Rancher - 21	Druggist- 3	Baseball Player- 1	Unknown- 89
Businessman- 19	Mechanic- 3	Draftsman- 1	
Accountant/Auditor- 16	Actor- 3	Farm Manager- 1	
Lawyer- 14	Scientist- 2	Lumberman- 1	
Industrial Foreman-11	Manufacturer- 1	Architect- 1	
Engineer- 8	Stock Broker- 1	Railroad Worker- 1	

Using the standard applied to the Fort Sheridan OTC for determining social class, and factoring out the students and those candidates that listed no professions, 86.6 percent of the candidates could be classified as having been employed in upper or middle-class professional or white collar jobs.³² It appears that in many ways the quality of the candidates at the fourth OTCs actually increased or at least remained constant with that the third OTCs.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Blue collar jobs are defined here as industrial foreman, industrial worker, mechanic, actor, watchmaker, baseball player, plumber, lineman, farm manager, and railroad worker. Given the number of candidates who did not give an occupation but had some college education (59 of 89), it is a good possibility that half of the “occupation unknown” were also students when they entered the OTC.

One of the other constants that influenced the effectiveness of the fourth OTCs was the continued problem of securing qualified instructors. A year into the war, with the exception of most camp commandants and perhaps a handful of staff officers, the regular army officers were long removed from instructing at the OTCs, leaving short-service officers responsible for nurturing the army's leadership seed corn. The OTCs at Camps Dodge and Sherman illustrate this ongoing problem. While Camp Dodge's OTC at least retained a Regular Army officer as its camp commander, the senior instructor, Captain Harold Schaub, was a graduate of the First OTC at Camp Snellings, Minnesota. Of the remaining 13 instructors and camp staff officers, nine had received their commissions from the First OTCs, and four had only been commissioned since November 1917 after graduating from the Second OTCs. Although ten of these officers had college educations, including one Rhodes Scholar, Henry Gunderson, only two had had any military experience prior to the war. First Lieutenant E.G. Kelsey had served three years as an enlisted man in the Idaho National Guard, and Captain Marion Drake had served briefly with the Indiana Naval Reserve. Although it was bad enough that all of the instructors had less than a year of commissioned service, the military experience that they had gained since their commissioning was also suspect. Of the 13 instructors, nine had only served in depot brigades or other OTCs prior to joining the Camp Dodge OTC. This meant that their actual leadership experience and depth of military knowledge was severely circumscribed.³³

The instructor situation of Camp Sherman was equally grim, and actually made worse by the War Department's eleventh-hour personnel decisions. After the Camp Sherman class had been training for only a month, the War Department abruptly reassigned all of its instructors, to include the OTC commanding officer. The replacement commander, Major William Gunn, had been commissioned after the First OTC, and thus had less than ten months in uniform when he

³³ *Pass in Review*, 9, 11-12, 15, 17, 19.

took over the camp. His senior instructor, Captain Jesse Marshall, was little better off. Marshall had been a reserve officer who had only been commissioned since 21 April 1917. Of the eight assistant instructors, one was a reserve officer commissioned in June of 1917, five were graduates of the first OTCs, and two were graduates of the second OTCs. All told, this meant that all of the assistant instructors, those officers who were directly responsible for most of the training of the candidates, only had seven months to a year of military training themselves when they began teaching the course in June of 1918.³⁴ Given the dearth of knowledge that the Camp Sherman and Dodge instructors brought to their teaching, it was truly a case of the “blind leading the blind” when it came to officers’ training.

The students themselves realized the limitations of their instructors. Their uneasiness at the inability of their instructors to teach the French platoon drill has already been noted. Other candidates also remarked on the continued problems with lectures and conferences as well as the obvious gaps in their instructors’ knowledge. One candidate offered a series of tongue-in-cheek, “Word to the Wise” for future candidates,

Never admit former affiliation with National Guard.

When an officer says you are wrong, for heavens sake be wrong...

Catch lost sleep during lectures, especially if conducted by brother aspirants. You don’t know what he is trying to say and neither does he...

Get away from the lesson as much as possible by irrelevant questions. If the instructor has a hobby, play it systematically for sixty minutes...

Never ask for an explanation. Wait until the last minute. Someone is bound to show his ignorance by beating you to it.

³⁴ Memorandum from, MAJ William K. Gunn, Commanding Officer, Fourth Officers’ Training School, Camp Sherman, Ohio to LTC C. R. Lewis, Chief of the Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Summary of Instruction of Candidates, dated 17 August 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, NM-84, Box 186, Entry 310, “Camp Sherman, Ohio Fourth Officers’ Training School Summary of Instruction of Candidates.”

Laugh at all jokes told by the instructor. Be sure to wait for the end of the joke...

If the Colonel puts in an unexpected appearance, bawl someone out...

If on a deep tactical question, do not embarrass the instructor by asking him to explain [it] before the entire command.³⁵

In spite of their drollery, the candidate's observations were also a telling indictment of his instructors' overall abilities.

If all these woes were not enough, last minute decisions and policy changes from the War Department also hobbled training in the fourth OTCs. On 15 May 1918 the army opened an OTC at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky, to provide officers for the 84th Division, then organizing at that location. After only three weeks of training, the OTC accompanied the division on its move to Camp Sherman, Ohio. Due to this major disruption in training, the War Department granted the OTC commander permission to extend the course by one month, but later reneged on parts of the agreement. In August 1918, Major William Gunn, the OTC commander, reported that his students' instruction on the automatic rifle had been limited to a theoretical discussion of the tactical employment of those weapons because they had been "unable to procure the rifles" for hands-on training. He also noted that the candidates had not received rifle range practice or instruction on company administration due to the move of the OTC from Camp Taylor to Camp Sherman and the War Department's early closure of the training camp.³⁶

³⁵ *Pass in Review*, 39.

³⁶ Memorandum from, MAJ William K. Gunn, Commanding Officer, Fourth Officers' Training School, Camp Sherman, Ohio to LTC C. R. Lewis, Chief of the Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Summary of Instruction of Candidates, dated 17 August 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, NM-84, Box 186, Entry 310, "Camp Sherman, Ohio Fourth Officers' Training School Summary of Instruction of Candidates."

Sadly, these disruptions were far from rare. Like Camp Sherman, the fourth OTC at Camp Dodge was also hindered by last minute changes imposed by the War Department. After a month of training at Camp Dodge, the instruction of candidates ground to a halt as the War Department filled the camp with a large levy of new aspirants. The War Department took this step in an attempt to overcome the ongoing shortage of officers. At the same time, the War Department reassigned nearly all of the instructors back to their original divisions so they could deploy to France. Soon after training resumed with a new cadre of instructors in mid-June 1918, the War Department again disrupted the camp by sending candidates slated to be artillery and machine gun officers to the new Central Officers' Training Schools at Camps Taylor and Hancock.³⁷

With the War Department's decision to replace the OTCs with COTSs (discussed in detail below), officers' training in the fourth OTCs suffered more blows. This is illustrated in the experiences of Walter Adams. In the winter of 1918, Adams and 14 other men from his company applied to attend OTC. Ultimately six of these soldiers were selected to attend the training camp after being interviewed by their company commanders and passing an examination board headed by a colonel and two other officers. Although he began the fourth OTC at Camp McClellan in May 1918, his training was disrupted by the consolidation of officer training at the Central Officers' Training Schools. He admitted that even prior to the closing of his OTC, his training had already been slowed in anticipation of the transfer.³⁸ These changes affected nearly all of the OTCs and severely disrupted the flow and depth of the camps' training.

³⁷ *Pass in Review*, 22.

³⁸ Letter from Walter Adams to "Mr. Lyle" dated 19 May 1918 from Camp McClellan, Alabama, in 2LT Walter Adams, Officers' Training Schools, Camp McClellan, USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

As with the third OTCs, the War Department originally intended to commission only a fraction of the candidates as officers upon their graduation from the fourth OTCs. This was again an effort to build a pool of personnel trained to be officers. The army's original plan was to commission merely 50 percent of the graduates in September. As before, however, the "urgent need for line officers" prevented this plan from coming to fruition, and all eligible candidates were commissioned at the end of their training.³⁹

Although the AEF was to be the "Army of 1919," no one had thought to consult the Germans on the American plan. In March 1918, the German Army began a series of attacks along the Western Front designed to end the war before the Americans could bring their weight of numbers and resources to bear. The German offensives forced the commitment of the AEF to battle much earlier than Pershing or the War Department had anticipated. As American officer casualties mounted in the spring and summer of 1918, and the Allies put more pressure on the Americans to ship units to France, the already great shortage of junior officers reached crisis levels and forced major changes to officers' training.

A reflection of that crisis was Adjutant General McCain's recommendation to Chief of Staff March on 2 August 1918 to immediately graduate and commission those fourth OTC and COTS students who had received at least three and a half months of their four-month officers' training course. He argued that this would help to alleviate the shortage of infantry officers by filling the junior commissioned ranks of those divisions departing for France in August and September 1918. The Director of the War Plans Division concurred with McCain's recommendations and admitted that since the newly-formed COTSs were still short of both instructors and facilities, the early commissioning would gain him some time to sort out the

³⁹ The Cabell Report, 9-10.

growing pains of the central schools.⁴⁰ During this crisis, the Adjutant General even directed camp commanders to immediately commission some candidates that were still far short of the three and a half months of training he had recommended to March. In early August 1918, with more than a month of instruction left in the course, the War Department ordered Camp Dodge's OTC commander to commission 68 candidates early so they could deploy with the 88th Division.⁴¹

Given that the War Department had not expected to need replacement officers in any number until 1919, it was still caught flat footed by the demand for junior officers in mid-1918. To a great extent, poor planning by the General Staff had contributed to this problem by not linking the attendance at the training camps to accurate projections of long-term officer needs. It was not until 18 May 1918, that the Adjutant General warned General March that despite the recent commissioning of an additional 11,657 officers from the thirds series of OTCs, the army was in danger of draining its pool of surplus officers to replace casualties or to fill new units. He estimated that "only 2,000 Infantry and 750 Field Artillery [officers] are available to be absorbed." He further noted,

It is believed to be a conservative estimate that the replacement needs of officers in the several arms will approximate not less than ten percent per month of those actually engaged in front line service. Beginning with the month of August and assuming four army corps to be actually engaged, replacement needs alone will approximate 2,000 officers per month, therefore, for the remaining five months of the present year, provisions should be made for at least 10,000 officers, for replacement purposes alone.⁴²

To further muddy the waters, McCain admitted that he was uncertain of the number of surplus

⁴⁰ "Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, to Chief of Staff, dated 2 August 1918" and "Memorandum from BG Lytle Brown, Director of the War Plans Division, to Chief of Staff, Subject: Graduation of Infantry Candidates, 4th Officers' Training Schools, dated 8 August 1918," in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁴¹ *Pass in Review*, 22.

⁴² "Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, to Chief of Staff, dated 18 May 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

officers with the AEF in France and that he had no information on the number of officers being turned out by the AEF's Candidate School.

There should have been no surprise in the upper echelons of the War Department as to the number of replacement officers that it would have to provide the AEF. As early as 1915, a American military attaché in France had reported on the unprecedented scale of officer casualties being absorbed on the Western Front. On 25 August 1915, for instance, Major Spencer Cosby reported, "An officer of the [French] General Staff on duty in the Ministry of War told me that the French losses in officers to June 1st [1915] were Cavalry 280, artillery 1160, infantry over 10,000."⁴³ No one, it seems, took any notice of these facts until well after the United States had entered the war.

In March 1918, the American Military Intelligence Branch tried to estimate possible American officer losses for May 1918 through April 1919 based on the losses that the British army had suffered in France in 1917. For that year, the British lost 7,881 officers killed in action, 2,703 who died of wounds, and 298 who died due to disease. They calculated that the British also suffered 25,789 temporary or long term losses of officers due to nonfatal wounds. Of the wounded officers, eight percent convalesced for two months or less, 16 percent for two to four months, 15 percent for four to six months, 27 percent required recovery times over six months in duration, and 34 percent were so grievously wounded as to be unfit for further service. The study revealed that British officers on average took twice as long to recover than either NCOs or soldiers. Based on these statistics, the intelligence branch estimated that beginning in May 1918, when they "assumed that the American forces will be actively involved in France," until November 1918 the AEF could expect to lose between 4.6 to 6.4 percent of its officers per

⁴³ Report of Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché, "French Casualties," dated 25 August 1915, National Archives RG 165, "Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917," File 8698, Roll 219.

month. The study's author projected that after officer casualties declined to 1.3 to 2.5 percent per month due to the slowing of operations during the winter of 1918 and 1919, April 1919 would see a spike in officer casualties to 8.3 percent as the Americans began to shoulder more responsibility in fighting the war.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, for the AEF's infantry officers in 1918, these estimates were quite short of the mark.

Although the War Department waited until the crisis was upon them to act, it did take steps in the spring of 1918 to try and solve its glaring shortages of officers. Shortly before the commencement of the fourth series of OTCs, some members of the General Staff were already questioning the wisdom of placing the OTCs under the control of division commanders. On 14 March 1918, the acting Chief of the War Plans Division, Colonel D. W. Ketcham, recommended to Chief of Staff Peyton March that the army replace its system of OTCs located in the divisional mobilization camps with four centralized camps for training officer candidates. Ketcham argued that the war was likely to be a long one and that "there is a possibility of necessity for very large officer replacements." In a telling indictment of the current OTC training, he stated that recent inspections had revealed that, "the present schools in divisions are, with few exceptions, failing to produce the desired results," and that "some of the schools have been described as so ineffective as to be farces." Furthermore, "National Guard divisions are believed to be unable to organize and conduct efficient schools because of a lack of competent instructors." Any division commander, Ketcham declared, "cannot efficiently train his division and supervise the school in addition." When it came to officer training, Ketcham accurately predicted that division commanders,

...will not be inclined to put it under his best officers. The school is a feature

⁴⁴ "Statistics on British Officers in France During 1917 and Estimate of Expected Losses," in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G1 Troops, undated, 12.3-12.6, Box 50, NM-4, Entry 310, File 7-12.3, "Study of Officer Replacements."

that is grafted on to his division. It is reasonable to place this extra burden on division commanders when their time should be entirely occupied in preparing their divisions for war.⁴⁵

Ketcham was far from being alone in his desire to reform officers' training. Leonard Wood had long been dissatisfied with the officers he was receiving from the OTCs. He unequivocally stated in April 1918, "The three months' course does not turn out sufficiently well trained officers and it has been necessary to give them comparatively long periods of training in France." He recommended that the OTCs be expanded from three to six months.⁴⁶ McCain also agreed with these sentiments, and in his 18 May 1918 letter to the Chief of Staff, he pleaded that the army immediately establish Central Officers' Training Schools at Camps Gordon, Lee, Hancock, and Pike. He estimated that such centralized officer schools could turn out at least 2,000 new officers per month and would overcome the problem of training replacement officers after divisions in training left for France and closed the OTCs.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, change was slow in coming to the officers' training system. It was not until early June 1918 that the War Department finally issued orders closing the OTCs in the divisional training camps and established three Infantry Central Officers' Training Schools (COTS) at Camps Gordon, Lee, and Pike; a Machine Gun COTS at Camp Hancock, Georgia; and a Field Artillery COTS at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky. As already noted, this late decision both disrupted the fourth OTCs and complicated the establishment of the new COTS.

Regardless of branch, all of the COTS classes were to be four months in duration.

Although the army understood that "a fully trained officer cannot be produced in so short of a

⁴⁵ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from Colonel D. W. Ketcham Acting Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Future Officers' Training Schools for Infantry, Field Artillery and Cavalry, dated 14 March 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁴⁶ "Letter to Adjutant General from MG Leonard Wood, Subject: Training camps for officers, dated 18 April 1918," in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁴⁷ "Memorandum from BG H. P. McCain, Army Adjutant General, to Chief of Staff, dated 18 May 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

course,” the aim was to give the candidates a course, “comprehensive enough to cover the fundamentals in which an officer should be thoroughly grounded, and, in addition, to permit a primary schooling in the methods of modern war.” In designing the course, the War Plans Division sought to continue to balance training in both trench and open warfare, and directed that in the interest of time, “the course of training must not be interrupted by unnecessary parades, reviews, practice marches,” or other distractions.⁴⁸

During the first month of the new course for infantry officers the instruction would focus on the theoretical basis of the *IDR*, the *Manual of Interior Guard Duty*, field sanitation and first aid, and the *Small Arms Firing Regulations*. Training in the second month continued to emphasize the *IDR* but put more time into the theory and practice of minor tactics, topographic sketching, administration, paper work, and the “interior economy of company messing and property.” The third month of training continued to emphasize the *IDR* and topographic sketching, but now focused mostly on musketry training and practice (62 hours), and on minor tactics. The final month of training introduced map reading, field fortifications, the *Manual for Courts Martial*, the tactical employment of machine guns (3 hours), and “Trench warfare, grenades, trench mortars, gas, etc” for 26 hours. Physical training, bayonet training, and signaling were emphasized throughout and given the same amount of time during each month of training. This meant that the candidate still spent 49 hours in dubious bayonet training over the course of the school. The continued reliance on the *IDR* also demonstrates the persistent use of obsolete tactical doctrine in officers’ training. It is amazing how little the tactical instruction of

⁴⁸ “Memorandum of Information, from Adjutant General’s Office, Subject: Central Officers’ Training Schools for Candidates for Commission in the Infantry, Field Artillery, and Machine Gun Units, undated, but staffed the War Plans Division on 16 June 1918” and Draft Special Regulations titled, “Central Officers’ Training Schools for Candidates for Commission in the Infantry, Field Artillery, and Machine Gun Units” in NARA RG 165 Army General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G-5 Schools, 7-52.8- 52.9, Box 201, Entry 310, “Training Schools for Officers.”

officer candidates had changed over the course of the war. In the fall of 1918, candidates were still being subjected to training which in no way reflected the realities of combat in France.

These subjects were taught in the infantry COTSs, and the time devoted to them.⁴⁹

Table 7-3: Four Month Training Plan for Infantry COTS Candidates

Subject	Hours of TNG	% of Total TNG
In and out processing, and misc.	45 hours	4.6 %
Evening Study	176 hours	18.3 %
Physical training	49 hours	5.1 %
Bayonet training	49 hours	5.1 %
Infantry Drill Regulations (33 hours theoretic and 121 hours hands on)	154 hours	16 %
Small Arms Firing Regulation and fundamental musketry	42 hours	4.3 %
Practice march	23 hours	2.3 %
Manual of Interior Guard	23 hours	2.3 %
First Aid, hygiene, and field sanitation	16 hours	1.6 %
Military discipline and courtesy	8 hours	.9 %
Signaling	24 hours	2.4 %
Field Firing	8 hours	.9 %
Range Practice	48 hours	5 %
Military topography and sketching	43 hours	4.4 %
Manual for Courts Martial	13 hours	1.3 %
Field engineering and fortification	6 hours	.7 %
Sand table and map exercises	15 hours	1.5 %
Company administration, paperwork, and interior economy	24 hours	2.4 %
Field Service Regulations	6 hours	.7 %
Minor Tactics	17 hours	1.7 %
Advance guard and outposts	14 hours	1.4 %
Combat offensive and defensive	8 hours	.9 %
Map Problems	12 hours	1.2 %
Tactical walks and terrain exercises	19 hours	2 %
Employment of machine guns and automatic rifle	6 hours	.7 %
Trench warfare- (grenades, trench mortars, gas)	26 hours	2.7 %
Tests and examinations	36 hours	3.7 %
Inspections and ceremonies	42 hours	4.3 %

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Lectures	10 hours	1 %
Total training hours:	961 hours	

Some of the problems in the COTSs training was reflected in the questions the candidates were given in their written examinations. An examination given to Camp Gordon candidates during their first week of training, for example, asked them to answer: “What is the present status of Bulgaria in this war?”; “What are the ‘Eagle Boats’ and who makes them?”; and “Who wrote the following: *Evangeline*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The House of Seven Gables*, *Ben Hur*, *The Call of the Wild*?” On an examination in the eleventh week of training the aspirants were required to, “Name the eight rules that govern the carrying of the piece.”⁵⁰ An examination given COTS students at Camp MacArthur on 21 September 1918 included some weighty questions drawn from materials in the *IDR* such as, “Why is close order drill essential,” “Explain the command, By the Right Flank, March,” and “Describe the Hand Salute.” The essay portion of the test asked the students, “In not more than one hundred words state the value of bayonet work from the following standpoints: physical benefits to be derived; need for alertness of mind as well as quick and decisive movements of the body; discipline; developing the individual fighting spirit of each man.”⁵¹ As had been the case with the previous OTCs, the problem with the training in the camps had more to do with what was taught rather than how much time the course had to teach its students.

The poor quality of the training was not lost on either the students or certain senior American officers. On 4 September 1918, Leonard Wood expressed his concern to the Adjutant General that the COTSs were failing to give, “proper weight to the quality of leadership,

⁵⁰ NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-52.2 – 52.9, Box 201, Entry 310, “Camp Gordon COT School.”

⁵¹ “Headquarters Central Infantry Officers’ Training School, General Orders, Special Orders, Training Memorandums, Examinations, Miscellaneous,” in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5, 7-50.4, Box 178, NM-84, Entry 310, “Orders & etc, ICOTS, Camp Macarthur, Texas.”

judgment, character, and initiative” of the candidates. He went on to note,

There are plenty of men who can squeeze through a training camp, memorize commands and make fair recitations; who are absolutely unfit to be officers...It is a dangerous policy to continue turning out partially instructed men. This war demands thoroughly trained officers, and no class is more important than the platoon commander, who is generally a young officer just from training school. They are not coming to us at the present time, so trained as to be really competent to perform this duty.⁵²

Wood’s sentiments were shared by the Camp Gordon COTS candidate Henry P. Fry. In a July 1918 letter to an acquaintance in the War Department, Fry wrote that “there are a lot of defects in the system” of officer training. Fry was a graduate of VMI, a former commissioned officer in the National Guard, and a recent sergeant in the National Army. He maintained that, “the theoretical instruction given in the school is exceeding weak,” and singled out instruction in musketry, bayonet work, topography, and minor tactics as being particularly flawed. He also believed that not enough time was being devoted to subjects that a young officer needed “to make him think.”⁵³ Another candidate, Robert O’Hair simply believed that his officer training at both the Fort Sheridan OTC and the Camp Taylor Field Artillery COTS was “brief and sketchy,” and that it did not entail “enough attention to detail or preparation for actual battle.”⁵⁴

Wood and the candidates were not alone in their anxiety over the training at the COTS. A British officer assigned to Camp Gordon, Captain V. S. Hebbert, reported on 25 July 1918 that the training plan for the COTS was in disarray because there was little uniformity in training. He also noted that the candidates had arrived at Camp Gordon from several defunct OTCs, each of

⁵² “Letter to Adjutant General from MG Leonard Wood, Subject: Officers, dated 4 September 1918.” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁵³ Letter to Major John R. M. Taylor from Candidate Henry P. Fry, Third Infantry Company, Central Officers’ Training School, Camp Gordon, Georgia, dated 26 July 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-52.2 – 52.9, Box 201, Entry 310, “Camp Gordon COT School.”

⁵⁴ Robert O’Hair, Student Army Training Corps, Indiana University, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

which differed in the content and methods of instruction.⁵⁵ An inspector from the General Staff's Training and Instruction Branch discovered similar problems upon visiting Camps MacArthur, Pike, and Gordon in the same month. Major Elvid Hunt noted that the COTSs he visited all lacked adequate training in "leadership and drillmastership," and overall, the schools suffered from a lack of quality instructors.⁵⁶

Despite the War Department's best efforts to "fix" officers' training with the COTSs, reoccurring problems with instructors and equipment, and the AEF's voracious demand for replacement officers, combined to short-circuit its goals. Ultimately, only the classes that began on 15 September 1918 received the full four month course, and that was only because the War Department allowed it to continue over two months after the Armistice. Due to the crush of events, nearly all of the COTS students who were commissioned prior to the Armistice only received from two to three months training.⁵⁷ It is amazing that in the last four months of the war the army was still wrestling with some of these problems. The most intractable of which seems to have been finding qualified instructors.

The British Captain V. S. Hebbert viewed the issue of instructors as the furthestmost obstacle to American officer training. He noted,

Great hindrance is also caused by the shortage of instructors. In no subject is the school provided with outside instructors. The company commanders, platoon commanders, and students are all employed as instructors. In nine subjects out of ten it is selected students who give the instructions and such as it is, it is done very well, but it greatly retards the progress. In many cases the students chosen as instructors are really insufficiently trained to act in that capacity, and owing to the

⁵⁵ Report of CPT V. S. Hebbert to Group Commander, British Military Mission, Camp Gordon, Georgia, Subject: Progress Report for Period Ending July 25, 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File "Camp Gordon, Atlanta, Georgia- Progress Reports- July 1918, Central Officers Tn School."

⁵⁶ Memorandum for the Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, from Major Elvid Hunt, Subject: Liaison visit to Infantry Training Centers at Camps MacArthur, Pike, and Gordon, dated July 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185-A NM-84, Entry 310, "Camp Macarthur, Texas, Infantry Training Center."

⁵⁷ The Cabell Report, 12.

instructor being of the same category as the students subconscious slackness results in the students.⁵⁸

In many ways, the American response to Hibbert's trenchant observations reveals why the army continued to face such intractable problems so late in the war. Answering Hebbert's criticism, an American General Staff officer simply retorted that it reflected nothing more than, "The English desire that their fixed system be used in Central Officers' Training Schools." This officer expressed his horror that another Allied officer was going to "recommend that fewer hours be given to bayonet work, etc, and more to Offensive and Defensive Warfare." The American concluded that it was best to allow the American commander on the scene, "work out his own system, selecting from British and French criticism what is best and applicable."⁵⁹ The staff officer seemed oblivious to the fact that allowing local commanders to "work out his own system" of training was partially to blame for the Americans' predicament.

Throughout the late summer and fall of 1918, the COTS commandants wrote a steady stream of reports to the Training and Instruction Branch bemoaning their problems with obtaining suitable instructors. On 26 August, the Camp Pike commander informed the War Department that, "The general character of the instructor personnel which has to be employed leaves much to be desired in the point of efficiency."⁶⁰ A few weeks later, he stated, "The greatest need is that of qualified instructors in charge of the various battalions to supervise the

⁵⁸ Report of CPT V. S. Hebbert to Group Commander, British Military Mission, Camp Gordon, Georgia, Subject: Progress Report for Period Ending July 25, 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File "Camp Gordon, Atlanta, Georgia- Progress Reports- July 1918, Central Officers Tn School."

⁵⁹ Memorandum for Col. Fleming, Subject: Capt. Hebbert's report on C.O.T.C., Camp Gordon, dated 30 July 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File "Camp Gordon, Atlanta, Georgia- Progress Reports- July 1918, Central Officers Tn School."

⁶⁰ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Pike, Arkansas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report Ending August 24, 1918, dated 26 August 1918" in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 186, Entry 310, "Camp Pike, Ark, Infantry COTS."

work of the company instructors, most of whom require a great deal of instruction...to qualify them for the work.”⁶¹ He asked for Regular Army majors, preferably West Pointers to be assigned to him to take on these tasks. In late September 1918, the Engineer COTS at Camp Humphreys, Virginia was 150 officers short of their goal of graduating 700 officers per month, and had been forced to decrease the length of its course from four months to only three, with some students only receiving five weeks of instruction. The Camp’s commander attributed this decline to a serious shortage of qualified instructors.⁶²

As with the earlier training camps, at times the War Department added to the commanders’ litany of woes by reassigning COTS instructors with little or no notice. The commander of the Camp Lee COTS, Colonel Henry Eaton, sent a blistering letter to the Chief of the Training and Instruction Branch in September after one such occurrence. He complained that just as his cadre was adequately trained to serve as trainers, the War Department reassigned his Senior Instructor and 20 other junior instructors. He angrily replied “if the War Department will let my officers alone and give me a chance to develop them, I shall be able to turn out satisfactory Lieutenants.”⁶³

At other times, the camp commanders themselves helped to exacerbate their instructor problems. Only a month prior to launching his tirade against the War Department, Eaton himself had reported his dissatisfaction with having recently received 14 captains from France to serve as cadre at the school. Eaton complained that since these officers were due for promotion to major,

⁶¹ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Pike, Arkansas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report Ending September 7, 1918, dated 9 September 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 186, Entry 310, “Camp Pike, Ark, Infantry COTS”

⁶² “Memorandum for Director, War Plans Division, dated 2 October 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁶³ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly Report, dated 14 September 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, “COTS Lee”

he had no use for them. They would be too senior to serve as company commanders and he did not want them as senior instructors or battalion commanders because they would not be “thoroughly conversant with training school systems.”⁶⁴ In October 1918 Colonel Edan Frey, the Camp Gordon COTS commander, recommended that for the sake of their morale, some of his instructors should be given the chance to be reassigned to combat duty in France. While he admitted that “this will result in the loss of trained instructors,” such a move would help to overcome the “slump” he believed his officers were stuck in by holding out the carrot of a sought-after assignment.⁶⁵ Although both commanders believed that they were doing the right by their camps and instructors, neither seemed to consider the downsides of these actions and the detrimental effects they would have on their students’ training.

The General Staff and the War Plans Division sympathized with the camp commanders, but, thanks to a host of missteps throughout the war, by late 1918 they were powerless to remedy the situation. The Chief of the Training and Instruction Branch admitted to the commanders that “in most cases the instructors will be officers of limited experience.” His only solution was for the commanders to ensure that their instructors made “careful preparation of the problems given” and were provided, “a logical solution of the problem which will bring out the tactical principle involved.”⁶⁶ By this Pontius Pilate-like move, the War Department washed their hands of the mess and placed the burden on the schools’ Senior Instructors to prepare all of the tactical

⁶⁴ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report on Central Officers’ Training School, Camp Lee, Va., dated 17 August 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, “COTS Lee.”

⁶⁵ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Gordon, Georgia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly Report, dated 19 October 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-52.2 – 52.9, Box 201, Entry 310, “Camp Gordon COT School.”

⁶⁶ Memorandum from Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, to Commanding Officers, Central Officers’ Training Schools for Infantry, Subject: Three months’ course of instruction, dated 6 November 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5, 7-50.4, Box 180, NM-84, Entry 310, “Reports of Camp Grant Infantry COTS.”

problems and to ensure that their assistant instructors understood how to properly teach the class.

The available evidence does point to worsening problems with instructors in late 1918. By examining the background of instructors at Camps Lee and Hancock, it appears that the experience level in the cadre continued to wane as the war went on. The company commander and senior instructor for the August through October 1918 class for the 8th Company, Camp Lee Infantry COTS, Major Gordon Hunter, was commissioned at the first OTC at Plattsburg, but had then only served as an instructor in other OTCs or depot brigades before arriving at Camp Lee. Hunter's five assistant instructors had followed a similar path. Two of them were graduates of the first OTCs, two others were graduates of the second OTCs, and one had a reserve commission that predated the war. Only one of the instructors had any wartime troop experience outside of depot brigades or OTCs prior to his Camp Lee assignment.⁶⁷

Of the ten instructors that taught the 6th Battalion, Camp Lee Infantry COTS from October 1918 to January 1919, five were commissioned out of the first OTCs, two from the second OTCs, one from the third OTC, and two had been students in the Camp Lee COTS class that had just graduated in early October 1918. While seven of the instructors had some level of college education, only three had any military experience prior to April 1917. First Lieutenant William Rodenberger's military experience consisted of only one year's service during the Philippine Insurrection. First Lieutenant George Stevens had served five years as an artilleryman in the British Army before immigrating to the United States. Second Lieutenant John Teter was a first generation Polish immigrant who had served as a coast artilleryman in the Regular Army from 1914 to 1917.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Eight Company, Central Officers' Training School, Camp Lee, Virginia, *Take His Name* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1918), 5-9.

⁶⁸ *Lieut VI*, 11.

The assignment of officers who had just graduated from the course to the cadre was not limited to Camp Lee. Of the 15 company commanders and senior instructors identified in the October to December class graduate book of the Camp Hancock Central Machine Gun Officers' Training School, four had graduated from the 1st OTCs, five from the third OTCs, and six from the fourth OTCs. Only three of the 21 assistant instructors had been commissioned for at least a year. The remaining officers had all been recent graduates of the Machine Gun COTS itself. Five of these instructors had graduated in September 1918 and 13 had graduated in early October 1918. This meant that when the last Machine Gun COTS class began its training in mid-October 1918, half of its instructors had only been officers themselves for mere days and weeks.⁶⁹ This trend of using recently graduated officers is solid evidence of a steady decline in overall instructor quality and a continued adherence to the unintended policy of the "blind leading the blind."

Surprisingly, the COTSs continued to face shortages of equipment and instructional material to the end of the war. On 15 September 1918, the commander of the Camp MacArthur COTS, Colonel John Boniface, informed the War Plans Division's Training and Instruction Branch that he had concerns about his instructors and the glaring shortage of textbooks. He admitted that his new instructors were "eager and willing," but hoped that their "efficiency will develop as time passes." The shortage of text books, however, was of greater import, and the colonel noted that until the army could provide the required texts, he would make due by "borrowing books from the post library and other sources."⁷⁰ Over a month later he was still lamenting, "The shortage of text books is terribly trying; I have again purchased them

⁶⁹ *Four Months of Sand*, 29, 36-8, 71, 84.

⁷⁰ "Weekly Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 15 September 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

locally...and I hope that this meets with your approval in this.” He noted, “We must have text books and I am sure you will not disapprove my buying when I cannot get them any other way.” (original emphasis)⁷¹ A General Staff inspection of COTS in October 1918 revealed that the Camp Gordon school was still short 2,000 copies of the *IDR* and other publications.⁷² The Camp Lee COTS commander was also bedeviled by the shortage of text books and raised the logical question of why he could not get them from the divisional OTCs that were closing down.⁷³ Unfortunately, the War Department made no reply to this valid question.

Texts books were not the only instructional materials in short supply at the COTS. As late as November 1918, camps commanders were still reporting shortages of key equipment. The Camp Grant COTS commander, Colonel C. E. Reese, reported on 4 November that, “no rifles, bayonets and scabbards are available for issue to October and November classes.” He noted that while the camp had been able to supply the September class with rifles, a great number of them, “are unserviceable as no spare parts are obtainable in camp.”⁷⁴ The same day, the Chief Instructor of the Camp Gordon Infantry Replacement and Training Camp, Colonel Robert Getty, reported to the General Staff that he was so short on gas masks that they had to be shared among his different organizations, thus making the supervision and scheduling of

⁷¹ “Weekly Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 19 October 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁷² Memorandum for the Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, Subject: Inspection visit to various camps, dated 2 October 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185-A NM-84, Entry 310, “Camp MacArthur, Texas, Infantry Training Center.”

⁷³ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report on Central Officers’ Training School, Camp Lee, Va., dated 17 August 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, “COTS Lee.”

⁷⁴ Memorandum from Commander, Camp Grant ICOTS to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly report, week ending November 2nd, 1918, dated 4 November 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5, 7-50.4, Box 180, NM-84, Entry 310, “Reports of Camp Grant Infantry COTS.”

“practical gas instruction” very difficult.⁷⁵ Even the students rebelled at these obvious problems. When presented a lecture on the obsolete Benet-Mercie machine gun, one candidate of the Machine Gun COTS vehemently stated that the instructor should, “Cut the stone age stuff; this is the World War, not the Civil.”⁷⁶ The continuation of these supply problems and their baleful influence on officer training is a sad reflection on the haphazard nature of the American mobilization.

The greatest single complaint or concern broached by the COTS in the last four months of the war was not about instructors, text books, or equipment, but rather was the perceived decline in the quality of candidates attending their camps. Nearly all of the camp commanders raised this issue in the fall of 1918. As early as August, the Camps Lee and Pike COTS commanders were noting what they viewed as the precipitous decline in the standards of their students. The Camp Lee commander, Colonel Eaton, lamented that the decline was not only evident in the enlisted men being sent to the school, but also in the attendees that he was being sent from the civilian sector. He maintained that the local draft boards had “not been as strict as required for the infantry course and candidates sent here have had to be rejected after being here but a short time.”⁷⁷ He later noted that a number of the enlisted men, “are being sent who are entirely lacking in the instincts of a gentlemen,” and “were uncouth and their language was far from being refined.” He concluded that it was “quite impossible to make gentlemen out of men

⁷⁵ Memorandum from COL Robert Getty, Camp Gordon, Georgia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, dated 4 November 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 184, NM -84, Entry 310, File “Infantry Replacement Training, Camp Gordon, Ga.”

⁷⁶ *Four Months of Sand*, 26.

⁷⁷ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report on Central Officers’ Training School, Camp Lee, Va., dated 17 August 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, “COTS Lee.”

of this type in four months.”⁷⁸ The Camp Pike commander, Colonel Charles Miller, echoed Eaton’s unease and reported that “Many of the enlisted candidates who reported in July and August were lacking in educational qualifications and a considerable number were lacking in physical qualifications, and many had to be eliminated at once.”⁷⁹

The situation only worsened in September and October. On 26 September 1918 the Camp MacArthur COTS commander complained that the quality of candidates he was receiving was not what it should be. He was angered that a recent levy of enlisted candidates had included two men with venereal disease and others that clearly lacked the qualities needed for officership.⁸⁰ In October he furiously reported,

... We have discovered two or three men that have the most abominable records and how they were ever allowed to come here is a mystery and shows that company commanders still have to realize the grave error of sending men here with bad records... Today I found one candidate’s record that showed something like 21 company punishments and 13 courts-martial, yet he was sent here to become an officer.⁸¹

That same month, the problem had become so apparent that even the Assistant Secretary of War had to admit that the army had experienced great “difficulty in securing the proper number of qualified candidates for the Officers’ Training Schools, and within the greatly enlarged military

⁷⁸ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly Report, dated 7 September 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, “COTS Lee”.

⁷⁹ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Pike, Arkansas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Report Ending August 24, 1918, dated 26 August 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 186, Entry 310, “Camp Pike, Ark, Infantry COTS”.

⁸⁰ “Weekly Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 26 September 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁸¹ “Weekly Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 19 October 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

program this difficulty has threatened to become acute.”⁸²

The camp commanders all blamed the candidates’ company commanders for sending unqualified men to officers’ training. The Camp MacArthur COTS commander accurately noted that,

...some of the company commanders failed to select suitable men as candidates; such mistakes are bound to occur where the selection is made by inexperienced officers back in their companies...My observations of the candidates, as a whole, impresses me with the fact that previous classes have drained the service and we must expect many poor candidates to arrive...Please urge company and regimental officers to appreciate the grave importance to the service of selecting their VERY BEST men, regardless of whether that means they must send their first sergeants, sergeants majors and troop clerks...” (original emphasis)⁸³

However in establishing the blame for the problem, the colonel had also stumbled on the reason for the decline. Not only had many of the best soldiers already gone through the training, but the unit commanders had also grown tired of seeing their companies decimated by the War Department’s ceaseless levies of personnel.

The demands of officer replacements drove the War Department to both cut standards for candidates and increase its quotas for attendance to officers’ training in the last months of 1918. In August 1918 the severe shortage of infantry officers led the War Department to depart from its long-standing policy of having all line officers be graduates from a designated officers’ training course. The Adjutant General directed that commanders of depot brigades, replacement centers and infantry and cavalry regiments still in the United States hold boards to “examine enlisted men for direct appointment as 2nd lieutenants of infantry and cavalry.” Those enlisted men

⁸² “Memorandum from the Office of the Third Assistant Secretary of War for dissemination to the field, Subject: Procurement of Officer Material, dated October 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁸³ “Weekly Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 26 September 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

already attending an officers' training school, but not having finished the course of instruction, could also apply to their school commander for an appointment. By this commissioning slight of hand, the army added a further 539 infantry and 309 cavalry second lieutenants.⁸⁴ On 27 September 1918 Secretary of War Baker directed that the commandants of the three Infantry COTSs graduate and commission the students, who entered the course in August 1918, after only two and a half months of training. He did stipulate, however, that they were "authorized to retain for one month longer those whom you think need further instruction to make efficient officers."⁸⁵ This was only one of a frenzied series of changes to the qualifications of the applicants and reductions in their training time.

Although it intended the candidates from the COTS to come mainly from the army's enlisted ranks, the War Department found that the supply of quality enlisted candidates was running dry. This was particularly apparent in candidates for field artillery and other technical branches. The field artillery, for example, had to accept over 50 percent of its candidates from civilian life in order to find men with the requisite mathematical skills that the branch required. This meant that while it was physically capable of processing over 1000 students per week, in October 1918 the Field Artillery COTS at Camp Taylor, Kentucky was only reaching a weekly intake of 500 new students.⁸⁶ When it came to worthy applicants, Colonel Cabell reported, "the Army had already been thoroughly combed for good material and the normal draft calls did not supply the quality of material required."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The Cabell Report, 23.

⁸⁵ "Memorandum for the Adjutant General from BG Henry Jervey, Asst Chief of Staff, Subject: Graduating class Central Officers Training Schools of Infantry, dated 27 September 1918, in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁸⁶ "Memorandum for Director, War Plans Division, dated 2 October 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁸⁷ The Cabell Report, 13.

The War Department tried to address this problem by first expanding the quota of soldiers that units had to provide to the COTS. In the fall of 1918, the Adjutant General raised the quota for infantry units from 2 percent to 5 percent of their total enlisted strength. It set the quota for artillery and machine gun units even higher.⁸⁸ The shortage of infantry officers became so acute that, in September and October 1918, the army even added three more Infantry COTS at Camp Grant, Illinois; Camp MacArthur, Texas; and Camp Fremont, California. To make matters worse, the great Influenza epidemic also led to a great reduction in the number of applicants in both October and November. While few of their graduates ever left the United States, the COTSs ultimately commissioned 20,563 officers between September 1918 and February 1919.⁸⁹

In many ways it was this increase in quotas for the training camps that led to some of the worst abuses of the system. All-too-often, harried company commanders used the levies as a means of ridding themselves of the troublemakers or the expendable elements of their units. The Camp Lee commander noted that one sergeant from the 29th Infantry Regiment was sent to the course against his will because his company commander had a quota to fill for the school and the sergeant was the most expendable. In another case, a first sergeant from a unit in Panama entered COTS “solely to get back to the United States with hope that he could secure a furlough to visit his home.”⁹⁰ This also accounts for the VD and discipline cases that showed up at Camp MacArthur.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 15. The Camp Grant Infantry COTS commander, Colonel Charles Hagadorn, reported on 7 October 1918 that he had to delay the start of the new class of candidates scheduled to begin on 15 October because of “the prevalence of the influenza epidemic.” On 19 October, the Camp MacArthur commander reported that his camp was in the midst of the influenza epidemic, and that the sickness had already killed two candidates and four of the school’s cadre. He also reported that half of his staff was sick.

⁹⁰ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly Report, dated 7 September 1918” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, “COTS Lee.”

Nearly all the COTS commanders also reported great spikes in the number of candidates who reported that they had been sent to officers' training against their will or without any previous consultation by their commanders. In his report summarizing the lessons learned at the Camp MacArthur COTS, its commander noted...

There were candidates stating, quite frequently, that they had been sent here to school without their wishes being consulted, in fact against their expressed wishes and that they desired to be relieved from the course....[this] impeded the work of the school, caused additional work of elimination boards at the schools, and the elimination of such men created vacancies in the candidate body at a time when the Government needed every officer that could be obtained from such schools.⁹¹

Given the frequency with which these comments appear in the record, this seems to have been a rather common occurrence. Even some enlisted men noted how rapidly and unexpectedly a soldier could be packed off to become an officer. One private wrote home, "The captain just announced that he had selected a private named Hilmen to go to the officers' training school in Atlanta, Ga. in the morning. That's how quick [the] U.S. does things in the Army. Hilmen didn't know a thing about it till just now."⁹²

There were a number of soldiers that wanted nothing to do with becoming an officer. The regular sergeant-turned-captain Sam Woodfill repeatedly tried to get his first sergeant, Severt Nelson, to attend officers' training. Nelson would have no part of it. The grizzled veteran informed Woodfill in no uncertain terms,

I wouldn't know what to do with a commission if I had one. I figure that I was born to be a top sergeant. I've learned the game. And I'm goin' to stick to it. I'd rather be a top sarge than a brigadier.⁹³

Nelson was not alone in trying to avoid the officer's training. Sergeant Major John Burton was a

⁹¹ "Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 15 November 1918" in RG 165 "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁹² Letter from "Ted" to "Grace," dated 17 July 1918 from Columbia, Missouri, in Charles G. Osgood, Student Army Training Corps, Michigan State University, USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹³ Thomas, *Woodfill of the Regulars*, 224.

college student when the war broke out, and was thus a prime candidate for selection to attend officers' training. But Burton recalled that "I did not wish to become a commissioned officer, preferring to remain 'in the gang,' with my comrades. I had no wish to be called 'Sir,' whatever."⁹⁴ It appears that Woodfill was one of the few company commanders who took the time to ask their soldiers' opinion before bundling them off to officers' training.

In August 1918 the Congress and the army had begun to explore ways to better utilize the manpower that was being held in the nation's colleges and universities. This came to fruition with the Man Power Bill of 12 September 1918. The bill authorized the enlistment all of the nation's able-bodied college students into the Students' Army Training Corps (SATC). Beginning 1 October 1918, the SATC militarized the nation's educational institutions by essentially turning them into mills for the production of junior officers.⁹⁵ In fact, soon after the establishment of the SATC units in the colleges, the Assistant Secretary of War made clear in the memo that the SATCs were to be "a recruiting ground for the central training schools for line officers" and that the army had already asked the SATC to provide 8,000 students to the COTSS per month.⁹⁶

Faced with a deepening officer manpower crisis, the War Department also used the Man Power Bill of 12 September 1918 as a justification for raising the maximum age for admission to officers' training for candidates from the ranks from 40 to 45 years old. Two days after the Congress passed the Man Power Bill, Secretary Baker further authorized the commissioning of

⁹⁴ SMG John McNab Burton, Camp Jackson, 156th Depot BDE, File 4461, USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹⁵ *War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 299-304, 320-1. The SATC eventually encompassed 518 colleges and over 135,000 students. The best work discussing the establishment of the SATC remains, Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of Higher Learning in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975).

⁹⁶ Memorandum from the Office of the Third Assistant Secretary of War for dissemination to the field, No subject given, but the memo explains the status of the SATC, no date, circa October 1918, in RG 165 "Letters,...etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

SATC candidates who were at least 18 years old and had been recommended by a local board of officers. By essentially lowering the minimum age for commissioning from 20 years and nine months to 18, the army squeezed out another 3,264 second lieutenants before the end of the war.⁹⁷ This also meant that by mid-October, the capacity of the Infantry COTSs at Camps Pike, Lee, Grant, MacArthur, and Gordon was at 5,600 students each, and they were taking in 1,400 new candidates a month and graduating around 1000 officers every four weeks. Of these candidates, 60 percent were enlisted men, 20 percent were SATC students, and 20 percent were coming directly from civilian life.⁹⁸

On 21 October 1918, the Adjutant General further lowered the standard for admission into officers' training by allowing five percent of COTS candidates to be drawn from "limited service men whose physical defects [such as poor eyesight or lack of a full range of motion in the arms and legs] were not glaring, but were of a minor nature."⁹⁹ The idea was that upon graduation and commissioning, these limited service officers would be sent to fill positions in depot brigades and other postings not requiring field service so as to release physically qualified men then occupying those jobs for active service. In the week before the Armistice, the Adjutant General was also successful in lowering the acceptable physical standards for officers to that of the minimal physical standards for draftees. This allowed enlisted men to apply for attendance to COTS who had previously been disqualified due to poor eyesight, color blindness, or other minor defects. Despite these steady lowering of the standards, Colonel Cabell still argued that had the Armistice not been signed, "it would have been difficult

⁹⁷ The Cabell Report, 24.

⁹⁸ "Memorandum for Director, War Plans Division, dated 2 October 1918," in RG 165 "Letters,...etc Officers' Training Camps," NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

⁹⁹ The Cabell Report, 15.

to have gotten the November classes to the Central Schools to the authorized strength.”¹⁰⁰

The lowering of the standards for entry into the COTS was also met with alterations to the training conducted in the camps. On 6 November 1918, the Chief of the War Plans Division’s Training and Instruction Branch issued new guidance to the Infantry COTS commanders on the length of the course and subjects that were to be taught. It directed that the COTS course be reduced from four to three months in duration, and that the course was to be based on a six-work-day week (Monday through Saturday) with a “minimum day of 10 hours” of training. The new three month course drastically reduced training time devoted to musketry training and practice, minor tactics, and the new weapons of warfare. Signal training was limited to the use of “wig wag” signal flags. It is interesting to note that under the new course, 33 hours were devoted to bayonet training and 18 hours to “wig-wag” signaling while the candidates only received 14 hours in small arms firing, eight hours of gas instruction, and only three hours of map reading.¹⁰¹ Even in the face of severe cutbacks to training, at the eleventh hour the army was still devoting an inordinate amount of precious instructional time to subjects of questionable importance.

Were the men attending the COTSs in late 1918 truly as poor as the Regular Army officers who trained them claimed? A study of candidates from Camps Lee, Hancock, and Taylor do allow for some tentative answers to this question. The statistics for the candidates of the 4th Battalion, Machine Gun Central Officers’ Training School, at Camp Hancock, Georgia, who began their training in August 1918, actually show a slight increase in levels of education over the sample taken from fourth series OTCs. Over 70 percent of the candidates in the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰¹ Memorandum from Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, to Commanding Officers, Central Officers’ Training Schools for Infantry, Subject: Three months’ course of instruction, dated 6 November 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5, 7-50.4, Box 180, NM-84, Entry 310, “Reports of Camp Grant Infantry COTS.”

battalion's 21st Company had some college experience. Of the 111 candidates of the 22nd Company, 75 (67.5%) had some college education; 31 (30%) had only a high school education; 3 (2.7%) had attended vocational school, and 2 (1.8%) had less than a high school education. There also seemed to have been no major change in the candidates who had held professional or white collar jobs prior to the war. Table 7-4 lists the occupations given by the 121 candidates of the 20th Company. Using the same criteria applied to the Fort Sheridan sample, after factoring out the students and those candidates whose occupations were unknown, approximately 85 percent of the candidates could be classified as been employed in upper or middle-class professional or white collar jobs.¹⁰²

Table 7-4: Occupations of Camp Hancock MGCOTS August 1918

Clerk/Office work- 19	Teacher- 6	Office/Sales Manager- 3	RA Enlisted- 1
Student- 15	Salesman- 6	Engineer- 3	Insurance- 1
Lawyer- 14	Indust.Worker- 5	Banker- 2	Architect- 1
Businessman- 11	Secretary- 4	Stock Broker- 2	Dentist- 1
Farmer- 10	Newspaperman- 4	Mechanic- 2	Unknown- 1
Indust. Foreman- 8	Accountant- 3	Musical Director- 1	

Despite the greater academic rigor required of officers in the Field Artillery, the education levels for candidates at the Camp Taylor FACOTS were very similar to those of students at Camp Hancock. Of the 8737 officers who graduated from the Field Artillery Central Officers' Training School at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky from 16 August 1918 to its closure in February 1919, 6207 (71%) were college graduates or had some degree of college education. Of the remainder, 2416 (27.6%) had graduated from high school and 120 (1.4%) had only a grade school education. When examining the age of the graduates, 563 (6.4 %) were between 18 and 20; 5634 (64.5%) were from 21 to 26; 2076 (23.8%) were from 27 to 31; 448 (5.1%) were

¹⁰² Statistical information drawn from, *Four Months of Sand*, 45-6, 54, 71-2.

from 32 to 40, and only 16 (.2%) were over 41 years old.¹⁰³

Statistics from two different classes at the Camp Lee Infantry COTS illustrate the shifts in demographics of who was attending officers' training after the COTSs replaced the OTCs. They also highlight the influence of the Student Army Training Corps on who was entering the COTSs in the last months of the Great War. The statistics for the candidates of the 8th Company, Camp Lee Infantry COTS (who went through the course from July through October 1918), indicate the continued shift toward selecting candidates from the enlisted ranks of the army. Due to the requirement that all those seeking commissions had to first enlist in the army, every candidate listed his military rank at time of entry into the course. What is interesting is that a broad majority of the candidates (78.7%) had been NCOs prior to attending officers' training. Of the 8th Company's 173 candidates, 38 (22%) had been corporals; 68 (39.4%) had been sergeants; 3 (1.7%) had been sergeants first class; 19 (11%) had been first sergeants, and eight (4.6%) had been regimental or battalion sergeants major. Seven of the 37 privates in the company even had some degree of military service prior to entering the course. The high number of NCOs attending officers' training illustrates the army's continued policy of "robbing Peter to pay Paul," when it came to company-level leadership. This also explains the irritation of many company commanders in being forced to give up their NCOs to officers' training. The constant drain of solid NCOs from line units, as will be seen in the next chapter, played havoc in the training and cohesion building of companies, platoons, and squads.¹⁰⁴

The average age of the 8th Company's candidates was 26, and 35 (20%) had military service in the National Guard, Regular Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or with a foreign army, prior to America entering the war. One of these men, Arnold Kroepsch, had

¹⁰³ Raymond Walters, et al., *F.A.C.O.T.S.: The Story of the Field Artillery Central Officers' Training School*, Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1919), 74.

¹⁰⁴ Statistical information drawn from *Take His Name*, 15-26.

served three months with the regulars and nearly six months with the British Army's 14th London Territorials on the Western Front. The company also contained four soldiers who had attended, but failed out of, previous officers' training camps. One of these men, William Pierson, had washed out of the 1st OTC at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana and the third OTC at Camp Sherman, Ohio. The occupations listed by the 8th Company candidates prior to joining the army are in Table 7-5. Using the same criteria applied to the Fort Sheridan sample, after factoring out the students and those candidates whose occupations were unknown, approximately 85 percent of the candidates could be classified as having been employed in upper or middle-class professional or white collar jobs.¹⁰⁵

Table 7-5: Occupations of Camp Lee 8th Company ICOTS, July 1918

Office/Store Manager- 21	Indust. Foreman- 4	School Admin- 2	Police Sergeant-1
Accountant- 21	Insurance- 4	Secretary- 2	Advertising- 1
Clerk/Office work- 20	Farmer – 4	Purchase Agent- 2	Contractor- 1
Salesman- 17	Banker- 4	Artist/Designer- 2	Tree Surgeon- 1
Businessman- 14	Indust. Worker- 3	RA Enlisted – 2	Writer- 1
Lawyer- 9	Railroad Worker- 3	Mechanic- 2	Unknown- 4
Student- 8	Actor- 3	Building Inspector- 1	
Teacher- 5	Electrician- 3	Newspaperman- 1	
Engineer – 4	Detective-2	Security Guard-1	

The statistics for the candidates from the 6th Battalion, Camp Lee Infantry COTS who went through the course from October 1918 to January 1919, illustrate the dramatic change to the demographics of officers' training schools after SATC students began to flood the camps in the fall of 1918. Of the 167 candidates in the 6th Battalion, nearly 71 percent of them had been born between 1898 and 1900, thus making them age 18 through 20. This influx of younger candidates lowered the average age of the course to 21 to 22 years old. The youngest candidate, Robert G. Hunt, was born on 24 June 1900, making him 18 years and four months old at the time of the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. The blue collar jobs counted in this sample are industrial foreman, industrial worker, railroad worker, actor, detective, military enlisted, mechanic, electrician, police sergeant, and security guard.

Armistice.¹⁰⁶

The vast majority of these younger candidates were entering the schools directly from college and university SATC programs. This raised the overall education level of the men in the course. Of the 167 candidates, 153 (91.6%) were college graduates or had some level of college education. Of the remainder, three (1.7%) had graduated from preparatory school; five (3%) had graduated from high school, and six (3.5%) had less than a high school education. The influx of college students also witnessed a precipitous decline in those candidates with prior military service. The only candidate with any real military experience was Julien Bryan, who had served with the French Army for seven months as an ambulance driver and had chronicled his exploits in the book, *Ambulance 464*. Four candidates had attended the first Plattsburg OTC and had failed to obtain commissions, while nine others had attended military colleges.¹⁰⁷

Based on the samples from these camps, the regular officers may have been overhasty in their characterizations of the COTS candidates. On the surface, with the addition of the SATC cadets, one could even argue that the overall education level of the candidates, and thus their perceived quality, actually improved at the end of the war. This being said, it is still clear that the army was facing an uphill battle to fill the ranks of the training schools in late 1918 and had correspondingly lowered standards to fill the officer schools. However, the number of obviously unqualified candidates sent by fuming company commanders to fill the War Department's endless quotas, may have magnified the issue of overall candidate quality in the eyes of the COTS commanders.

At no time in the war did the Regular Army officer corps ever stray too far from their preference for college educated officers. In his final report, the Camp MacArthur COTS

¹⁰⁶ Statistical information drawn from, *Lieut VI*, 30-51.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

commander still maintained that, “It was found that the brightest men were those from the universities and colleges; also that it was these men who gave the greatest enthusiasm for the work.”¹⁰⁸ In the end, the SATC cadets seemed to offer a panacea for the War Department’s officer manpower woes by still retaining the benefit of having college educated men.

Unfortunately, for all its allure, the SATC path came with serious consequences. First of all, given the ages that these cadets were when entering the COTSS, it is obvious that they had spent very little time in college. Thus, whatever intellectual broadening or conditioning that the army hoped to gain from selecting these men was largely moot. More importantly, one should not disregard the inherent danger that the army was willing to accept in placing immature youths in command of combat units. Of these callow youngsters filling his camps, one COTS commander warned,

The incoming candidates from the Students’ Training Corps look like boys; quite a few of them seem to be about eighteen, underdeveloped, weak, needing the training I had as a boy in prep school. I doubt if your office contemplated such material being sent here to become officers after four months’ training. Some will not be nineteen when their four months are up.¹⁰⁹

It is generally difficult enough to direct young 18 and 19 year old privates; it is quite another to place them in command of soldiers who are dependent on their decision-making abilities and knowledge. It was perhaps fortunate that the war ended before these adolescent officers made it to the front.

During the war a French officer was reputed to have told his American counterpart that while raising a four million man army was no great feat, the Americans’ ability to create an

¹⁰⁸ “Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 15 November 1918” in RG 165 “Letters,...etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁰⁹ “Weekly Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp MacArthur, Texas to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, dated 19 October 1918,” in RG 165 “Letters,...etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

officer corps from virtually nothing was quite miraculous. In all fairness to the Great War U. S. Army, the sheer effort it shouldered in identifying, training, and selecting its 200,000 man strong officer corps was a prodigious accomplishment. Shortly after the end of the war, Peyton March explained,

In planning for an intensive course of training for three month there was no thought that trained officers could be produced in that short period of time. It was believed however that some of the necessary fundamentals could be taught, and that the course would permit the selection of those who showed that they were capable of becoming instructors and leaders of soldiers, and that belief was fully justified by the results.¹¹⁰

Although March's statement is certainly valid, one should not forget that this accomplishment was only achieved by cutting a number of corners. Teaching the fundamentals is a sound practice as long as the fundamentals taught are applicable and are linked to the skills that an officer needed to command in combat. As we have seen, this was often not the case in the training camps.

In the final analysis, the operation of the OTCs and SATC demonstrate the ad hoc and "stop-gap" nature of the American mobilization for the war. Some of the "corner cutting" was an inevitable result of the systemic problems of mass mobilization. Others, however, such as the ineffectiveness and lack of realism in the candidates' training were self-inflicted War Department wounds. While the army's makeshift officer training system generally managed to fill the ranks with an acceptable quality of officer (although even the quality and rank-filling was proving to be a chore in late 1918), the improvised character of the training produced leaders of wildly uneven abilities, questionable technical and tactical competencies, and unrealistic concepts of warfare. This fundamental flaw would dog the U. S. Army until the end of the war.

¹¹⁰ *War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 300.

Chapter 8
“Ninety-Day Wonders” and “Jumped-up Sergeants”
Stateside Mobilization and the Challenges of Small Unit Leadership

Until the creation of the COTs, most of the graduates from the officers’ training camps went directly from school into leadership or staff positions in units in the process of mobilizing or training. As these officers reported to their new units, most Regular Army officers realized that the OTCs were but an elementary school in the graduates’ overall military education. Following the traditions of the Old Army, the novice officer’s finishing school would be his “on the job training” within his unit. As a battalion commander later noted of his new officers,

Careful selection at the training camps has undoubtedly served to weed out the more defective material which presented itself for commissions. Three months of intensive exercise and the most superficial training in the theory of leadership have naturally failed to impress this human material, though it is of the finest quality, with the true character of officers. . . Their intelligence, enthusiasm, energy, and potential capacity for leadership are in no sense satisfactory substitutes for the knowledge and experience which in the main they lack.¹

This fact was not lost on the new officers. Lieutenant Milton Bernet recalled, “every candidate realized that if he were fortunate enough to receive a commission, he would have to supplement his actual work with a great deal of further study.”² Unfortunately, as Bernet and the other officers filling the new divisions in the fall and winter of 1917 and 1918 discovered, the pace and problems of mobilization left little time for completing the “graduate study” of their new trade or even filling in the gaps in their training left over from the OTCs.

¹ LTC Jennings C. Wise, “The Soldier’s Life in Battle,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVI, no. 11 (May 1920), 929.

² Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript “The World War As I Saw It” in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 35.

This chapter will examine how the army trained its small unit leaders as part of its overall plan for mobilizing, training, and deploying its divisions. It will specifically explore the selection and training of NCOs, the continued instruction of the new wartime officer corps in units, and the overall effectiveness of the preparation of both groups to meet the tactical challenges they would face in France. It will also investigate the following questions: what was the army's expectation of its junior officers and NCOs as combat leaders?; what were the average soldiers' perceptions of their leaders?; how effective was the army and its junior leaders at building cohesion within their small units?; how did systemic problems associated with mass mobilization (i.e., unit organization, the levy of soldiers, shortage of training equipment, etc.) exacerbate the issue of leadership training and competence?

With the OTCs often located on the same posts as the National Army cantonments, for the young "90 day wonders" it was a short walk from the OTC graduation field to their lives as company grade officers. The letters, diaries, and memoirs of those officers reveal that many of them were apprehensive and unsure about assuming their new roles. As one young officer recorded,

"Reposing special trust and confidence in my patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities," W(oodrow) Wilson, Esq. has this day appointed me 1st Lieut., Field Artillery, of his army. He's an optimist! . . . Getting used to being saluted. Losing the Uncle Tom feeling of "candidate." Occupied with size, shape and position of shoulder bars. Feel like a Knight of Pythias. . . Having had our spirits thoroughly broken by three months at Sheridan, find it hard to assume the mental attitude of honest-to-goodness officers.³

Some realized that it was not going to be an easy task to instill discipline in their independent-minded citizens-turned soldiers. An Oklahoma National Guard officer recalled, "Men who had lived all their life in the open and managed their own affairs found it difficult to obey someone

³ Anonymous, *Wine, Women and War: A Diary of Disillusionment* (New York: J.H. Sears and Company, 1926), 3, 9.

else in nearly everything they did, especially as it was not always explained why the thing was to be done.”⁴ Even the soothsayers of the new science of psychology gave dire warnings of the fate awaiting the new officers. Noting the effects of individualism and egalitarianism on American society, Yale professor and army consultant William Hocking wrote,

Those who say it is hard for an American to take orders may not realize that it is equally hard for the average American to give them. . . . While the experienced commander forgets his own special personality, and uses quite naturally the voice and authority of the organization, the raw commander is conscious of his individual self, and consequently realizes that the words falling out of his mouth have hardly the weight that should make men obey them. . . . He knows he has to face, not so much the surly criticism as the more searching humor of his men. . . . He needs the manner which only experience can justify, the manner of confidence, authority, prestige.⁵

Thus damned by science and uncertain of his own “confidence, authority, [and] prestige,” the young officer went forward to meet the men he would lead into battle.

As the officers made the fateful trip from candidate to combat leader, they carried with them, for better or worse, the Regular Army’s expectations of officership. This process of acculturation began the moment that the soldier entered the OTCs and continued during his early months within his new unit. These standards of personal conduct and models of combat leadership did not differ greatly from those of the prewar Regular Army. Given the regulars’ long standing drive to have “a proper military policy” instituted in the United States, it is little surprise that they fully intended to stamp their attitudes and expectations on the new officers.

The beginning of the young officer’s acculturation process often began with the man’s reading of many of the same semi-official publications for officers that had circulated prior to the war. As soon as the nation entered the war, James Moss and other prewar authors quickly

⁴ Captain Ben Chastaine, *Story of the 36th* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1920), 17.

⁵ William E. Hocking, *Morale and its Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), 131-2. Hocking observed American soldiers training in both the U.S. and in France. His writings were also published in *Infantry Journal* (May 1918).

printed new editions of the manuals for young officers. Given the early shortages of training publications, these books often served as textbooks or recommended reading for the impressionable candidates. They also became mediums for inculcating the novices with the army's values, codes of conduct, and expectations of leadership.

James Moss' *Officers' Manual* was perhaps the most widely used guide for young officers and officer candidates. Moss reprinted the manual in May 1917, and 135,000 copies of the work were printed during the war. Although the book provided a handy guide to the organization and workings of the army and provided a few hints or general maxims to aid young officers in their daily work, it was still much too concerned with the niceties of the peacetime army's "customs of the service." Neither it, nor any of the other reprints of these types of prewar semi-official publications, truly offered any real insights into combat leadership or any help in training a unit for war or preparing it to deploy overseas. What these manuals did do, however, was to serve as a means to inculcate the novices with the service's paternalistic culture and the belief that the officer was first and foremost a gentleman.

The indoctrination of officer candidates in the army's leadership culture of gentility, paternalism, and *noblesse oblige* continued through the war years. Within days of the United States entering the war, the Army Service School Press published *The Customs of the Service also Some Suggestions and Advice*, by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Miller. Miller stressed the importance of the candidates understanding the army's unwritten rules of conduct. He noted that, "in our social intercourse there are many little conventionalities which, although of no apparent intrinsic importance, are in the eyes of the world an index to character and breeding, and these conventionalities no gentleman can afford to ignore."⁶ He went on to describe such

⁶ Lieutenant Colonel Charles Miller, *The Customs of the Service also Some Suggestions and Advice* (Fort Leavenworth: Army Service School Press, 1917), 7.

weighty matters as when a lieutenant should be addressed as “Mister” rather than his rank, the importance of paying due “attention to which her position entitles her” to the commanding officer’s wife at social functions (“especially if she be an elderly woman”), and that since the regiment’s Chief Musician was usually, “above the average enlisted man in education, refinement and artistic temperament, they are generally shown a certain amount of cordiality by officers.”⁷ One wonders that given the grave challenges that the army faced in training its officers, if its time and energy would have been better spent in worrying about commanding platoons in combat and less on the feelings of artistic bandmasters.

Whatever the value of refining the manners of the army’s young officers, the army’s expectations of gentility echoed throughout much of their training. Lieutenant Colonel James McAndrews warned the second class of the provisional second lieutenants graduating from Fort Leavenworth to “remember at all times that you are gentlemen worthy of confidence.”⁸ Throughout their time at the third OTC at Camp Devens, for example, the camp’s senior instructor, Lieutenant Colonel Masee, constantly reminded the candidates that, “War is a gentleman’s game and you will play it as gentlemen.”⁹ Major Christian Bach informed the new officers that these attributes were key to their ability to command because their moral ascendancy over their men came from their being morally straight, physically strong, and having the strength to do what is ethically right.¹⁰ As noted in the last chapter, one of the fears of some Regular Army officers was that the rush to fill the commissioned ranks had allowed men into the officer corps who were not only “lacking in the instincts of a gentleman,” but also were never

⁷ Ibid., 10, 14, 18.

⁸ LTC J. W. McAndrews, *Address to the Second Class of Provisional Second Lieutenants, April 17, 1917* (CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.), 7.

⁹ Fort Devens OTC Yearbook Committee, *The Pick: 3rd O.T.C., Camp Devens, Mass* (Boston: George H. Dean, 1918), 15.

¹⁰ Major C. A. Bach, “Leadership,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 8 (February 1918), 607.

likely to improve their social horizons.¹¹

As they had before the war, the regulars also placed great emphasis on the need for the new officers to exhibit paternalism when dealing with their troops. Echoing the army's pre-war paternalistic creed, one colonel advised,

One of the rules is expressed in the regulation that familiarity between yourself and enlisted men is inadmissible. This seems like a harsh rule in democratic America, but it is one which you will find necessary to apply, but with sound judgment and discretion... While your dignity must be sustained and undue familiarity avoided, your manner toward your men should be marked by simplicity and kindness... So treat your men as to cause each one to think that you are personally interested in him and in his success as a soldier.¹²

Another officer maintained that the officers should always provide "a watchful care for the comforts and welfare of those in your charge." Since, "soldiers must be like children. You must see that they have shelter, food and clothing, the best that your utmost efforts can provide."¹³

In many ways, the U. S. Army's focus on paternalistic gentility mirrored similar beliefs in the Great War's British Army. In *Leadership in the Trenches*, historian G. D. Sheffield argues that while the war somewhat loosened the army's harsh discipline and the upper classes' grip on the officer corps, the generally good wartime morale of the British army still rested on pre-war assumptions of officer paternalism and the social deference of the enlisted man. He notes that despite the large influx of new officers promoted from the ranks or appointed from the civilian middle class, regular officers were largely able to inculcate their public school ideas of noblesse oblige, self-sacrifice and paternalism on the hearts and minds of their "temporary gentlemen."¹⁴

¹¹ Report of the Commander, COTS, Camp Lee, Virginia to Chief, Training and Instruction Branch, War Plans Division, Subject: Weekly Report, dated 7 September 1918" in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, 7-56.2 – 56.4, Box 207, Entry 310, "COTS Lee."

¹² Colonel C. H. Hitchcock, "A Letter to a Training Camp Student," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (July 1917), 59.

¹³ Bach, "Leadership," 608.

¹⁴ G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale, and Discipline in the British Army of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4-8, 38-40, 56-60, 68-83, 111-113, 178.

Although the four week cadet courses that commissioned the rankers and civilians were woefully deficient in training critical combat leadership skills, Sheffield maintains that their focus on instilling the attributes and values of upper-class gentility within the candidates was perfectly suited to the military culture of the British army.¹⁵ Regardless of social background, officers who were able to provide for the physical needs of their soldiers, exhibit courage under fire, led from the front, and exercise of degree of tactical common sense meet the “social contract” demanded by their men and thus buttressed the overall morale, discipline, and combat effectiveness of the army as a whole.

Michael Ramsay has argued that while the British conception of combat leadership rested on paternalism and gentility, the class consciousness and social assumptions of the prewar officer corps largely hindered efforts by reformers inside the army to adequately deal with massive changes that occurred in warfare between 1870 and the Great War. In *Command and Cohesion*, Ramsay notes that, like prewar American regular officers, the largely rural aristocratic and gentry-based British officer corps believed that industrialization and urbanization had sapped the lower classes of their courage, manliness, and patriotism and had left behind dangerous strains of individualism and liberalism.¹⁶ As with the Americans, much of the British debate on small unit tactics centered on how to balance the need for obedience and discipline in what many officers saw as a flawed pool of potential recruits with the increased demand for soldiers able to exercise individual initiative and judgment due to the changing nature of warfare.

To Ramsay, the downside of gentility was that it propagated a culture in the British officer corps that (unlike the Americans) consciously denigrated professional study and tended to concentrate decision-making at the highest possible level. He also maintains that the regular

¹⁵ Ibid., 54-5.

¹⁶ M.A. Ramsey, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army 1870-1918* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 56-73.

British officers deliberately tried to instill class consciousness within their new wartime officers and demanded such a great degree of separation between the ranks that officer paternalism was actually circumscribed.¹⁷ This last trait was also evident in the American officer corps. As one colonel warned new officers, “One of the rules is expressed in the regulation that familiarity between yourself and enlisted men is inadmissible. This seems like a harsh rule in democratic America, but it is one which you will find necessary to apply, but with sound judgment and discretion.”¹⁸ There were certainly limits to democracy in the wartime “democratic army.” As with the British, the willingness of some American officers to abuse the rule that “rank hath its privileges” at times undermined the morale of numerous doughboys.

The seriousness with which the regulars viewed the need for all officers to act as gentlemen was reflected in its wartime use of military law to police its commissioned ranks. The records of courts martial reveal that not all the army’s officers were up to the moral expectations of their ranks and positions. As the officer ranks swelled, so to did the number of officers brought before courts martial. From 6 April 1917 to 30 June 1918, the army tried 642 officers, but, from 1 July 1918 to 30 June 1919 the number more than tripled to 1,948. Most charges during this period actually occurred before, or shortly after, the Armistice. Trials of lieutenants accounted for over 75 percent of all officer courts martial.¹⁹

Nearly 37 percent of all of the trials of officers in the later half of 1918 were related to violations of just three Articles of War: drunkenness, absence without leave, and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. As the case of Captain John M. Andrews demonstrates, the army took its concepts of “officers and gentlemen” very seriously. Andrews, an officer of the 88th Division’s 349th Infantry, went on something of a binge between 30 August and

¹⁷ Ibid., 38-41 and 58-60.

¹⁸ Hitchcock, “A Letter to a Training Camp Student,” 51-2.

¹⁹ War department, *Annual Report for 1918*, Vol. 1, 672.

9 September 1917 in Des Moines, Iowa. During that time, he was seen drunk in uniform on several days, consorted with and “occupied a bedroom with a woman not his wife,” and, “while in uniform, consort[ed] with prostitutes and did become drunk with them in a public place.” To add insult to injury, the officer went absent without leave to conduct his debauchery, and in the process “incapacitated himself for the performance of military duty by excessive use of intoxicating liquors.” The court found Andrews guilty of all the charges, except being AWOL, and recommended his discharge from the service. In another case, Second Lieutenant Charles Ferguson was found guilty of both theft and conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman, for stealing a \$50.00 overcoat from a fellow officer. It was clear that the regulars were going to make damn sure that the new “emergency” officers lived by their code and expectations of officership.²⁰

The immutability of the officer code of conduct was also displayed in the actions of Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower. While commanding the Tank Center at Camp Colt, Pennsylvania, Eisenhower had to deal with a new officer who had been caught cheating at cards by his fellow officers. Ike gave the officer the choice of resigning his commission or facing courts martial. The officer opted to resign. Shortly after the resignation, Eisenhower was visited by the cashiered officer’s Congressman and father. They tried to convince him to tear up the resignation and transfer the officer to another post, and made veiled threats to harm Ike’s career if he did not comply with their wishes. Eisenhower refused to change his order and argued that if he failed to act, he would merely pass his problem on to another commander and undermine the foundations of the officer corps.²¹

²⁰ General Order 143, 14 November 1917., General Order 152, 7 December 1917., Annual Report for 1918, Vol. 1, 672.

²¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 143-4.

Beyond the desire to instill a veneer of gentility on the new officers, when it came to the subject of leadership Lieutenant Colonel Miller and other the regulars could offer little. Miller admitted that “The management of men is a vast unbound sea upon which the young officer sets sail without pilot and without chart,” and that “there is no textbook nor treatise to guide him in this, the most important feature of his profession.”²² Like Moss, and most of the other Regular Army pundits, Miller could only offer broad rules of thumb and hoary chestnuts for a young officer to follow when it came to leading soldiers. A good bit of their counsel sounded much like the advice that Polonius gave Laertes in *Hamlet*: live within your means, don’t drink, don’t gamble, don’t grumble, and don’t gossip. As for the troops, the old paternalistic ethos held sway;

With regards to his company the captain stands in the same light as a father to a large family of children. It is his duty to provide for their comfort, sustenance and pleasure; enforce strict rules of obedience, punish the refractory and reward the deserving.²³

Unfortunately, when it came to some of the most important issues of combat leadership, dealing with battlefield fear and stress and motivating men to kill and risk death, Miller, Moss, and the other “authorities” were tellingly silent.

In addition to the reissued manuals and guides, the war saw an explosion of new War Department and semi-official privately published handbooks. Myron Adams, the morale officer for the Fort Sheridan 2nd OTC worked with some of the camp’s instructors to publish *The Officer’s Responsibility for His Men*. This small tome not only encapsulated the army’s paternalistic outlook on leadership, it also melded it with the crusading spirit of civilian

²² Miller., 28.

²³ Ibid., 29. Similarly, McAndrews informed his Leavenworth candidates, “The highest efficiency possible must be your goal. The price that you will pay to attain it is made up of the items of clean living, sobriety, industry, honor, and a whole-hearted devotion to your profession.” LTC J. W. McAndrews, Address to the Second Class of Provisional Second Lieutenants, 17 April 1917, 5-6.

progressivism. Adams admonished his readers, “The officer entrusted with a company in the National Army has a responsibility in caring for his men, equal to that in commanding them.”²⁴ Although one of the work’s four chapters was devoted to the practical care of the soldier from the aspect of field sanitation, food, clothing, and shelter, the bulk of the book provided the reader a guide for dealing with issues of recreation, religion, “moral problems,” and the “mental training of the enlisted man.”

In true progressive fashion, the paternalistic care of the soldier also extended to moral uplift and social engineering. The candidate was informed, “The leisure hours of the men can be made valuable or dangerous,” and warned, “An unwise use of leisure hours results in destroying the good spirit of the company, multiplying delinquencies and discrediting the character of the army among civilians.” However, “The wholesome use of leisure hours contributes directly to military efficiency, to ease of training, and to general morale.”²⁵ Thus, a good officer was the one who took, “social measures to diminish sexual temptations,” and worked to eliminate such vices as gambling and the drinking of alcohol. As civilian progressives sought to uplift the uneducated immigrant street urchin, “fallen women,” or men addicted to drink, the “social working” officer sought to steer the child-like soldier toward cleanliness in body, mind, and soul for the good of the army, society, and nation. Again, while these pleas for uplift and paternalism served a military purpose, they still failed to address the salient issues of combat leadership.

The army did not completely wash its hands of the issue of leading men in battle, but it consistently equated the issue with the concept of discipline throughout the war. In other words, if the young officer inculcated iron discipline in his soldiers, the demands of combat leadership became relatively easy and manageable. The officer simply ordered and the soldier simply

²⁴ Myron Adams, ed., *The Officer’s Responsibility for His Men* (Fort Sheridan: Locally Published, 1917), viii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

obeyed. Iron discipline was the remedy for battlefield fear, confusion and friction. Miller argued that discipline had to be the focus of all training if a unit was to be successful in combat. He defined discipline as an “ever present respect for superiors, and an instant, cheerful obedience” that produced, “a spirit of loyalty to leader and organization which will result in *unity and promptness of action, in instant response to the will of the leader.*” (original emphasis)²⁶ Thus when it came to the tension between unquestioned obedience and initiative, both Moss and Miller advised the aspiring officer to follow his superior’s orders.²⁷

Interestingly, when Allied officers’ vision of leadership and discipline meshed with American principles, the War Department even turned to them to drive home its expectations of combat leadership. In March 1918, the Army War College printed the lectures that the British Colonel Applin had given to American officers on discipline, leadership and training, as well as a British officer’s “Hints to Young Officers.” In his lectures, Applin evoked the specter of the Russian soldier Soviets to drive home his message that the American officers had to exhibit leadership that produced “instant and willing obedience to all orders.” To Applin this “instant obedience” entailed no questioning, no second guessing, and “no moment for thought.”²⁸ Thus, in their tactical training, in their lectures, and in their personal reading the young officer and officer candidates were bombarded by a steady message that unquestioning obedience to orders and the will of their senior commanders was much more important than preparing them for independent thought, action, or initiative.

²⁶ Miller., 27.

²⁷ James A. Moss, *Officers Manual*, 6th Edition (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Company, May 1917), 219-221.

²⁸ Army War College, *Lectures on Discipline and Training by Colonel Applin of the British General Staff and Hints to Young Officers by a British Officer* (Washington D. C.: War College Press, February 1918), 8.

Applin's views were amplified by the advice that senior American regular officers gave the newly commissioned men. McAndrews warned his new second lieutenants that when dealing with their superiors,

Do not set up your own judgment against theirs. If they seem to you to be at fault, have patience, as time will probably show you that they were right. And always remember that implicit obedience to orders and wishes of your superiors is the foundation of discipline.²⁹

Colonel C. H. Hitchcock pointedly instructed young officers that,

The conduct and orders of your superiors must not be criticized, questioned, or even commented upon...This rule is very contrary to our civilian customs and practices, but is necessary to discipline. An order is an order and is to be carried out without cavil or evasion. The only discussion admissible is to as[k] how it may best be obeyed.³⁰

Both McAndrews and Hitchcock made one thing perfectly clear, the young officer was as bound by the rules of unquestioned obedience as the NCO and private.

The constant emphasis placed on discipline and unquestioning obedience by regular officers, revealed a major source of tension within the American concept of combat leadership. Even before the war, it had dawned on some in the officer corps that the realities of the modern battlefield were making new demands on the leadership, abilities, and decision-making of junior leaders. As the battlefield extended in both depth and breadth without any subsequent improvement in communications and control methods, it became increasingly difficult for commanders at the battalion level and above to exercise their traditional role as the primary director of combat actions.

Of all of the major combatants in the war, the Americans' German adversaries were the most developed in dealing with this challenge. In response to the confusion and isolation of the

²⁹ LTC J. W. McAndrews, *Address to the Second Class of Provisional Second Lieutenants*, 6.

³⁰ Hitchcock, "A Letter to a Training Camp Student," 49-52.

new battlefield, the German Army had built its wartime doctrine on long-standing traditions of command and control that expected subordinate leaders, at all levels, to use their initiative to achieve the given mission directed mainly by the broad guidance and intent of their superior commanders. Since no order could ever cover the myriad of eventualities that occurred in battle or could anticipate the opportunities that randomly opened and close in combat, the Germans were content to tell their subordinates what must be accomplished and then let them adapt their plans to the terrain, enemy, and other specific realities that they faced on their portion of the battlefield. This, of course, required that leaders in the German Army, from general to corporal, understood the army's doctrine, were trained to best use the resources at their disposal, and most importantly, were practiced at using their initiative, rapidly making decisions, and issuing orders with little or no reference to the higher headquarters.³¹

To some extent the *IDR* acknowledged this German view of combat leadership. It stated, "subordinates must...be given great latitude in the execution of their tasks," and that "a subordinate who is reasonably sure that his intended action is such as would be ordered by the commander, were the later present and in possession of the facts, has enough encouragement to go ahead confidently."³² The manual also warned, however, that "independence must not become license," and that there was still "one supreme will to which all must conform." Ultimately, the young officer was warned that any responsibility for an exercise of initiative that went wrong "rests on the subordinate."³³ This was perhaps less than reassuring to neophyte officers already unsure of their own authority, training, and knowledge.

³¹ Martin Samuels, *Command or Control: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies: 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 3-5, 289.

³² War Department, *Infantry Drill Regulations, 1913, corrected to December 31, 1917* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 99.

³³ *Ibid.*

Some American officers during the war argued for the U. S. Army to follow a path of command and control that was similar to that of the Germans and broader than those outlined in the *IDR*. In July 1918, Captain W. N. Hughes argued in the *Infantry Journal* that given the deadliness of the new battlefield, junior officers and NCOs had to be trained to quickly assume the duties of their superiors, but to accomplish this, the young leaders had to be schooled in taking the initiative. He believed that this skill had to be inculcated in leaders as soon as they reached their units and pleaded that their senior commanders should “carefully refrain from interfering with any system which is producing results, remembering that no two men will proceed along exactly the same line.” Hughes also stressed that interference by superior officers, “not only destroy initiative, but also weaken the authority of the subordinate commander over his men.”³⁴

In May of 1918 the journal also published a series of lectures on infantry tactics from the British Lieutenant Colonel J. L. J. Clarke. In one of the articles, he accurately framed the problem that the U. S. Army faced in combat leadership. He noted, “We have seen that the necessity for infantry of fighting exclusively in skirmish lines had increased the difficulty of direction of combat and the importance of the action of subordinates (chiefs of platoons and half platoons).”³⁵ Later, Clarke unequivocally stated, “The platoon is the bedrock of modern infantry fighting. On its fighting efficiency everything else depends.”³⁶ Unfortunately, while Clarke identified one of the glaring blind spots in American (and also the British) doctrine and tactical thought, he offered no real solution to the problem.

³⁴ Captain W. N. Hughes, “A Practical Plan for Infantry Training,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (July 1917), 36-38.

³⁵ LTC J. L. J. Clarke, “Infantry in the Attack,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 11 (May 1918), 809.

³⁶ LTC J. L. J. Clarke, “Notes on Infantry Work on Western Front,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 11 (May 1918), 842-3.

This tension between obedience and initiative plagued the American Army throughout the war. On one hand, it was clear to many officers that the ability of field and flag rank commanders to exercise direct leadership in combat was waning. On the other hand, no colonel or general was willing to relinquish the reins of responsibility for the conduct of battle into the hands of junior officers and NCOs, especially given their subordinates' lack of experience and training.

Nowhere was this tension more clearly seen than in an editorial printed in the *Infantry Journal* in January 1918. In one part of the article the author points out that, "In order to obtain maximum efficiency, officers, noncommissioned officers, and men must be taught the qualities of resource, independence, and self-reliance- qualities which go to make the best soldier in the long run."³⁷ Yet, a few paragraphs later, he demands,

...in planning training, the first and most important step before you can accomplish anything is to inculcate discipline in the ranks in its most rigid form...unless you begin with discipline, you will not obtain the full benefits of your efforts. The individual will not be a dependable cog in what would otherwise be a smooth-running machine. Only when a man salutes properly and smartly and is smartly dressed, equipment clean, etc, and when he stands at attention properly, his mind and body alert, only then is he ready to follow any order with confidence and precision...³⁸

Discipline is an unquestionable necessity for any military organization. It is essential to the officer's ability to command and the soldier's ability to obey in the face of death and danger. But, at what point does discipline and obedience become the enemy of battlefield command, control and intelligent leadership?

The army's inability to reconcile the demands of strict control and obedience with the needs of junior officer independence and initiative sparked a lively and telling debate in the pages of the *Cavalry Journal* in the winter and spring of 1918. The journal's editor sparked the

³⁷ Editorial Staff, "The Spirit of Training," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 7 (January 1918), 519-521.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

debate by recounting his experiences of sitting on an examination board for young officers. The editor noted that the “results of the practical examination in Minor Tactics came as a bewildering disappointment.” He recounted,

The officers being examined showed no training in leadership; their estimates of the situation were insufficient and inaccurate...instead of giving orders to their platoon leaders when a situation required action was announced [to] them, assumed a far-a-way look, as if they were searching their memory for precedents, and answered as if they were reciting a lesson of abstract theories: “I would do so-and-so;” “I would give such and such orders;” “I would send such and such a message.”³⁹

After evaluating the machine gun companies of several regiments, he was astounded by the officers’ unwillingness to take the initiative and act without direct orders from their superiors.

When he asked the officers why this was the case,

One of the officers...replied: “why, Colonel, all my service I’ve been jumped on so hard if anything that I attempted to do without authority went wrong, that I have learned the safest way is to do only what I knew beforehand will be approved.” And the other chimed in: “Same here!”⁴⁰

He found that the Regular Army had also so long labored under the same problem that it contained far too many officers, “whose initiative was, by their training in those regiments, completely destroyed.” Over all he worried that the officer corps was largely, “untrained to leadership and without initiative.”⁴¹

The response to the editor’s indictment of junior officer leadership and initiative was not long in coming. In the journal’s next issue one regular officer blamed the problems on the army’s own culture and the narrow mental horizons of many of its senior officers. He denounced instances where “commanders have forbidden their subordinates from conducting tactical exercises, merely because such particular exercises were not specifically described in

³⁹ Editorial Staff, “Why is it?” *Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 116 (October 1917), 268-272.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

detail in the drill books.”⁴² The writer laid the blame for “any observed lack of initiative and spirit of leadership in juniors” on,

1. A long extant deep rooted struggle hold grip of bureaucratic administration. Papers must be kept straight whether the battle be won or lost.
2. Centralization of control, command and instruction.
3. Insufficient basic training.
4. A failure on the part of a majority of those charged particularly with instruction to realize and visualize the necessities and to take advantage of such latitude as given them to decentralize and to force subordinates to assume responsibility and the initiative.⁴³

If the army was going to solve its problems with junior leaders, its senior commanders were going to have to divorce themselves of the desire to maintain absolute control and change the way they trained their young officers.

One of the young officers in question also offered his critique of the army’s culture of absolute command, control, and obedience. The officer, writing under the name “One of them,” argued that the *Cavalry Journal*’s editor was off the mark in his disparagement of the new officers. “One of Them” blamed much of the problem of junior officer initiative on the army’s school system. As he pointedly observed, his instructors were too tied to teaching by “the book,” that it became the, “all and all of their instruction as they handed it down to the next generation.” The officer recounted,

I have been red-inked at a school solution of a Grippenkurl problem for a departure from the approved solution. I was not informed that I violated any principle but that a second lieutenant could not improve a solution of Grippenkurl therefore a departure was necessarily wrong. Thereafter, knowing what my instructor wanted, which was quite a game at these schools, I memorized the solution and gave them verbatim...Immediately I received excellent marks and saved myself the labor of original thought...Thus instead of mental development, the young officer received a training in mental gymnastics... Is it any wonder that

⁴² H. R. H., “Why is it? An Answer” *Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 117 (January 1918), 221- 423.

⁴³ Ibid.

the edge of our initiative and keenness to assume responsibility are somewhat blunted?⁴⁴

As he saw it, the greatest failure in his training was that the army, through its schools and instructors, had beaten any desire or ability to exercise initiative out of its junior leaders.

Although the contentious exchange waged in the pages of the *Cavalry Journal* highlights the fact that some in the officer corps recognized the glaring issues with company-level leadership, it also underscored the fact that the army had done a very poor job at mitigating the problem. In the spring of 1918, just as the bulk of American divisions began to deploy to France, it seems that the army had not reconciled the tension between obedience and control and the need for initiative in its junior leaders. Since the modern battlefield operated under its own logic and realities, the junior leaders were going to be thrust into situations where they had to act on their own regardless of the desires and proclivities of their senior officers. However, as the senior commanders and the army's schools had failed to adequately prepare the company-level leaders for this challenge, the captains, lieutenants, and NCOs were going to have to learn these lessons under the unforgiving taskmaster of combat.

Although the exchange in the *Cavalry Journal* revealed that some officers were aware of the problems with the army's leadership training, throughout the war, regular officers tended to place the burden of repairing these deficiencies back on the junior officers themselves. Time and time again, the young officers were browbeaten by their Regular Army superiors to take responsibility for completing the professional education that the army had failed so miserably to provide. Colonel C. H. Hitchcock chided,

By law and regulations you are the superior of the men under you. You must

⁴⁴ "One of Them," "Why is it? Another Answer" *Cavalry Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 118 (April 1918), 556-558.

make this a fact and not a mere theory. This is the first thing. You must not allow any of the men under you to know more of your profession than you do, and you must not allow them to surpass you in any of the true soldierly quality.⁴⁵

Major Christian Bach warned his novices that “Men will not have confidence in an officer unless he knows his business,” and sharply pronounced, “If you have a rotten company, it will be because you are a rotten captain.”⁴⁶ It does seem that the majority of the new officers took this charge seriously and studiously applied themselves to expanding their knowledge. Regrettably, those officers who tried this course of self improvement still found themselves stymied by the continued prevalence of obsolete doctrine and their inability to sort the best tactical practices from the flood of information coming from the host of official and semi-official publications.

The War Department attempted to resolve its monumental problem of preparing its tactical units for war by instituting a standardized training plan for all levels of command within a division. On 27 August 1917, the War Department issued the pamphlet *Infantry Training* to serve as the mandatory guide for readying divisions to fight in France. The pamphlet delineated the responsibility of commanders at all echelons for the training of their soldiers, mandated the establishment of 13 divisional schools for specialists, and provided a weekly training plan for the instruction of infantry and machine gun companies.⁴⁷ The total course of instruction was to take 16 weeks, and its intent was to be make it possible for the division’s units “to take their places on the line,” with a “minimum of training in France.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Hitchcock, “A Letter to a Training Camp Student.”

⁴⁶ Major C. A. Bach, “Leadership,” 607-8.

⁴⁷ War Department, *Infantry Training* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 27 August 1917), 7, 11-12, 20-9. The divisional schools were to be: Infantry School of Arms; Artillery School; School for Stable Sergeants and Farriers; School for Mess Sergeants, Bakers, and Cooks; School for Horseshoers; School for Company Mechanics; School of Equation; School for Supply Officers and Supply Sergeants; School for Clerks; School for Saddlers and Cobblers; Signal School; School for Bandsmen and Buglers; and the School for Hygiene and Sanitation. The Infantry School of Arms was to provide technical instruction in musketry, grenades, the bayonet, machine guns, field engineering and fortifications, and gas defense.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

From the beginning, the instruction to be given in the divisions' training in the United States was at odds with the wishes of General Pershing. On the very first page of the pamphlet, the War College author clearly stated that the "training for trench warfare is of paramount importance," and declared, "every effort should be devoted to making all squads from the squad and platoon upwards proficient in this kind of training."⁴⁹ This guidance conflicted with Pershing's desire to place more emphasis on "open warfare" and to leave much of the training for trench warfare for after the units arrived in France. On 20 December 1917, the War Department extended the standard training plan from 16 to 18 weeks. This move was partially made to appease Pershing by adding more emphasis on maneuver warfare.⁵⁰ However, much of these changes were superficial and did not greatly differ from the plan issued in August 1917. In instructions issued on 27 August 1918 to the commanders of the divisions being mobilized late in the war, the War Department stipulated that the new training plan would focus on "open warfare with minimum instruction in trench warfare."⁵¹ The War Department followed these instructions up with *Training Circular No. 12: Combined Training of a Division* issued on 10 October 1918. The training circular again stressed the need for divisions to be well trained in open warfare, but failed to give any meaningful directions in how to achieve that end. Whatever the merit of the changes that the War Department tried to implement, they arrived too late to change the stateside training of American divisions in any consequential way.

The original 16 week training plan was to consist of 640 total hours of instruction. Of this time, the soldiers were to spend 41 hours in bayonet training, 56 hours in close order drill, 57 hours in extended order and trench warfare drills, and 27 hours in trench construction. In weapons training, the soldiers were to spend 40 hours in musketry and the fundamentals of the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Annual Report for 1918*, 297.

⁵¹ Ibid., 297, 310.

rifle, followed by 80 hours of individual, squad, and platoon firing. All soldiers were to spend 31 hours in hand grenade training and six hours of familiarization training on machine guns, automatic rifles, and the other weapons of trench warfare. Weapons specialists (automatic riflemen and machine gunners) were scheduled an additional 80 hours in range firing, while other members of the company spent that time in additional trench warfare training. Gas warfare and defense accounted for only 14 hours of the training plan.⁵² At all times the unit's officers and NCOs were supposed to continue to hone their skills through lectures, unit schools, and hands on practice. Once the basic training of the companies was complete, the divisions were to receive an additional months of training to focus on regimental, brigade, and division operations.

Although the standardized training plan seemed very complete on paper, it proved to be very difficult to execute in reality. The systemic problems of mass mobilization that had so plagued officers' training were redoubled in the wartime training of units. Across the country, the order to have the divisional cantonments ready to receive the first draftees by August 1917 led to a frenzy of activity and quickly showed the army's lack of preparation for such a massive mobilization. On 22 May 1917, George Marshall wrote an acquaintance,

We are suffering from a serious lack of sufficient officers and non-commissioned officers of the regular army, particularly at the larger headquarters and training camps. The commissioned officers now available are simply overwhelmed with work. Difficulty is being experienced in obtaining the necessary supplies for the present camps. Tentage is not available. Cantonments for some 200,000 men must be built in this department within two months.⁵³

The War Department had to locate suitable land for the training posts and build a complete road, water, and barracks infrastructure on the new sites. Much of this work was still being done when National Guard and National Army units arrived in camp.

⁵² Ibid., 20-23.

⁵³ George Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. I, *The Soldierly Spirit: December 1880-June 1939*, edited by Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 102.

One guardsman recalled that when his unit arrived at his mobilization station near New Orleans, they discovered that it was “at the time a cypress swamp” that the soldiers had to drain and clear. Despite their efforts to improve drainage, after heavy rains the floor of his tent was six inches deep in water. One of his soldiers on guard duty even “killed an alligator during the night thinking that it was a German creeping up on him.”⁵⁴ The number of accounts by World War I veterans that mentioned their work in pulling stumps or otherwise preparing their camps for military use, indicate that this was a rather common experience in the early months of the war. Upon arriving at Camp Dodge, Iowa after being drafted in September 1917, Walter Aamothe discovered that since “the camp was not ready for us” he and his comrades mostly worked to turn a cornfield into a parade ground. He also noted that shortages of food and poor staff work meant that he existed on “black coffee and stew for weeks.” The uniform shortages meant that for several weeks, the young recruits had to perform their duties in whatever shoes and clothing that they had brought with them from home. This entire muddle meant that he did no regular drill or training until he was shipped to Camp Pike, Arkansas after being in the service for over two months.⁵⁵ The 89th Division forming at Camp Funston also faced a host of shortages. The division commander, Leonard Wood, had his supply officers buy blue denim overalls to give the new soldiers some semblance of uniformity when no uniforms were forthcoming from the War Department.⁵⁶

As they tried to cope with the mounting problems of mobilization, commanders and staff officers at all levels constantly bombarded their subordinates with requests for information and

⁵⁴ H. A. Honaker, AEF North Russia and 142 MG BN, File WWI 2318, USAMHI. WWI Veterans’ Survey.

⁵⁵ 2LT Walter J. Aamothe, Officers’ Training Schools, Camp Pike, File # WWI-6372, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey. For other examples of the unreadiness of the new posts, see, Charles Camp, *History of the 305th Field Artillery* (Garden City: The Country Life Press, 1919), 21-2.

⁵⁶ George H. English, Jr. *History of the 89th Division, U.S.A* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing Company, 1920), 27.

details of soldiers to accomplish the myriad assortment of chores required in the expanding posts. Despite the War Department's standard training, these other demands continually drained men from training. One officer recalled, "In their efforts to supply details for all of these objectives, Company Commanders found schedules impossible." For 19 November 1917 alone, the 353rd Infantry had to provide two and a half companies to do engineer work on post: 12 carpenters, 12 laborers, and six plumbers to build a detention camp; 11 men to do fatigue work for a truck company, and five men to work fatigue duty for the YMCA. Furthermore, "when the guard and school details were added to this list, few were left on the drill grounds."⁵⁷ One exasperated company commander in the 78th Division recalled that his higher headquarters demanded,

...reports on how many men we had; how many shirts each man had; how many extra shoe-laces were in our possession; how many men had W[ar]. R[isk]. insurance; how many were yet to be inoculated and how many times. Twice a day that I have to report for officers meetings; twice a day would the Colonel hold forth on the reports the general wanted, which company commanders would prepare at once, personally, and writing; then the adjutant would begin on the reports the colonel wanted; the supply officer would chime in with a few more that he had to have by six o'clock at the latest. Life was a veritable nightmare of typewritten figures... Drill was carried on in the intervals of lining up for another check or inspection.

The young officer concluded that as a result of this frenetic and often pointless activity, "the men, quite naturally, looked upon the officers as a set of lunatics who didn't know their own minds for 10 minutes at a time."⁵⁸ This last comment highlighted the ultimate effect of this muddle and confusion. Leadership rests upon a foundation of mutual trust between the leaders and the led. When the leader seems to act in a manner that indicates to his men that he has no idea what is going on, or seems unable to provide those articles that his soldiers need, his

⁵⁷ Captain Charles Dienst, et al., *They're From Kansas: History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment, 89th Division, National Army* (Wichita: The Eagle Press, 1921), 10-11.

⁵⁸ B. A. Colonna, ed. *The History of Company B, 311th Infantry in the World War* (Freehold, NJ: Transcript Printing House, 1922), 10.

leadership and effectiveness is called into question by the soldiers. Although many soldiers understood that their leaders were being hobbled by forces beyond their control, it was still not a situation that encouraged trust and confidence among the men in the army or its officers.

One of the gravest shortages that the army faced in 1917 was of arms and equipment. The experience of the 82nd Division demonstrates the effects that the equipment shortages had on training and leadership development. The acute shortage of weapons in the 82nd Division forced officers to contract with local saw mills for the production of dummy rifles. The "Camp Gordon 1917 Model Rifle," as the doughboys derisively called the wooden weapons, allowed units to conduct limited instructions in close order marching and bayonet training but had few other useful purposes. Though the 82nd Division was formed in August 1917, some of the unit's infantry regiments were not completely armed with rifles until the first week of February 1918.⁵⁹ Rifles were but one of the shortages that hamstrung the division's training. The division Chief of Staff, Colonel G. Edward Buxton, recalled,

The training of specialists in the United States was necessarily of a theoretical character. The Divisional Automatic Rifle School possessed about a dozen Chauchat rifles; the regiments had none. Colt machine guns were issued to machine gun companies, although this weapon was never to be used in battle. The Stokes Mortar platoon never saw a 3-inch Stokes Mortar while in the United States, and the 37-mm gun platoons possessed collectively one of these weapons during the last two or three weeks of their stay at Camp Gordon. A limited number of offensive and defensive hand grenades were obtained and thrown by selected officers and non-commissioned officers at the Division Grenade School. The men of one regiment witnessed a demonstration where four rifle grenades were fired.⁶⁰

These shortages not only hindered the training of the unit's weapons specialists, but also prevented the junior officers from understanding the employment and potential of the new

⁵⁹ 328th Infantry Historical Committee, *History of the Three Hundred and Twenty-eighth Infantry Regiment* (No publisher, 1922), 7-8.

⁶⁰ G. Edward Buxton, ed. *Official History of the 82nd Division American Expeditionary Forces* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1919), 4.

military technologies.

Equipment problems were not limited to National Army units like the 82nd Division. The National Guard's 36th Division had to rotate its limited stock of rifles around its infantry units to accomplish the bare minimum of marksmanship training. As late as 18 December 1917 most of the division's machine gun battalions had not been issued weapons and had only received a modicum of training on the obsolete Colt and Benet-Mercie machine guns.⁶¹ The supposedly-Regular Army 4th Division also suffered shortages of rifles and machine guns. Its soldiers were dispirited when their unit's arms and equipment were stripped to fit out the 3rd Division and other units who were to deploy before them. In fact, it was not until after the 3rd Division deployed that the 4th Division was even able to begin its rifle marksmanship training. Unfortunately, the time available for the training was so short, that the 4th Division's 39th Infantry Regiment and a battalion from the 58th Infantry were not able to complete even the basic firing course before the division itself deployed to France.⁶² Although the 14 January 1918 Division Table of Organization stated that divisions would have 768 automatic rifles (usually Chauchats), in February 1918, the French Military mission stated that of the 18 divisions that they inspected, 17 had 32 or fewer of the rifles on hand. They found similar shortages in trench mortars, signal equipment, and artillery. In fact, the only artillery found at Camp Beauregard, Louisiana was four Parrot Guns and three Napoleon Guns from the Civil War.⁶³

⁶¹ Lonnie J. White, *Panthers to Arrowheads: The 36th Division in World War I* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1984), 55-6.

⁶² Christian A. Bach and Henry N. Hall, *The Fourth Division: Its Services and Achievements in the World War* (New York: Country Life Press, 1920), 21, 27.

⁶³ Summary of the Reports of the French Advisory Mission, dated 16 February 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training- Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File "Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission." and, War Department, *Order of Battle for the United States Land Forces in the World War*, Vol 3, Part 2, *Zone of the Interior* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), 640.

In nearly all the divisions, artillery units were most affected by equipment shortages. The army entered the war with only 604 field guns and 180 heavy howitzers, many of which were obsolete.⁶⁴ Through much of 1917 most of the new artillerymen had to content themselves with practicing their trade on wooden guns made from “logs mounted on the running gear of escort wagons,” or other improvisations.⁶⁵ When cannons were available, they were generally of the old American designs and not the French guns that they would later use on the Western Front. At the beginning of their training, the 77th Division’s 306th Field Artillery’s men were instructed on standing drill and simulated firing of obsolete cannons, but soon even these were taken away. One soldier recalled, “No explosives were ever handled at Upton, and the only real benefit the cannoneers received from their training there, was a slight inkling of how a gun crew was formed, how it functioned on a drill field, and the manner in which indirect fire was conducted.”⁶⁶ Artillerymen in the 90th Division did not fire their guns until March 1918, only weeks before the unit departed for France.⁶⁷

The shortage of guns prevented artillery officers from adequately learning how to control and adjust fires and stymied efforts to conduct combined arms training in most divisions. This later contributed to the AEF’s problems in mastering infantry-artillery coordination. Regardless of their branches, the young officers’ and NCOs’ lack of experience with modern weapons limited their professional development and further hobbled their efforts to realistically prepare themselves and their units for combat.

⁶⁴ War Department, *America’s Munitions 1917-1918: Report of Benedict Crowell the Assistant Secretary of War Director of Munitions* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 61.

⁶⁵ Bach, *The Forth Division*, 19. Photos of artillerymen training with wooden guns are common from the period. For a good example, see, Ward, *Camp Sherman Souvenir*, 59. The shortage of artillery was also noted in Edward G. Buxton, ed. *Official History of the 82nd Division* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1919)4., and English, *History of the 89th Division*, 27-8.

⁶⁶ *The Battery Book: A History of Battery “A”, 306th F.A.* (New York: The DeVinne Press, 1921), 21.

⁶⁷ Lonnie J. White, *The 90th Division in World War I* (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1996), 40. White, *Panthers to Arrowheads*, 55-6.

Adding to these problems was a shortage of training aids and publications. The 89th Division's George English noted that his division's artillery units had no drill manuals to assist them in their training until an officer translated the French Artillery Drill Regulations and provided mimeographed copies to the units.⁶⁸ Lucian K. Truscott recalled that when he attended an ad hoc regimental machine gun school while posted at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, "There were no textbooks of any kind. No manuals. And no charts." During the class, "The instructor read his own notes, complied during his course at the Machine Gun School at Fort Bliss...and the class copied furiously in their own notebooks."⁶⁹ Reflecting back on his World War I experiences after a lifetime in the Regular Army, General John E. Hull recalled, "We were short ...of all the training aids that you need to conduct training adequately. But we didn't realize we were short because we didn't know any better."⁷⁰

Ironically, Major General John F. O'Ryan faced the opposite challenge. O'Ryan bemoaned the fact that when he began training his 27th Division, there was no general agreement among army officers in which direction that the American training should take. Despite the existence of a standard training plan, there continued to be a great debate over what should be emphasized in instructing the troops. O'Ryan recalled that some Regular officers argued for the primacy of training the bayonet and rifle, others for concentrating primarily on machine guns, grenades, or other specialist training, and some argued that since trench warfare had so completely changed tactical Principles, "that time expended in maneuvers was time wasted."⁷¹ While he was working through these issues, he found that,

⁶⁸ English, 28-9.

⁶⁹ Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *The Twilight of the Cavalry: Life in the Old Army 1917-1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 19.

⁷⁰ Transcript of Interview of General John E. Hull by LTC James W. Wurman on 22 October 1973 in Washington D.C., in USAMHI Oral History Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁷¹ Quoted in Robert S. Sutcliffe, *Seventy-First New York in the World War* (New York: Seventy-First Regiment Association, 1922), 41.

The training problem at the outbreak of the war was compounded by a veritable avalanche of books, booklets, pamphlets, and bulletins covering every phase and aspect of the conduct of war, which were delivered at the training camps almost daily. These came from the War Department and apparently had been prepared hurriedly by officers on duty in Washington. Most of them were reprints and adaptations of foreign books and pamphlets. Some of them were illuminating and valuable. Many were repetitions of other pamphlets, while a considerable percentage were obsolete.⁷²

As noted in Chapter 6, the War Department's orgy of publishing further muddied the water as officers at all levels attempted to sort through the weighty questions of what should be taught to the flood of new recruits filling the divisions in the fall of 1917.

In addition to these systemic problems of mass mobilization, officers also faced other challenges in completing their training that were completely out of anyone's control. The winter of 1917 and 1918 was particularly inclement and played havoc with the War Department's intricate training plans. On 28 February 1918, for example, the 83rd Division's Intelligence Officer reported that the "unduly severe winter" at Camp Sherman, Ohio had so retarded the progress of the division's training that they were still working on the 18th week of the War Department's training plan when they were supposed to be working on the program for week 23. He also noted that, "trench work, of necessity, has been cut down to almost nil up until the present time."⁷³

⁷² Ibid. The problem with the flood of material that O'Ryan described was endemic in the army. While Chapter 6 discussed the issue of conflicting doctrinal publications at the platoon and company levels, these problems even existed for division commanders. In addition to the August 1917 *Infantry Training* guidance, O'Ryan and his peers also had to sort through the ideas contained in *Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action*, a copy of a British Army work that the War Department issued in June 1917. Of course, the War College made no effort to reconcile the differences between the two works.

⁷³ Report from The Acting Intelligence Officer, 83rd Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, Subject: "General Information," dated 28 February 1918, NARA, RG 165 Records of the General Staff, Entry 377, Correspondence Related to Morale at Army Installations, Box 14, Camp Sherman file. (Hereafter "Morale at Army Installations") for other discussion of the effects of poor weather on stateside training see, Elmer Murphy and Robert Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AK: Old Hickory Publishing Company, 1936), 38., Frederick L. Huidenkopfer, *The History of the 33rd Division A.E.F.* (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1921), 15.

The situation was even worse for the 4th Division at Camp Greene, North Carolina. The rain and snow in the winter of 1918 turned the post's red clay soil into such a viscous mess that "the troops simply could not work out of doors" for weeks at a time. Between 10 December 1917 and 4 March 1918, one officer recorded that the division's units experienced only 16 days where any meaningful outdoor training was even possible. Under the constant wet weather, the trench system that the division constructed for training quickly turned into a sea of unusable muck. The only bright side to this natural disaster, one division staff officer quipped, was that they gave the soldiers an unintentionally realistic view of the conditions that they would later face in Flanders and the Argonne.⁷⁴

Adding to the misery of weather-induced inactivity and further hindering training, were deadly outbreaks of Spanish influenza, measles, and other diseases. Disease hindered or halted unit training as whole companies were quarantined for weeks at a time to prevent the spread of the sickness.⁷⁵ In a letter home to his wife in March 1918, Benson Oakley wrote that a mutual friend in another company had "just got out of his two week quarantine last week when a fellow in his tent came down with the mumps. He together with the others in tent were moved out into the woods away from everyone else for 21 days more of quarantine."⁷⁶ That meant that his friend lost at least five weeks of valuable training time.

By far the deadliest disease that the doughboys encountered was influenza. The army estimated that between 25 to 40 percent of its doughboys suffered from influenza at some time during the war. Influenza eventually killed 45,000 American soldiers, almost as many as were killed in action. The army also lost 8,743,102 days of work and training from enlisted men laid

⁷⁴ Bach, 23-4.

⁷⁵ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 81-84., White, *The 90th Division in World War I*, 31-32.

⁷⁶ Letter from P. Benson Oakley to Helen Oakley postmarked 26 March 1918 from Camp Hancock, Ga. from Author's collection.

low by the epidemic.⁷⁷ Forced indoors by the weather or sickness, junior leaders found it difficult to complete their own training or that of their soldiers and units.

The systemic problems of mass mobilization, such as shortages of equipment, lack of weapons, inadequate infrastructure, and uncertainty in the subjects to be trained, along with weather problems and epidemics, all had the cumulative effect of hindering the instruction of American units and served as an obstacle to the “on the job” training of junior officers and NCOs. This also meant that the War Department’s training plan for the divisions was never as standardized as the army had envisioned. Thus, local conditions often determined the quantity and quality of unit training and produced divisions, and unit leaders, with widely varying levels of ability. As will be seen below, when these systemic problems were combined with poor personnel decisions and sketchy, ill-focused, or incomplete unit training, the net results were combat leaders and units that were unprepared for the tactical challenges that awaited them in France.

Perhaps the gravest systemic problem that confronted the army and its junior leaders was the issue of how to select and train NCOs. As noted in Chapter Three, the Regular Army system for selecting NCOs rested upon the ability of long-service officers to identify and promote potential NCO “talent” from within their units. NCO training in the old army was “learning by doing” within the squad, platoon, and company. Since the army had given little to no thought to raising a wartime cadre of NCOs, the old army method became the defacto system for the selection and training of the Great War’s NCOs. The keys to the success of the old army system were experience and time: the experience of the officer making the selection, and the time the man in the ranks had to learn his trade and demonstrate the qualities the officer sought in his

⁷⁷ Carol R. Byerly, *The Fever of War: The Influenza Epidemic in the U. S. Army during World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 8-9.

NCOs. Unfortunately, the two things that were sorely lacking in the wartime army were, of course, experience and time.

The regulars were well aware of the problem in raising NCOs and offered the new officers plenty of advice for selecting their sergeants and corporals as well as providing a small cadre of regular NCOs to serve as the basic noncommissioned skeletons for the newly formed units. This last idea proved to be a mixed blessing. Some of these regular NCOs did quite well. The 353rd Infantry received a contingent of 34 Regular Army NCOs to train the unit's recruits and serve as the basis of the NCO cadre. Captain Charles Dienst admired the fact that their men were "soldiers by profession and played the game in a manner worthy of the best traditions of the old army."⁷⁸ Unfortunately, Dienst's experience with the regular NCOs seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.

At the outbreak of the war, the Regular Army was already shorthanded and over-extended. The loss of a number of NCOs to officer training resulted in the rapid promotion of a number of short-service privates to the noncommissioned ranks. Lieutenant Colonel George English noted that the 89th Division received enough Regular Army NCOs that they "assigned two to each company of infantry and battery of artillery." However, while, "many of these men were of inestimable value in drilling the new recruits," far too many of them have been "recently promoted as a result of the great expansion of the Regular Army." English believed that the best qualified regular enlisted men had already been commissioned, "leaving only the less qualified men available for noncommissioned officers." He went on to state, "As a class these noncommissioned officers did not accommodate themselves well to the new conditions, and not so valuable as the better educated and more highly skilled men from civil life, of which there

⁷⁸ Dienst, 3-4.

were a number in every company or battery.”⁷⁹ The 89th Division was fortunate to have regulars assigned that had at least been promoted to NCOs. During its organization, Company B, 311th Infantry received three regular Army soldiers to serve as the nucleus of its NCOs. Unfortunately, all three men were buck privates when they reported.⁸⁰

The units of the 89th Division were not alone in being somewhat disappointed in the quality of NCOs sent to their organizations after having been promised that they would receive “the best” the regulars could provide. When their Regular Army soldiers reported to the 77th Division’s 305th Field Artillery, it quickly became clear that their previous company commanders had used the requirement to transfer their NCOs as a means to rid themselves of their problem soldiers. The men that the 305th Artillery received had long “records of battery punishments and courts martial.” One of the officers sarcastically noted, “We pitied those distant, unknown commanders. If these were their best we shrank from picturing their days and nights with the worst.”⁸¹ In due course the new officers learned this lesson themselves and in turn used transfer orders to shed their human deadwood over the course of the war.

For their part, not all of the regular NCOs were happy with their assignments to the new units either. One battery of the 305th Artillery was assigned a Regular Army NCO as its first sergeant. The sergeant, “with deliberate intention went A.W.O.L. to be ‘busted’ and sent back to his unit in the Regular Army.”⁸² Other regulars succumbed to the age old temptations of soldiering and lost their positions. Leslie Langille, of the 42nd Division, was gladdened by the fact that his first sergeant was a “real soldier” who had served two hitches with the regulars. Unfortunately, while his unit was mobilizing at Fort Sheridan, the top sergeant met a girl and

⁷⁹ English, Jr. *History of the 89th Division*, 21.

⁸⁰ Colonna, *The History of Company B, 311th*, 9.

⁸¹ Camp, 13-14.

⁸² *The Battery Book: A History of Battery “A”, 306th F.A.*, 18.

went AWOL for two weeks. After “having spent his dough on the babe and drained his ‘cup of joy’ to the last dime,” the sergeant returned to his battery to face the music. The company commander reduced the NCO to stable sergeant and promoted a lesser man to first sergeant. Langille and his comrades roundly cursed the girlfriend “because of the grief she unwittingly brought upon our heads by luring away a good top-kick, who was replaced with a dolt.”⁸³

Some of the veterans brought with them the regulars’ jaundiced view of citizen soldiers. James Howard recalled that some of the regular NCOs, “came with an utterly wrong notion of the National Army and had an idea they could do about what they liked with the reserve officers...A strenuous sifting process was instituted which soon got rid of the undesirables.”⁸⁴ Ultimately, Captain Kerr Rainsford, of the 77th Division’s 307th Infantry, best summed up the practice of assigning regular NCOs to the new units. He recalled that the regular NCOs “did excellent service as drill sergeants; but on the whole the experiment was not successful, and the greater number returned to the regiments whence they came.”⁸⁵

With many of the regular NCOs returning to their units and the ones that stayed being overwhelmed or otherwise occupied with standing up the new units, the company commanders were thrown on their own to do the best they could with selecting NCOs from the anonymous mass of recruits arriving daily in their units. Their Regular Army superiors were quick with advice. Just as the draftees were arriving at the camps, Major J. C. Wise warned the new officers of the fate that awaited them.

The company officers will find within the course of a few days about 150 recruits committed to their charge- recruits representing all degrees of education and intelligence and every social caste, from professional gentleman with a college education to illiterate city loafer, from the intelligent mechanic to the untutored

⁸³ Leslie Langille, *Men of the Rainbow* (Hamond, In.: W. B. Coakley Company, 1933), 23.

⁸⁴ James M. Howard, *The Autobiography of a Regiment* (New York: Privately printed, 1920), 8.

⁸⁵ Kerr Rainsford, *From Upton to the Meuse with the Three Hundred and Seventh Infantry* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920), 2-3.

laborer, from men imbued with the loftiest sentiments of patriotism to those of foreign birth and attachments... There will be ne'er-do-wells of the luxurious classes, stupid yokels, criminals, near criminals, and thugs mixed in with the good elements of all classes.⁸⁶

Wise advised that the new commander must plan his training only after considering the individual soldier's "social caste" and "Character, intelligence, and experience." He recommended that junior officers should divide their soldiers into three categories: Superior, "business and professional men, tradesmen, [and] skilled mechanics;" Ordinary, "uneducated but intelligent laborers and miscellaneous recruits;" and Inferior, "recruits of the lowest order of intelligence and character."

Wise suggested that officers select their NCOs primarily from the "superior" caste of their units, and that they be made "temporary acting noncommissioned officers" and be "given a chance to demonstrate his fitness for a chevron." He stressed that if the acting NCOs are "intelligent and ambitious they will rapidly acquire military knowledge superior to that of other recruits in order to measure up to their responsibilities."⁸⁷ Along the same line, Major Charles Tipps noted that during the war he found that, "Men who have successfully handled six to eight men in civil life as a boss of a group of farm hands, or as the foreman of a small department in some factory, will almost invariably make good corporals, and men with relatively more experience will, in most cases, qualify to fill relatively higher positions."⁸⁸

Shortly before George Williams left for officers' training, a retired Regular Army sergeant advised him that when "choosing your sergeants and corporals, don't look for the most cooperative men- but [for the one who] is observed to be in the center of the group in free time in

⁸⁶ Major J. C. Wise, "Organization and Initial Training of a Company," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 3 (September 1917), 201-210.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Maj Charles R. Tipps, "Selecting and Training Military Leaders," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV, No. 7 (January 1919), 541.

the barracks- look for the leaders, [for] it is better to have them on your side.”⁸⁹ The retired sergeant’s advice, along with those of Majors Wise and Tips, were good “rules of thumb,” but they still required that the commander have the time and experience to identify those with the attributes they described.

Although some officers used the Yerkes mental tests as a way of identifying potential NCOs, most muddled through the best they could, with little help from their superiors. On 4 September 1917, the 89th Division’s commander, Leonard Wood, tried to cut the Gordian Knot by simply directing that “The training of the first five percent of the new National Army men will be undertaken immediately upon their arrival, with the purpose of developing among them noncommissioned officers and instructors for the National Army men who will arrive later.”⁹⁰ Wood’s grandiose plan, which was followed by a other divisions, still only provided two weeks to train these jumped-up NCOs prior to the arrival of the second contingent of draftees.

Faced with the pressing need for NCOs, some officers simply opted to assign men to these ranks based on seniority. In these units, NCOs owed their positions to the fact that they arrive days or hours prior to their comrades. As none of the men who arrived at Camp Funston with Private John Nell had any previous military service, his new company commander simply went down the line selecting every fourth man to serve as a corporal.⁹¹ Other officers followed Wise’s suggestions and tried to select their NCOs based on the soldier’s previous occupation or leadership experience. Given the need to maintain some semblance of order and discipline in the ranks, some NCOs gained their stripes solely on their ability to over-awe or bully their fellow recruits into line.

⁸⁹ 2LT George O. Williams, Student Army Training Corps, Washington State College, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹⁰ Dienst, 7-8.

⁹¹ John W. Nell, *The Lost Battalion: A Private’s Story* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2001), 5.

Soon after the war, one officer lamented the lack of any uniform system in the units for picking NCOs. He pointed out,

Candidates for the commissioned ranks as a rule pass through a rigid process of selection, are then sent to appropriate schools for further observation and training, and weeding out at the end of the training period. In the case of sergeants and corporals, the pillars of the army, there are no such schools. Rough observation, personal idiosyncrasies, subjective factors, all enter more or less into the selection of these men.⁹²

This confusion was not lost on the privates, and some even felt pity for their officers' plight.

Private D. B. Gallagher wrote, "Our officers were all men who had respect for those serving under them, and the mistakes that were made in selecting the 'non-coms' were not of their making, but due to the utter lack of any system to be governed by placing men in positions which they were qualified to fill."⁹³ Nor were these problems lost on the "jumped up" NCOs themselves. As one sergeant recalled, "The confusion was unbelievable- it seemed as if nobody knew anything for sure. I was a corporal within three months and knew very little about the army."⁹⁴

Regardless of their method of selection, the vast majority of the newly minted sergeants and corporals had no real knowledge or practical experience to merit their promotion or assure their authority. Captain John Stringfellow observed that the best method for giving the NCOs the experience they needed was to throw them into the deep water of responsibility to see if they would "sink or swim." He maintained,

Through a lack of material, usually, a Corporal is *chosen* who has never commanded before in his life, and those seven men about his age, fret under restraint. In camp, all sorts of petty requirements are devised to compel the Corporal, against his will, to order the seven unwilling men to perform. In this

⁹² Maj George F. Arps, "Science as Applied to the Selection of Noncommissioned Officers," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV, No. 7 (January 1919), 577-8.

⁹³ D. B. Gallagher, *The Battle of Bolts and Nuts in the Sector of Cognac Hill* (Fort Worth: Gallagher-Crosby Company, 1931), 12.

⁹⁴ Charles G. Campbell, Evacuation Ambulance Company #1, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey.

way he becomes accustomed to command and they to obey, without argument. Then, and only then, will they fight successfully.⁹⁵

Although Stringfellow and his peers often had no other options readily available to them to train their NCOs, these unsystematic and idiosyncratic procedures did not produce the strong backbone of NCOs that the army needed for its combat units.

Sadly, while the army made efforts later in the war to provide some degree of training to its novice NCOs, these changes came too late to significantly change the course set in 1917. As late as 31 July 1918, a War Department inspector reported of the 84th Division,

The noncommissioned officers are as a rule not thoroughly instructed. Many of them are noncommissioned officers simply because there were no others to make. Many corporals have only a few weeks service and many organizations have not made all their noncommissioned officers for lack of trained personnel.⁹⁶

The lack of a strong corps of NCOs to help to train and lead the squads, platoons, and companies of the new divisions had immediate and profound influence on unit training and a lasting effect on how the American army later fought in France.

The most significant consequence of the weak NCO corps was that the company-level officers had to not only serve as the unit commanders, but also took on the training and administrative roles usually accomplished by first sergeants, company clerks, supply sergeants, and enlisted drill masters. As one officer observed, the “Lack of experience on the part of non-commissioned officers at the beginning of training centered full responsibility on the officers. Officers...[were thus] occupied with details of instruction, police and paperwork.”⁹⁷ Another infantry officer recalled that the “training of non-commissioned officers [was] slighted almost to

⁹⁵ Captain John S. Stringfellow, *Hell! No!* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1936), 35.

⁹⁶ Memorandum to Adjutant General, from Colonel H. O. Williams, Subject: Report on inspection of troops at Camp Sherman, Ohio, dated 31 July 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185-A NM-84, Entry 310, “Camp Macarthur, Texas, Infantry Training Center.”

⁹⁷ Dienst, 13.

the point of neglect. Officers, from the Company Commander down, [were] obliged to spend fifty percent of their time and energy in doing the work of non-commissioned officers.”⁹⁸ As the officers became the font of all military knowledge and the leader directly responsible for the training, discipline, and care of the soldiers, the NCOs’ roles and prestige within the units declined.

Knowingly or not, the Regular Army senior officers and commanders encouraged this process. They merely wanted certain tasks accomplished to standard in their subordinate units and held the officers in those units responsible for these results. One regimental commander expressed no alarm in the fact that, “The junior officers really performed the duties of non-coms, in each company one being in charge of quarters, one with an assistant in charge of mess, one in charge of the company office, and so on.”⁹⁹ With the spotlight on the junior officers to produce results, and a lack of training and readiness on the part of their nascent NCOs to aid them, the officers tended to simply do their jobs as well as those of their sergeants.

The tendency of officers to become defacto NCOs led to a culture of micromanagement and dependency in the small units that made it difficult for NCOs to find their authority and break their unit’s absolute reliance on their commissioned leaders. Soon after the war, Major Thomas Swann decried the fact that, “It was often the practice in the formation of the National Army to have a sergeant always supervised by an officer.” He maintained that while, the “officers and men had to be trained simultaneously...too much supervision [by the officers] was destructive of initiative in the noncommissioned officers, and rather made them dodge than

⁹⁸“Replies to Officers' Questionnaires" from Morale Branch of the War College and War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, dated 5 November 1919, in NARA, RG165, NM84, Entry 378, Box 6 (here after cited as Morale Branch Officers’ Survey), 69. This was a frequent complaint from junior officers. Most blamed the army itself for failing to increase NCO pay and training, thus making the positions more desirable to the new men.

⁹⁹ Unprinted manuscript in the Julian L. Schley papers, Box 1, United States Military Academy Library Special Collections, 11-12.

accept responsibility.”¹⁰⁰ The 305th Infantry’s Captain Frank Tiebout also ruefully acknowledged,

...the officers never ceased to regret the theory of the Division Commander who forbade the placing of any real responsibility upon the shoulders of our non-coms. Far better it would have been at camp and throughout our subsequent experience, if it had not always been required that an officer be present, whether at the fairly simple task of filling a bedsack, or at an inconsequential gathering of any sort.¹⁰¹

Although Tiebout was quick to denounce the micromanagement of his senior commander, the company-grade officers also perpetuated this officer dependency and undercut their sergeants and corporals. One private observed that when NCOs began to drill their squads, inevitably, their lieutenant would step in and correct the NCO in front of his men, all the while lecturing him on the chapter and verse of the drill regulations.¹⁰² At every turn, the officer’s position was thus strengthened to the detriment of his sergeants and corporals.

The prewar Regular Army’s tradition of NCOs being “captain’s men:” selected, promoted, and demoted at the whim of the company commander, and the continued lack of effort to physically and psychologically separate the NCOs from their men by giving them greater privileges, further eroded the status of noncommissioned officers in the wartime army’s small units. The rapidity with which a company commander could make or break a NCO cheapened their status among the soldiers. One barely literate Kansas soldier wrote home from Camp Funston,

I was made a sergent (sic) 4 weeks ago and got Busted the next week after wards for going absent without leave there was me and 3 Serg’ts 2 Corp’l and one First Serg’t in the guard House and I got Busted

¹⁰⁰ Major Thomas Swann, “The Top-Sergeant,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV, No. 12 (June 1919), 952.

¹⁰¹ Frank B. Tiebout, *A History of the 305th Infantry* (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, 1919), 19.

¹⁰² Gallagher, *The Battle of Bolts and Nuts in the Sector of Cognac Hill*, 13.

Ha Ha didnt want it any way. to much trouble. (sic)¹⁰³

The Kansan was not alone in shunning the dubious honor of wearing chevrons. The future Medal Of Honor winner John Barkley and one of his comrades wanted no part in being promoted to corporals and thus forced to “run around after” their squad members “like their mummies.” To avoid the promotion they, “decided to go absent without leave for a few days; then there’d be nothing to do but reduce us.”¹⁰⁴

Due to his previous college educational and military experience, Claude Hopkins was quickly promoted by his company commander to corporal after reporting to Camp Gordon in July 1918. However, despite his credentials and qualifications, it was quickly brought by to him by his captain how tenuous his hold was on his stripes. During the influenza epidemic of the fall of 1918, many stateside posts required all soldiers to wear cotton masks to keep the infection from spreading. Unfortunately, Hopkins had allowed some of his soldiers to briefly take off their masks while he was chatting with them when his commander walked into the room. On the spot, the captain gave Hopkins the choice between being sent before a courts martial or reduced in ranks. Hopkins took the reduction, but soon regained his corporal stripes and ended the war as a sergeant.¹⁰⁵

While their superiors advised the young officers to follow the old army tradition of “trying out” acting NCOs before actually promoting them, some officers took this as a license to establish a revolving door policy for selecting their sergeants and corporals. On 29 July 1918, Captain Clarence J. Minick, of the 361st Infantry, 91st Division, wrote that he had reduced 31 of his NCOs to privates, leaving him with only one remaining NCO in the company. He noted that

¹⁰³ Letter from CPL Albert Carmoody to “Grandma,” dated 08 October 1918. The original is in the author's collection.

¹⁰⁴ John L. Barkley, *No Hard Feelings!* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1930), 23.

¹⁰⁵ SGT Claude A. Hopkins, Camp Gordon, File WWI 6577, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

“these are the ones I tried [out] on the way over,” and found they did not work out in their new ranks.¹⁰⁶ Although Minick’s case was extreme, it does highlight the company commander’s latitude to shape the composition of his unit NCOs to his pleasure. While battalion commanders were, by regulation, expected to be the approving authority for the demotion of any NCOs in their units, few seemed willing to second guess their captains in these matters.¹⁰⁷

To add to this litany of woe, neither the new officers nor their proto-NCOs seemed to understand exactly what the roles and responsibilities of the sergeants and corporals were to be. Some officers, however, were quick to denounce the failings of their non-coms. An infantry battalion commander observed, “Among the so-called noncommissioned officers, who are but the more apt enlisted personnel with chevrons, no high sense of individual obligation to their ill-defined and imperfectly understood responsibilities exists, and being, like those over whom they have been set, but novices at the game, they are lacking utterly in the confidence which is necessary to force them to the front.”¹⁰⁸ This officer failed to grasp that the American NCOs generally received no special training and little incentive for their assignment and were often poorly guided and supported by their officers. The position of NCO carried few privileges in terms of pay and status and even fewer responsibilities. That the new NCOs’ responsibilities remained “ill-defined and imperfectly understood” was the fault of the army and of officers such as the battalion commander himself.

In 1914 the War Department issued the *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates* for each branch of the service. These manuals were updated in 1917 to serve as the recruit’s handbook for basic military knowledge. As the title implied, these manuals were also to

¹⁰⁶ Diary of Captain Clarence J. Minick, Clarence J. Minick Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁰⁷ *Army Regulations of 1913, Corrected to 15 April 1917*, paragraph 276, 72.

¹⁰⁸ Wise, “The Soldier’s Life in Battle,” 930.

instruct NCOs on their duties and responsibilities. Unfortunately, the information in the books was far too broad and general to be of any practical use to the NCOs. The books covered how to give close order drill, but nowhere was the new sergeant instructed on the principles of leadership or on his role in combat. The manual stated that the NCOs overarching duty was to enforce discipline and “obey strictly and execute promptly the lawful orders of your superiors.”¹⁰⁹ Beyond those admonitions, the inexperienced NCO was given no “helpful hints” on how to turn a group of civilians into soldiers or get those same men to move forward in an attack. Also, if one followed the manual, there was little to no room for an NCO to exercise initiative or any independent combat action outside of very limited patrolling.

Throughout the war the army made little effort to distinguish NCOs from privates. Even the title *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates* is suggestive of this attitude. Given the fact that the majority of NCOs had no more experience than the privates they led, this attitude may be understandable. However, this outlook seems to have sidetracked any serious efforts to systematically educate and develop NCOs until late in the war. Throughout 1917 and much of 1918, the only effort to train NCOs was at unit level schools. For example, the commander of the 30th Division’s 60th Infantry Brigade mandated that company commanders devote at least one hour per day to a school for their NCOs.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, these schools were usually taught by OTC graduate-officers who often lacked the knowledge and experience to adequately train their student NCOs. Also, when the units began to face large transfers of soldiers in the winter and

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of War, *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 9-10.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum from Commanding General, 30th Division, to the Adjutant General, Subject: Training Schedules, 30th Division, dated 13 December 1917, in NARA RG165, Correspondence of the War College Division, Microfilm M1024, Roll 142, File 7541-17., W.A. Sirmon, *That's War* (Atlanta: The Linmon Company, 1929), 20-1. Sirmon, an infantry platoon leader in the 82nd Division, wrote that he gave one-hour classes to his NCOs about twice a week. Given his own limited experience and the basic nature of the topics covered, this ad hoc NCO “school” did little to increase his NCOs’ professionalism. Also see Ernest Fisher, Jr., *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Non Commissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 192-3.

spring of 1918, and new drafts of men had to undergo basic instruction, the NCO schools were often the first thing dropped from over-crowded training schedules. Ultimately, without a reliable mechanism to develop knowledgeable corporals and sergeants, their status and authority remained unclear to their officers and privates.

These missteps in raising a corps of NCOs were not lost on the Allied officers assigned to train the Americans. What troubled a number of these officers was that the Americans seemed to overlook the emerging role of NCOs as true combat leaders who would be required to use their initiative and make weighty decisions on the battlefield, rather than being merely an executor of their officers' explicit orders. In a 10 January 1918 report to the American General Staff, an officer of the French Military Mission tried to broach this subject with the Americans. After noting how the lethality of the battlefield had led to a greater dispersion of units and thus more responsibility devolving upon NCOs, the Frenchman observed,

The American N.C.O's have no authority at the present time and consequently no influence over their men. Their situation is scarcely more than that of a corporal in the French army. Nothing has as yet been done to change this situation. Under such conditions, they can neither second the officers efficiently nor replace them."¹¹¹

He recommended that the ad hoc company or battalion NCO schools be replaced by central divisional schools that could give the NCOs, "the power, confidence, and prestige which only instruction can bestow." Two months later, after inspecting training at Camp Oglethorpe, Georgia, the French General Claudon reported, "The [American] N.C.O. is non-existing...At

¹¹¹ French Military Mission, "Improvements in the Condition and Instruction of Non-Commissioned Officers," dated 10 January 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training- Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File "Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission."

present time they have no authority and they have no right to punish. They are mixed with their men; they fight with them to get a piece of food, etc.”¹¹²

The French were not alone in their concern over the weak American NCO corps. On 24 May 1918, the Commander of the British Military Mission, Brigadier General Trotter, warned the American Chief of Staff, “ In the three divisions that I visited (the 83rd, 84th, and 89th) during my tour the British Officers commented on the status of the N.C.O. in the U.S. Army. The opinion I formed was that for both training and disciplinary purposes his status as compared to the British N.C.O. is not sufficiently recognized.”¹¹³ He stated that in discussions he had with the American division commanders he warned that if the American NCOs were to become effective combat leaders, the officers had to grant them more privileges, and do more to give the sergeants increased status and standing within their units.

The War Department’s failure to adequately plan for training NCOs meant that most of the divisions that deployed to France before the fall of 1918 did so with sergeants and corporals who had learned their roles mostly through on the job training under the constant supervision of their officers. Immediately following the war, the Morale Branch of the War College Plans Division submitted a questionnaire to officers leaving the army to gauge their opinions and attitudes toward their service. Looking back on their service, nearly all the officers polled agreed that they and the army had not done enough to give their NCOs the respect, prestige, or authority to accomplish their tasks or to encourage their privates to follow them.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, this hindsight wisdom came too late to do much good.

¹¹² “Report of General Claudon on his visit to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, March 4-6, 1918,” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training- Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File “Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission.”

¹¹³ Report of Inspection of the Commander, British Military Mission to Director of Training, War College, dated 24 May 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training, Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File “Inspections, British Groups Stationed at Camps.”

¹¹⁴ Morale Branch Report, 68-9.

It was not until the bulk of the American divisions began deploying in the spring and fall of 1918 that the War Department began to take seriously its responsibility for training NCOs. As was the case with officers' training at the time, the instruction of NCOs was part and parcel of the overarching need to provide replacements to the units of the AEF. As the divisions departed, the War Department established a series of replacement training centers and depot brigades. In addition to providing (in theory) basic training for new draftees, these units were also directed to establish schools for training NCOs.

However, since the War Department neglected to provide a standardized training plan for these schools, as they had throughout the war for officers' training, the training regimen and the selection criteria for the students for these courses varied greatly from post to post. For example, Brigadier General Sage, the Commander of the Camp Gordon Infantry Replacement Camp, issued regulations to guide all of the training schools under his command on 1 May 1918. Sage directed that ten percent of the privates going through the infantry replacement course at Camp Gordon would be selected for "special training in the duties of non-commissioned officers." Due to shortages of instructors, Sage mandated that, "Officer-candidates will be detailed as N.C.O's of the training companies. An officer-candidate will be assigned to each squad of recruits, and will continue if necessary their informal instruction and discipline outside of drill hours."¹¹⁵ He also allowed those going through the NCO training to serve as instructors in their own courses. The NCO school lasted for 30 days and provided the candidates with their basic infantry training focusing on "close and extended order drill, musketry, elements of field service, guard duty, [and] signaling."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Lytle Brown, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Appointment of noncommissioned officers of those students at Central Officers' Training Schools who fail to receive commissions, dated 5 August 1918" in RG 165, "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps."

¹¹⁶ Tips, "Selecting and Training Military Leaders," 543.

On 30 July 1918, the officers at Camp Devens, Massachusetts recommended that the War Department establish a two-month-long NCO school. After removing the time dedicated to conferences, inspections, and in and out processing, the school curriculum consisted of 262 “hands on” training hours (see the subjects and hours listed in Table 8-1). Over half of the practical instruction was devoted to close order drill, interior guard duty, and bayonet and physical training.¹¹⁷ Although these matters were important in building discipline and aggressiveness in the nascent NCOs, the relatively short amount of time given to subjects such as map reading and minor tactics, reveals the continued problems that the army faced in understanding the realities of modern combat and the skills that its junior leaders needed to face them.

Table 8-1: Camp Devens NCO School Subjects and Hours

Close Order Drill, 55 hours (21% of total hours)
Physical Training, 40 hours (15.2%)
Bayonet Training, 20 hours (7.6%)
Interior Guard Duty, 10 hours (4%)
Small Arms Training and Firing, 32 hours (12.2%)
Extended Order Drill, 15 hours (5.7%)
Field Fortifications, 12 hours (4.5 %)
Minor Tactics and Field Problems, 23 hours (8.7%)
Voice Culture (Giving oral commands), 6 hours (2.2%)
Map Reading, 5 hours (2%)
Practice Marches, 12 hours (4.5%)
Overnight Bivouac, 10 hours (4%)
Camp and Trench Experience, 6 hours (2.2)
Modern Weapons (machine guns, automatic rifle, one pound gun, mortars, grenades, and gas), 16 hours (6.1%)

NCO schools later established at Camps Lee and Grant had the same problem in focusing their subject matter as had Camp Devens. The Camp Lee school, for instance, devoted

¹¹⁷ “Scheme for Proposed Non-commissioned Officers’ Training School, Camp Devens, Massachusetts,” dated 30 July 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, Box 202, NM -84, Entry 310.

29 percent of its training time to close order drill and less than 15 percent of the curriculum to minor tactics.¹¹⁸ At times, had it not been for the specter of combat which hovered over the training, some of the material taught in the schools would have been laughable. Despite all the lapses in the training of the army's NCOs, the Camp Gordon Morale Officer gushed with pride at his ability to have a "special school for singing" established in the camp for selected NCOs to train them to serve as "song leaders in their companies." The officer noted that this was a coup for, "Singing is becoming an essential part of training." Two weeks later he reported that his new school was filled with two NCOs per company, and met four times a week for 30 minutes of instruction.¹¹⁹

It is interesting to note that all of the NCO schools mentioned here were of differing durations. The Camp Gordon NCO course ran for 30 days, while the Camp Grant course was for seven weeks, and the Camp Lee course was for two months.¹²⁰ This lack of standardization was not the only problem with the training. Just as with the OTCs, the NCO schools faced grave challenges in obtaining qualified candidates in the late summer and fall of 1918. Part of this resulted from the army's own priorities. Major Charles Tips reported that at the infantry replacement depot at Camp Gordon, "The best men from the noncommissioned officers' training

¹¹⁸ Training Bulletin for Non-commissioned Officers, Camp Lee, Virginia Infantry replacement and Training Camp, dated 3 September 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185, NM -84, Entry 310. The Camp Lee school consisted of 329 "hands on" training hours over the span of a two month course. Those training hours were divided among the following subjects and hours: Close Order Drill, 95 hours (29% of total hours); Physical Training, 20 hours (6%); Bayonet Training, 40 hours (12.1%); Interior Guard Duty, 10 hours (3%); Small Arms Training and Firing, 89 hours (24.3%); Extended Order Drill, 20 hours (6%); Field Fortifications, 16 hours (5 %); Minor Tactics, 48 hours (14.5%). Some of the hours devoted to minor tactics covered such "field craft" subjects as conducting a bivouac, the camp and trench experience, and individual cooking.

¹¹⁹ Report from Intelligence Officer, Camp Gordon, Ga. to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, Subject: "General Information Report, week ending September 2nd, 1918," and Report Subject "Singing School," dated 17 September 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 5, Camp Gordon file.

¹²⁰ "Report of Operations, Non-Commissioned Officers' School, Infantry Replacement and Training Troops, Period 20th October to December 5th, 1918, dated 15 December 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 184, NM -84, Entry 310, File "Camp Grant NCO Replacement School."

school are selected to attend the central officers' training school."¹²¹ The Chief of the War Plans Division tried to put the best face possible on this reality by suggested that since only 65 percent of the COTS graduates ultimately received commissions, "the other 35 [percent] should make the best noncommissioned officer material possible to secure at this time, both from the view point of selected material and training." However, even he admitted that "this source alone will not furnish the necessary number of noncommissioned officers required."¹²²

A post-war board of officers studying the combat effectiveness of the AEF lamented that some of the tactical sluggishness of the U. S. Army was due to "poorly trained and rather dull non-commissioned officers."¹²³ Given all of the problems the army faced with selecting and training its NCOs, was it any wonder that its corporals and sergeants sometimes, if not often, failed to live up to their ill-defined responsibilities and expectations? As the 307th Infantry departed for France the best that one officer could say of the unit's enlisted leadership was,

[In] every company one or two N.C.O.'s had shown that absolute reliance could be placed upon them as leaders of their men; for a much larger number it was confidently hoped that under war-time conditions their power to command would develop; but the great mass of men still constituted an ununified, unknown, and very insufficiently trained quantity, who had never learned to take themselves serious as soldiers.¹²⁴

This rather bleak, though accurate, assessment could have been applied to most of the divisions at the time. The reality of combat in France later meant that many of this "ununified, unknown, and very insufficiently trained quantity" of NCOs would be forced to take command of units due to officer casualties and/or the arbitrary dictates of the "fog and friction" of war. While some

¹²¹ Tips, "Selecting and Training Military Leaders," 543.

¹²² "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff from BG Lytle Brown, Chief of the War College Division, Subject: Appointment of noncommissioned officers of those students at Central Officers' Training Schools who fail to receive commissions, dated 5 August 1918" in RG 165, "Letters,... etc Officers' Training Camps."

¹²³ General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No. 98, GHQ AEF 09 April 1919*, 9-10. (Here after cited as the Lewis Board) in USAMHI library.

¹²⁴ Rainsford, 16.

NCOs rose to these occasions and others did not, in neither case did much in their training adequately prepared them for the eventualities that thrust them into the center stage of combat leadership.

Given the systemic problems of mobilization and the level of leadership and knowledge of the new divisions' officers and NCOs, it should be no surprise that the stateside unit training was problematic. This was not for want of effort. The vast majority of the officers and NCOs involved with the training poured their hearts, souls and intellect into preparing for combat. Still, enthusiasm and effort is no substitute for skills and "know how." In a telling incident, in August 1917, Captain Robert Gill's commanding officer ordered him to form a trench mortar battery. After accepting the assignment, Gill's only question was "May I ask, sir, what a trench mortar is?" His commander's only response was, "Damned if I know, but you will soon find out."¹²⁵

With their own experience and knowledge barely above the level of a pre-war private, the junior officers found themselves suddenly responsible for the basic instruction of their soldiers. This left little time for the officers to concentrate on developing their own tactical competence. The under-trained lieutenants and captains frantically scrambled to learn the basics that they were expected to impart to their subordinates. For example, W. A. Sirmon, a lieutenant in the 82nd Division's 325th Infantry, recalled spending many of his mornings in hurried classes so he could give the same lessons to his soldiers later on in the day.¹²⁶ Soon after being assigned as the commander of the 157th Infantry's machine gun company, Lieutenant Maury Maverick realized that he faced a grave problem in training his soldiers. He recalled, "I could, with great show, take a machine gun apart, but putting it back together again was another matter. A

¹²⁵ Quoted in James H. Hallas, *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War I* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 26.

¹²⁶ Sirmon, 21.

few pieces would always be left over, or I simply couldn't get it together."¹²⁷ Lieutenant Charles Bolte, a graduate of an OTC and three Plattsburg summer camps, noted,

When it came to teaching the 45 automatic pistol, I had to sit up all night long with a manual just learning how you took it apart and put it together again so the next day I could sit down as if I knew all about it and try to teach this company how to do this very complicated task. It was a case of the blind leading the blind.¹²⁸

The phrase "blind leading the blind" peppers the writings of the war's veterans and was perhaps the best description of the tragi-comic training environment in the mobilization camps.

The shallowness of their officer's knowledge and training was not lost on their soldiers. During a lecture he was giving to his troops, one officer was taken aback when, "one fellow asked an embarrassing question." He had the soldier report to him after class, and "told him that if he tried making a monkey of me again I'd put him on K.P. for life." After the lieutenant discovered that the man was a civil engineer in civilian life, he sheepishly had the soldier tutor him privately in the subjects the officer was not well versed in.¹²⁹ The 27th Division's William Clarke remembered being drilled by a new officer while he was training at Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina. The officer, fresh out of OTC, "got so mixed up we were scattered all over the field and he was unable to get us back into platoon or company line." The lieutenant was rescued from this humiliating situation only by the timely intervention of the company's veteran first sergeant. Clarke did note, however, that "much to his credit" the novice "understood he had a lot to learn" and took steps to correct his shortcomings.¹³⁰

It is an age-old military truism that leaders "can't fool the troops" for long. In a case of pure motivated self-interest, enlisted men have (and do) closely observed their leaders to

¹²⁷ Maury Maverick, *A Maverick American* (New York: Covici Friede Publishers, 1937), 113.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 57.

¹²⁹ Anonymous, *Wine, Women, and War*, 55.

¹³⁰ William F. Clarke, *Over There with O'Ryan's Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 25.

determine their strengths, weaknesses, and overall competence. As their daily life and very lives depend upon the personalities and abilities of their officers and NCOs, the men in the ranks have tended to be harsh and honest judges of their leaders. This was certainly the case with Private John Oechsner. He described his officers as “90 day wonders” and, “boys just out of school.” During his time in training, it was clear to this private that his officers, “... didn’t know what the hell it was all about...it was all Greek to them.” He noted that even when it came to basic drill, “Our commanding officer didn’t know a damn thing.”¹³¹ It was even clear to the rookie recruit Benson Oakley that there were large gaps in the knowledge of his officers. Writing home from Camp Hancock in April 1918, Oakley described his officers as “ignorant.” After a week of “quite a little drilling,” he determined that his leaders “ought to study up [on] the drill regulations a bit.”¹³² None of these faults in the officers discussed could have done much to inspire trust and confidence in their soldiers.

Many senior commanders tried to aid their new leaders by establishing after hours unit officer and NCO schools. Unfortunately, the hectic conditions under which the leaders operated left little time for continued professional development and self-study. Though well-intentioned, the unit schools often lacked qualified instructors and “hands on” application. Lieutenant Milton Bernet complained, “This school was valueless and uninteresting. Attendance...was supposed to be compulsory but we all tried to duck it as it was so useless.”¹³³ As his unit was about to sail, Lieutenant John Castles expressed his dismay that in the hurried preparations, “the officers were

¹³¹ Oral History Transcript of the interview of John G. Oechsner by CSM Erwin H. Koehler on 19 January 1982, Noncommissioned Officer Oral History Program, USAMHI, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

¹³² Letter from P. Benson Oakley to Helen Oakley postmarked 26 April 1918 from Camp Hancock, Ga. from Author’s collection.

¹³³ Milton E. Bernet, unpublished manuscript “The World War As I Saw It” in USAMHI WWI Vet Survey, 89 DIV, WWI 2340, 132. An 82nd Division officer noted that, like the NCOs, the officers in his regiment had one hour classes conducted after duty hours, two or more times a week. Many of these were French language classes. Sirmon , 26-7, 38, 49.

compelled to listen to the Lieutenant Colonel's theory of fire superiority, etc. It was even more criminal than the protracted schools in New York the month before..."¹³⁴

Lucian Truscott experienced similar problems with continuing his professional education after reaching his unit. The first thing that struck him was that "The instructional content and methods of training in the regiment differed little from that in the officers' training camp."¹³⁵

His formal leader training consisted of one of the regiment's veteran officers gathering the new lieutenants under an open-air dance pavilion where,

...he would read from the manual the lesson assignment for the day. There were no charts, no diagrams, no photographs, no illustrations, no training aids of any sort. No practical work for the students; no questions period. He read. We listened. Then, the day's reading done, he would regale us with tales and anecdotes of colorful cavalry personalities and past cavalry history.¹³⁶

Nor were his senior officers helpful in filling in their new lieutenants' knowledge. Truscott's regimental commander,

...amazed us young officers by maintaining that the War Department had made a great mistake when it had abandoned the old single-shot [Trapdoor] Springfield for the Model 1903...He insisted that the repeating rifles and machine guns wasted ammunition and encouraged soldiers in careless habits, while the old single-shot rifle caused the soldier to exercise due care to make every shot count. Considering that the machine gun was dominating the battlefields of Europe at the time, Colonel Morgan's views provided us junior officers with a great amount of conversational material and did little toward increasing our confidence in some of our superiors.¹³⁷

True to the old army tradition, his regimental commander believed that the best way to instruct young officers "was to assign them a task and then let them work out their own solution."¹³⁸

Thus, to these half-trained company officers like Truscott and Bernet fell the responsibility for

¹³⁴ John W. Castles, Unprinted manuscript, Castles Papers, United States Military Academy Library Archives, West Point, New York.

¹³⁵ Truscott, 6.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 8.

the training and leading of the new army. Without a strong cadre of competent NCOs to aid them, the junior officers were left to "sink or swim" in the training of their soldiers and units.

In the fall of 1918, Army Chief of Staff Peyton March reported that, "The quality of troops and their value as an effective force depends to a very large extent upon the character and sufficiency of their training, which in turn is dependent upon the officers who are designated to instruct them in camp and lead them in battle."¹³⁹ For the U. S. Army in the Great War, no truer words could be spoken. Despite the War Department's well laid plans for stateside pre-deployment training, works by the war's participants suggest that far too much of the instruction time in the United States often centered on subjects that the novice officers understood and could easily teach, such as close order and bayonet drill.¹⁴⁰ A number of accounts from the war agreed with a 27th Division soldier's observation that "bayonet instruction was a prominent factor in the training schedule."¹⁴¹

As was the case in the OTCs, far too much of the training in the new divisions was also centered on mastering obsolete battle formations and inculcating unrealistic views of warfare. It should come as no surprise that the young officers passed on to their soldiers the tactics and

¹³⁹ *War Department Annual Report, 1919*, 299.

¹⁴⁰ For example, First Lieutenant Henry Thorn, of the 313th Infantry, noted the company commanders held schools for their NCOs every afternoon. These schools focused on those tasks which the sergeants would be training their soldiers on in the upcoming days. He noted that "The bayonet, one of the principal weapons of the infantryman, was gone into extensively." Henry Thorn, *History of 313th U. S. Infantry* (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, 1920), 12-13. For another example of the continued prevalence of the bayonet, see, Huidenkopfer, 12.

¹⁴¹ War Veteran's Association, *History of Company "E," 107th Infantry* (New York: Privately Published, 1920), 50. A soldier in the 165th Infantry noted that his unit's stateside training routine consisted of "drill at formations and bayonet practice without dummies." Martin Hogan, *The Shamrock Battalion in the Great War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 18-19. Despite the supposed hard training that the soldiers of the 131st Infantry received, one of their officers noted that by April 1918 "the men were getting stale from close order drill." The solution to this dilemma was a ten day practice march through southern Texas. Captain George M. Malstrom, *The 131st Infantry in the World War* (Chicago: Privately published, 1919), 25. For the army's view of the importance of close order drill, see, John Cutchins and George Stewart, *History of the 29th Division, 1917-1919* (Philadelphia: MacCalla & Co., 1921), 50

assumptions that they had so recently learned themselves. Looking back on the training he gave and received, one lieutenant confessed,

Too much stress [was] put on form, ceremonies, close order drill and other West Point relics of the Roman phalanx age. . .too much valuable time [was] spent teaching "squads right" and not enough making every man able to use any type of machine gun.¹⁴²

This point was also not lost on the 82nd Division's W. A. Sirmon. He recorded that as late as the division's soon-to-be-deployed infantry units were still focusing on, "one hour in general infantry training, close order drill, bayonet work and bombing." He lamented, "Drill, drill, drill-will it never end?"¹⁴³

Without their own base of experience to draw upon, the junior officers often found it difficult to instruct their men in the more complex tasks of soldiering. Despite the time and effort that his unit devoted to officer-supervised marksmanship training, the 82nd Division's famous Alvin York remembered that his comrades remained the worst "shots that ever shut eyes and pulled a trigger," and that their shooting "missed everything but the sky."¹⁴⁴ An inspection of the 84th Division revealed that, "Many of the old men of the command (meaning those with longer service) were found to have a very poor knowledge of subjects as care and preservation of arms and equipment...individual cooking, care of feet, first aid, or the effect of wind, heat, and light upon shooting." This was a poor start for an "open warfare" army built upon superior American marksmanship and maneuver.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Morale Branch Report, 77.

¹⁴³ Sirmon, 57.

¹⁴⁴ Alvin C. York, *Sergeant York: His Own Life Story and War Diary*, ed. Tom Skeyhill (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), 46. York noted that the officers never managed to correct this deficiency. During the St. Mihiel Offensive, he remembered that his comrades "were still mostly hitting the ground or the sky. They burned up a most awful lot of Uncle Sam's ammunition," 210.

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum to Adjutant General, from Colonel H. O. Williams, Subject: Report on inspection of troops at Camp Sherman, Ohio, dated 31 July 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185-A NM-84, Entry 310, "Camp Macarthur, Texas, Infantry Training Center."

Unfortunately, as American units prepared to deploy overseas, the experiences of the 82nd and 84th Divisions were the rule rather than the exception. A War Department inspection of division cantonments in 1917 revealed serious problems with the training conducted in the new units. The inspectors noted,

Schedules of drills and instruction show an ample provision of time for this phase of instruction. Want of time, therefore, cannot be given as an excuse. *The defect lies in a want of accurate knowledge on the part of company officers and noncommissioned officers and failure on part of battalion commanders and commanders of higher units properly to supervise the drills and instruction of their commands...* They fail to make satisfactory progress in drilling their commands because *they do not see* the mistakes which are constantly made, and do not, as a consequence, correct them.(original emphasis) ¹⁴⁶

This unfortunate situation did not improve with time. Nearly a year after the first inspection, Colonel H. O. Williams noted the same problems in training within the 84th Division. Williams reported,

The instruction of the division has not been as thorough as it should have been. Officers and noncommissioned officers are not sufficiently zealous in correcting mistakes made at drill...They give command and command without any correction or any apparent effort to see that the movement is properly executed.¹⁴⁷

Like the previous inspector, he noted, “The greatest weakness of our system of training today is the lack of officers and noncommissioned officers who have a thorough knowledge of what they are trying to teach or who insist upon having their commands or instructions thoroughly complied with. We must have more accuracy and more attention to detail.”¹⁴⁸ Without an adequate knowledge of the basics or a fundamental understanding of war on the Western Front, the new officers and NCOs were ill-equipped to identify and correct problems in both the training of their soldiers and in the flawed American doctrine.

¹⁴⁶ “Memorandum on Infantry Instruction,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 7, 509.

¹⁴⁷ Memorandum to Adjutant General, from Colonel H. O. Williams, Subject: Report on inspection of troops at Camp Sherman, Ohio, dated 31 July 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185-A NM-84, Entry 310, “Camp Macarthur, Texas, Infantry Training Center.”

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The Americans did not embark into their wilderness of training alone. Both the French and the British sent a number of officers and NCOs to instruct the Americans in the mysteries of modern war. Every division training in the United States had a cadre of Allied officers to teach the Americans the technical skills needed to master the new weapons that had come to prominence during the war. For example, one officer recalled that in the 89th Division, the training conducted by French and British officers was generally limited to machine gunnery, gas warfare, bayonet fighting, artillery firing, automatic rifles, bombs, liaison, and the Stokes Mortar.¹⁴⁹ These courses, which due to shortages in weapons, were generally taught in divisional schools and were those most commonly given by the Allied officers.

While the junior officers seemed to have been enthusiastic and receptive students, their regular army senior commanders were much less impressed.¹⁵⁰ After Huger Scott left the Chief of Staff office to take a division command, he observed,

A number of foreign officers invalided in France were sent over to teach us the newest developments of trench warfare... They invariably assumed our total ignorance of everything military, and started their course with the most rudimentary subjects. I had to stop this waste of time, and told them that our regular officers needed only the newest developments as they came up, for they were otherwise as well or better trained than the officers of Europe. After this they taught us the art of throwing bombs, the use of flares, and the operation of trench mortars, *but the best thing we got from them was their new bayonet drill.* (emphasis added)¹⁵¹

The fact that he found the bayonet drill to be the most important aspect of the training that the foreign officers gave is a telling statement on the mentality of many of the army's officers. It also shows why the training given by the Allied officers was so limited in scope and scale.

¹⁴⁹ English, 34-5.

¹⁵⁰ Even enthusiasm had its limits. One officer recalled that his after hours lectures by French and British officers was "fighting a hopeless fight against weariness and sleep." L. Wardlaw Miles, *History of the 308th Infantry* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 15.

¹⁵¹ Hugh L. Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier* (New York: The Century Company, 1928), 613-314.

The stiff-arming of French and British tactical concepts by the Americans was not lost on the Allied instructors themselves. Their reports to the American General Staff and their own military missions bristled with anger and exasperation over their sidelining by the very people they were trying to aid. After inspecting training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, one French officer reported “When there is a question of drills and maneuvers in which they could readily assist, the American officers are careful not to consult them, preferring to work their own way. Our officers have no part in training except in that of specialties and do not assist at any drills.”¹⁵² After visiting a number of American posts, he concluded the “The word ‘specialist’ is being deliberately exploited [by the Americans] to limit our activity.”¹⁵³

As the Americans “found their feet” in 1918, these obstructionist tendencies grew stronger. On 18 April 1918, Colonel James Martin, the Acting Chief of French Advisory Mission, reported a number of problems that his trainers were having in instructing the Americans. In one of the gravest situations, he found that his officers at Camp Custer were subject to “a certain hostility on the part of the new chief of staff.” The Frenchman peevishly observed that the American “thinks that because he stayed a few days near the front that he does not need any help of foreign advisors for the instruction of the division.”¹⁵⁴

The Allied officers were also critical of the tactical training that the Americans were conducting. As most, if not all, of these officers had personally experienced the realities of modern war, their criticism was telling. One Russian general was amazed that given the changes

¹⁵² “Extracts from the Report of Major De Reviere, Chief of the Atlanta Sub-District (French Military Mission) for the two weeks from March 1st to March 15th,” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training- Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM - 84, Entry 310, File “Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission.”

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Report from COL James Martin, Acting Chief of French Advisory Mission to COL J. Bradley, Acting Director of Training Committee, Subject: Report of Instruction, dated 18 April 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training- Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File “Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission.”

in warfare that had placed increased importance on small unit combat and made well-trained squads “the basis of all efficiency” in higher units, that he “saw practically no squad work in the entire trip.” This, he believed, was “a most grievous fault” in the Americans’ training.¹⁵⁵ The Frenchman, Major De Reviere condemned the fact that he was “unable to have our infantry combat methods accepted or to have the progressive stages of instruction directed along the lines of modern warfare” because the Americans insisted that their tactical training be based on “American Methods.” He found that in the U. S. Army, “False ideas of combat prevail such as antiquated tactical theories of before the war...”¹⁵⁶ As the bulk of the American divisions were preparing to deploy in the spring of 1918, the Head of the French Military Mission, General Claudon, noted that the Americans’ tactical training still lacked, “a programme of exercises in combat in simple but well defined and progressive steps.”¹⁵⁷

The Allied officers also denounced the Americans’ fixation with close order drill and time wasted on other topics of limited importance. The senior French officer assigned to Camp Sheridan was maddened by the fact that while the Americans had finally established a much-needed platoon leader school, six of its ten lessons were devoted to close order drill. Another noted that the platoon leader school at Camp Sevier had essentially closed because senior officers had mandated that young officers attend morning close order drill sessions rather than attending the school.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ “Letter for the Chief of Staff from Maj N. K. Averill, General Staff Corps, Subject: Defects in our training, especially candidates for officers, dated 10 August 1917” in RG 165 “Letters,... etc Officers’ Training Camps,” NARA Microfilm File 9226, Roll 261.

¹⁵⁶ “Extracts from the Report of Major De Reviere, Chief of the Atlanta Sub-District (French Military Mission) for the two weeks from March 1st to March 15th.”

¹⁵⁷ “Report of General Claudon on his visit to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, March 4-6, 1918,” in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training- Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File “Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission.”

¹⁵⁸ French Military Mission, “Summary of the Reports of the French Advisory Mission,” dated 16 February 1918, in NARA RG 165, War Department General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G5 Combat Training-

Some of the Allied officers placed the blame for this squarely on the backs of the American regular officers responsible for planning the training. Of his American peers, one Frenchman acidly remarked, “The field officers are very inferior as they have no special schools and do not get down to work. The efficiency of the staff is lost in innumerable details; its idea of training is merely that of close order formation and outward appearance (bluff).”¹⁵⁹ This officer’s gloomy and prescient conclusions were,

Combat training has hardly begun and is started in the wrong direction. It is greatly to be feared that if the present mistakes continue the situation will not improve...the divisional staff is responsible for false orientation given to training and it is absolutely necessary, in order to climb out of this rut and avoid appalling and demoralizing losses, that measures be taken and orders given from those in command.¹⁶⁰

None of these comments offered any ringing endorsements of the Americans’ training, doctrine, or combat leadership.

It could be argued that the harsh assessments of the Americans concealed a hidden agenda on the part of the Allied officers, or were merely “sour grapes.” There is truth in this point of view, and painting the Americans as inept amateurs was clearly a way of furthering the argument that the doughboys would be best served by being amalgamated into existing Allied units, or at least retained under Allied command. However, one must keep in mind that the Allied officers assigned to duty in the United States understood the implications for their battered nations and armies if the U. S. Army proved incapable of taking to the field. There is nothing to suggest that any of these officers wanted to see the Americans fall flat on their faces in either training or combat. The criticism that they offered was valid and reflected the veterans’ hard

Supervision by Allied Instructors, 7-56.5 – 56.9, Box 208, NM -84, Entry 310, File “Reports of Activities of Advisory Mission.”

¹⁵⁹ Extracts from the Report of Major De Reviens, Chief of the Atlanta Sub-District (French Military Mission) for the two weeks from March 1st to March 15th.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

won battlefield wisdom.

The Americans themselves appeared at times to understand the holes in their tactical training and doctrine. Regrettably, much of this realization came only after they experienced the pain of combat. From division to division there were great variances in the quality, quantity, and the degree of realism given to the tactical training of squads, platoons, and companies. As previously noted, much of this depended upon the local realities of equipment shortages, training areas available, the weather, and troop health. When all the right variables aligned, tactical training in the United States could be quite sound and realistic. Since the time, equipment and ammunition was available to Major General John F. O’Ryan, he was able to have units up to the brigade level in the 27th Division practice assaults on a simulated enemy trench system supported by preparatory fires and a rolling barrage fired by the division’s artillery units using live shells. The division commander noted that the “psychological effect upon units subjected to these tests was marked,” and that this “rather radical training” helped to better ease the soldiers into their later shocks of combat.¹⁶¹

The available evidence indicates that the level of detail and realism in the 27th Division’s tactical training was uncommon in other units. The field exercises in other divisions tended to range from overly scripted productions to wide ranging free-for-alls. In most cases the training was circumscribed by the knowledge and the abilities that the units’ junior officers brought to the field. For instance, Kerr Rainsford admitted that the military knowledge of most of his fellow officers was limited to the *IDR* and *FSR* that they had learned at the OTCs.¹⁶² As old habits in

¹⁶¹ Sutcliffe, 47. A soldier of B Company, 106th Machine Gun Battalion recalled that this training was “chief among the impressions made” on him and his peers during his tactical instruction. He noted that some of the men in his unit that had heretofore feared that the war would be over before they arrived in France now “found lots of other things to think and talk about.” Leslie Baker, *The Company History: The Story of Company B, 106th Machine Gun Battalion* (New York: Privately printed, 1920), 10-11.

¹⁶² Rainsford, 1.

training and indoctrination are hard to break, this often meant that the officers brought the obsolete practices which they learned to the instruction of their own units.

The continued uncertainty over the proper balance between training for trench and “open” warfare often meant that units approached neither with the depth needed for even basic competency. This tension, however, did not indicate any waning of the officer corps’ faith in “American exceptionalism” when it came to tactics. As a division Chief of Staff recalled,

...side-by-side with the instruction and training in the new methods of trench warfare went instruction in the methods and principles of warfare in the open. For it seems to have been at all times the faith and belief of all our Army at some time and somehow this stalemate would come to an end; that finally the enemy would be forced into the open and would have to come to conflict face-to-face and breast to breast; that the general principles of warfare are immutable and unchanged from age to age by the introduction of new appliances and new details; their own methods were sound and in accordance with those principles.¹⁶³

But, the Americans’ training was not adequately preparing them for that “face-to-face and breast to breast” moment against a seasoned and adaptive enemy. Training that failed to inculcate the use of artillery and the employment of supporting weapons (often due to equipment shortages and incomplete training) meant that American units and leaders had already conceded key advantages to their enemies long before they fired the first shots against the foe.

Although the available evidence suggests that officers made diligent efforts to keep abreast of rapidly changing doctrines, they seemed to be training concepts that were always two or more steps behind the realities or latest tactical developments of the Western Front. A 77th Division officer who attended a number of divisional schools at Camp Upton, New York recalled that his instructors “usually concluded their course with a warning that, in view of a more recent method having been ordered since the opening of the course, the methods of instruction just

¹⁶³ English, 33.

taught should not be practiced with the troops.”¹⁶⁴ Another 77th Division officer noted, “Platoons were for a time divided into grenade throwers...rifle-grenadiers, rifle-men and liaison agents, according to the directions of the red pamphlets, recently distributed to the officers and carefully marked with the suggestive legend, “Not to be Carried in the Front Line Trenches.”¹⁶⁵ While he was most likely referring to one of the red-jacketed *Supplement to Instructions for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* first published by the AEF in early 1918, by the time his unit sailed for France, it had already been supplanted by a new edition published in April 1918.¹⁶⁶ The officer also leaves the impression that even the time his unit spent on the new doctrine was rather sparse.

It was not until 6 May 1918 that Payton March approved a War College Division reprint of the AEF’s April 1918 edition of *Instructions for the Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Factoring in the time it took to print and distribute this manual, it is unlikely that infantry units training in the United States received it before late June or July of 1918. This meant that most of the American divisions had either already sailed for France, or were in the process of deploying by the time the publication was distributed.¹⁶⁷ Although the manual incorporated the AEF’s *Supplement to Instructions* illustrating the combat formations and maneuver drills for infantry platoons and companies, it also contained illustrations from a British source that where not in the AEF’s original publications. It is unclear why this series of British line drawings of a platoon in the attack were included in the manual. They were not referred to in the text and more importantly, did not match the formations illustrated in *Supplement to Instructions*. Although the

¹⁶⁴ Rainsford, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Miles, 18.

¹⁶⁶ General Headquarters, AEF, *Supplement to Instruction for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* (Nancy, France: Berger-Levarault, April 1918).

¹⁶⁷ Of the 42 U.S. Divisions that reached France (not including the dismembered 93rd), 25 had deployed by June 1918, 29 by July, and 35 by August. Ayers, 102.

pictures are quite artistically done, they could only have further complicated the efforts of junior leaders to puzzle-out the already confusing American doctrine.¹⁶⁸

The “lag time” in adjusting emerging doctrine to training hindered the ability of stateside instruction to replicate the realities of combat in France. Most divisions spent a lot of time and effort in constructing trench systems which their units would use as part of their offensive and defensive training. Some of these systems were quite elaborate with machine gun emplacements, troop shelters, communications and reserve trenches, and extensive barbwire obstacles. These forms of fortification were discussed in detail in the 1917 War Department publications, *Infantry in the Defense* and *Notes for Infantry Officers on Trench Warfare*. Unfortunately, the mighty constructions depicted in the publications and built in posts across the United States reflected more of the realities of 1916 than did they those of late 1917 or 1918. By mid-1917, the German Army had shifted its defensive doctrine to the elastic defense in depth. This change moved the Germans away from massing their strength in forward trenches to a system of echelonment that employed shell holes, strong points, and trenches sited on reverse slopes to slowly grind down any Allied attacks as they slogged through the depth of the German defenses.¹⁶⁹ The training trench system constructed by the 27th Division at Camp Wadsworth, South Carolina had a depth of only 400 yards; far shallower than the elastic defense systems then in use by the Germans on the Western Front.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the American training in no way

¹⁶⁸ War Department, *Instructions for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), Plates I-IV, not paginated, but inserted between pages 47-49. Although the manual gives no source for the illustrations, given the uniforms, equipment and weapons of the soldiers pictured, they are clearly British. What could show Allied solidarity more than an American manual, derived from French sources, with British illustrations?

¹⁶⁹ Timothy Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine During the First World War* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1981), 1-36.

¹⁷⁰ Gerald F. Jacobson, *History of the 107th Infantry U.S.A.* (New York: The De Vinne Press, 1920), 11-12. The AEF’s April 1918 edition of *Instructions for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* clearly stated the changes that the Germans had made to their doctrine and that the new “active defense aims to break up the attack by the intensive use of machine guns placed in shell holes (which are located in checkerboard fashion and protected by small

replicated either the methods of the German defense or their penchant for well-timed counterattacks.

The training also continued to present other unrealistic visions of modern war. One officer wrote, “With the completion of the new trench system patterned after a sector of the Western Front, the regiment engaged in maneuvers which suggested something of actual war. Men leaped over or into real trenches, and advanced cheering in innocent simulation of a real bayonet charge.”¹⁷¹ The ease in which the Americans assaulted the trenches, unhindered by complex thoughts of the artillery, machine gun fire, and supply, brings to mind the equally flawed and unrealistic training given Britain’s “Kitchner’s Army” scarcely two years before. These unrealistic visions of war even effected some officers’ conception of their role as combat leaders. While training at Camp Doniphan, Captain Ernest McKeigan wrote home to his wife, “...on the battlefield the captain is expected to be way back behind the lines in a ‘dugout’ or bombproof with a telephone at his head directing operations. They say we are not even allowed to carry a revolver but [are to be] armed with a trench stick.” (original emphasis)¹⁷² Although McKeigan may have written this to ease his wife’s worries, the passage still offers an insight into the mindset that his training encouraged.

It is interesting to note that the enlisted men appear to have often had a different impression of the field training than did their officers. In many ways the accounts of these soldiers offer a more honest appraisal of what they were learning. To the folks at home, Private George Brown related of his field training, “About three miles out we spotted the enemy and

garrisons), by small offensive detachments covering the flanks of each unit, and by the automatic and immediate action of counterattacks.” 9. Unfortunately, this information came too late to help most American units training in the United States.

¹⁷¹ Miles, 18.

¹⁷² Letter from Captain Earnest F. McKeigan to “Dearest Girl,” dated 2 September 1917, in Captain Earnest F. McKeigan Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

then the fun started. We have signals to advance and halt- no commands. We'd run a ways then fall down then up and run again. Imagine those heavy packs and rifles."¹⁷³ A soldier in the 77th Division observed that much of their tactical training at Camp Upton, New York often "degenerated into nothing more than wild games of hare and hound, pursued without the slightest regard for military regulations."¹⁷⁴ Similarly, another soldier maintained that during his training at Camp Funston, "Exercises in minor tactics made up in aggressiveness where they lacked in accuracy. Both sides claimed victory in many bloodless campaigns... 'You're a prisoner' was answered by 'I killed you half an hour ago.'"¹⁷⁵ At Camp Hancock in April 1918, Benson wrote,

During the past three days we have been very busy drilling under those ignorant officers and hiking. Yesterday morning we took a ten mile hike, five miles each way to a lake and on the way we had to send out snipers, advance guards etc to watch for [the] enemy. I was one of the advance guards and it was surely a great game spying around in the woods. We were supposed to be attacked by cavalry but our companies surprised them in the woods. Our guard discovered where they were, sent one man back to the main body and then they all charged down upon them. Of course we didn't have any guns but we all went through the maneuvers just as if we were actually engaged in the present war. We continued to the lake where we rested for half and hour and then came back...¹⁷⁶

These passages suggest that the soldiers involved either did not understand the purposes of the exercises and the roles they were to play in their unit's maneuvers, or were blissfully ignorant of how little their carrying-on reflected the realities of combat. In either case, they do draw into sharp focus the underlying problems with American stateside unit training. Unfortunately, these naive soldiers would soon find that their German adversaries played a much rougher version of "a great game spying around the woods."

¹⁷³ George Browne, *An American Soldier in World War I*, edited by David L. Snead (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 28-9.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Alan D. Graff, *Blood in the Argonne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 41.

¹⁷⁵ Dienst, 15.

¹⁷⁶ Letter from P. Benson Oakley to Helen Oakley postmarked 26 April 1918 from Camp Hancock, Ga. from Author's collection.

In addition to the goal of military training to impart important battle skills is the need for the experience of that instruction to weld all members of the unit into a cohesive whole that enables soldiers and leaders to effectively operate under the stress of combat. While individuals must have a personal knowledge and skill set to perform as soldiers, the individual must also be able to perform as a member of a unit if both the person and the group are to survive and succeed on the battlefield. The reason that close order drill (in moderation) has been a cornerstone of recruit training in modern armies is that it quickly accomplishes the task of training the individual to instantly respond to command while also building the concept of collective action and identity. It was the task of the junior officers and NCOs of the U. S. Army to build this corporate identity and cohesion in their units.

Although the U. S. Army of the Great War lacked a theoretic or doctrinal basis for describing cohesion, it clearly understood that modern warfare had placed even a greater demand on small units and had a conception of unit identity that was in line with the later writings of S.L.A. Marshall and Darryl Henderson. An experienced Regular officer wrote,

Any group of individuals working together for a common purpose is going to establish unconsciously a group spirit of some kind. This has got to happen. The leader knows that success largely depends on . . . this spirit. . .By getting to know the men and “how they feel about it,” he keeps in close touch with the spirit. . .and make the men feel a membership in his team.¹⁷⁷

In an April 1918 article in the *Infantry Journal*, William E. Hocking, a Harvard University Professor of Psychology, described the psychological realities of the battlefield that have a decidedly contemporary feel. In an age of “muscular Christianity” and boy’s dime store tales of courageous warriors, Hocking described a reality of war where “No one knows in advance how he will behave in an emergency that he has never experienced. But it may be taken for granted

¹⁷⁷ Lincoln Andrews, *Military Manpower* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 74-5.

that everyone experiences fear.”¹⁷⁸ He accurately noted that the “mass attack, while expensive in terms of men, is psychologically easier, for it satisfies the protective instinct of bunching together.” He argued that the only way to get soldiers away from this “illusory and fatal impulse” was to train the individual soldier and officer to understand what he and his unit had to accomplish and where he was to end up at the end of the battle.¹⁷⁹ As for unit leaders,

It is no longer possible for officers higher than platoon leaders to be personally in touch with their men during attack. The weight of responsibility for morale is thus thrown on lieutenants and noncommissioned officers, and under present conditions it is difficult for them to retain control. Men fight best with comrades and in units they are used to. Men are kept up to their best performance by the eyes of those who know them.¹⁸⁰

Thus, nearly thirty years before the publication of Marshall’s *Men Against Fire*, the concept of the modern psychological battlefield, and the cohesion and leadership that units and individuals needed to confront it, was understood in certain corners of the American Army.

Given this broad understanding of unit cohesion, one wonders why the War Department did not do more to promote it during World War I. Although the War Department was beset by a host of problems beyond its control that hobbled its wartime mobilization and training efforts, its personnel policies caused unnecessary “self-inflicted wounds” to unit cohesion that seriously undermined the army’s overall combat effectiveness and the leadership of its junior officers and NCOs. Some of this was undoubtedly a reflection of the managerial approach to problem solving that accompanied the “cult of professionalism.” As with other Progressive Era reforms, part of the Regular Army’s move toward increased professionalism was an effort to inject efficiency into military processes and operations. Reflecting the views of the guru of Progressive Era efficiency, Frederick Winslow Taylor, the Adjutant General and other members

¹⁷⁸ Dr. William E. Hocking, “Fundamentals of Military Psychology,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 10 (April 1918), 719.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 721.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

of the General Staff simply saw the manpower issue as matching human assets to the most pressing needs. Soldiers merely became interchangeable commodities that could be moved at will to enhance the overall institutional efficiency of the U. S. Army. This meant that throughout the conflict, the War Department displayed no reluctance in ordering massive levies and transfers of soldiers and leaders from one unit to another. Unfortunately, these frequent, and often inexplicable, movements of soldiers in and out of units further crippled individual and unit training, damaged the morale of officers and enlisted men, and preempted the efforts of leaders to build cohesive combat-ready units.

The experience of the 82nd Division is illustrative of the continual building and tearing down of the American divisions. In August 1917, the War Department activated the division and began to man it with draftees from Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. Less than two months later, with the division approaching full strength and already well into the stage of collective unit training, the War Department reversed itself and ordered most of the unit's enlisted men transferred to the 30th, 31st and 81st Divisions. The War Department's decision left the 82nd with a cadre of only 783 men to rebuild the division's organization.¹⁸¹ A regimental commander reported that these transfers left his company commanders with only five draftees in their units.¹⁸² Nor were the moves limited to enlisted men. The same officer noted that "each time a Signal Corps motorcycle entered camp," it caused great consternation in his regiment because it was bound to be bringing "orders for officers to proceed here, there, and everywhere for duty in

¹⁸¹ Buxton, 1-2., U. S. Department of War, *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces*, Vol. 2, *Divisions*. (Washington D.C., 1931), 349. (Hereafter cited as *Order of Battle*)

¹⁸² Unprinted manuscript in the Julian L. Schley papers, Box 1, United States Military Academy Library Special Collections. 14.

the then so-called National Army.”¹⁸³ More importantly, these moves meant that six weeks of cohesion building and training had gone to waste.

In late October and November, the division was brought back up to strength with draftees from New England and the Mid Atlantic states. Colonel Julian Schley remembered that the arrival of these new men was not greeted with rejoicing by his junior officers. He noted,

These men proved so poorly drilled in general that training had to commence at the beginning. Up to this time the spirit of the reserve officers had been high and the development of the men under their instruction had encouraged them. This return to the first lessons again with another set of men discouraged them and created a corresponding slump in their enthusiasm.¹⁸⁴

The new levy also contained a large percentage of recent immigrants unable to speak or read English. This further hindered training and forced the division commander to organize English classes to give the soldiers the basic language knowledge necessary for combat.¹⁸⁵ This problem was not limited to the 82nd Division; in 1917 one in three Americans was a first generation immigrant, and one in five draftees was foreign born.¹⁸⁶

The division’s manpower challenges did not end with the arrival of the northeastern draftees. In an effort to pool soldiers who had civilian experience in certain crafts and industrial jobs, Washington again ordered the 82nd to transfer over 3,000 specialists from its ranks in November 1917. This levy fell hardest among the unit’s NCOs. One bitter officer remarked,

The Division believed that the War Department had overlooked one important consideration. Although the soldier might be a very good plumber, lumberman, blacksmith or structural iron worker, a great deal of Government time and money had been expended in making him an even more valuable specialist in his present

¹⁸³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁸⁵ Buxton, 2. The problem was also noted in Sirmon, *That's War*, 26.

¹⁸⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 24, 157., John W. Chambers, *To Raise and Army* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 89-95. Chambers notes that many supporters of conscription hoped that military service would "make good Americans" out of the immigrants.

occupation: namely that of a non-commissioned officer, bayonet instructor, hand grenade expert or machine gunner.¹⁸⁷

As a result of the ugly wave of xenophobia and nativism that swept over the United States in the first year of the war, the division's number of trained men was further reduced by the forced discharge of over 1,400 men considered to be enemy aliens by the War Department in March 1918.¹⁸⁸ Although the War Department promised to refill the division with suitable specialists and replacements prior to their embarkation, the 82nd received only levies of untrained draftees. Some of these raw replacements arrived in the division only days before its departure from the United States. Private Ralph Flynt was inducted into the Army on April 2, 1918; eighteen days later he was on board one of the ships carrying the 82nd to France.¹⁸⁹

The disruptions caused by the army's levy policy were not confined to the 82nd Division. The *American Expeditionary Forces Order of Battle* notes that many National Guard and most National Army divisions experienced large turnovers of personnel prior to their movement overseas.¹⁹⁰ Of the 41 divisions that were sent to France (not including the 93rd Division that served with the French as individual regiments), 17 lost an aggregate of at least 10,000 men to transfers between the time they were raised and the time that they sailed for France. Nearly all of the remaining divisions suffered losses that ran into the thousands, or had to cope with the constant arrival of new and largely untrained men required to bring them up to strength.

¹⁸⁷ Buxton, 3.

¹⁸⁸ Buxton, 3., Kennedy, 24-25, 63-69. Sometimes these removals of "enemy aliens" even effected officers. The soldiers of E Company, 107th Infantry were distraught when their company commander, Captain Leo Knust, a 20 veteran of the New York National Guard, was relieved of command "because he was of German birth." *History of Company "E," 107th Infantry*, 62-3. However, the 27th Division's Intelligence Officer reported on 27 April 1918 that Captain Knust "spoke of the prowess of Germany's armies wherever he went and belittled the efforts of Americans in this war." The officer reported that "His men complained of his pro-Germanism." Report from Division Intelligence Officer, 27th Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, Subject: "General Information," 27 April 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 16, Camp Wadsworth file.

¹⁸⁹ Frank A. Holden, *War Memories* (Athens, GA: No publisher, 1922), 27-28.

¹⁹⁰ *Order of Battle*, Vol. 2. For examples see "Record of Events" for 39th, 40th, 77th, 81st and 91st Divisions. Lonnie White noted the effects of the levies on the 36th and 90th Divisions in *Panthers to Arrowheads*, 40-43., and *The 90th Division in World War I*, 35-37.

Although the War Department justified the constant transfers of personnel as a necessary evil that filled earlier deploying units at the expense of those sailing later in 1918, these moves appear to have been made with little or no reasoned thought or judgment. One wonders if it would have been easier to adjust the order in which units deployed rather than sending soldiers so promiscuously across the United States.

The 86th Division was hit particularly hard by the War Department's orgy of willy-nilly transfers and illustrates the problems that the haphazard moves left in their wake. Like most of the National Army divisions, the 86th was initially filled with the first wave of draftees by October 1917. Before that month was out, however, the division was forced to send over 5,400 of its newly arrived troops to the 33rd Division. Between January and April 1918, over 100,000 men were sent to Camp Grant mainly to fill the division's ranks. During the same period, the post and division lost an aggregate of 80,000 soldiers. On 30 April 1918, the 86th was down to only 10,000 men. These moves had a profoundly negative influence on the unit's leaders and men. In just the area of NCO leadership, the division's morale officer reported that, "it is noticeable that the men are not as keen as formerly in competition for noncommissioned rank." He believed that this was due to the fear among the men that, given the recent spate of levies, they would shortly be transferred and lose any rank they gained.¹⁹¹

Throughout the summer of 1918, in an unpredictable and unsystematic manner, the War Department again slowly refilled the units by sending drips and drabs of replacements until it deployed in August. Given the disruptions to its training caused by these chaotic transfers, it is

¹⁹¹ Report from Intelligence Officer, 86th Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, Subject: "Summary of General Information, March 11th, 1918," Morale at Army Installations, Box 6, Camp Grant file.

not surprising that Pershing ordered the 86th Division skeletonized to provide replacements to his other units upon its arrival in France.¹⁹²

The War Department's demand for men with specialized skills or those with the education and experience to attend officers' training wreaked havoc on the already strained efforts of lieutenants and captains to identify and train a solid cadre of NCOs. For example, the 89th Division's Intelligence Officer reported that "There is some feeling of discouragement and dissatisfaction among the commissioned personnel due to the constant extraction of men from this division." He noted that the officers, "feel keenly the loss of those men whom they have spent months of hard work in an effort to make them trained soldiers."¹⁹³ On 22 February 1918, another intelligence officer bewailed that training in the 31st Division had been gravely disrupted by was the unit's transfer of 320 "of the best N.C.O.s" to the Leon Springs OTC.¹⁹⁴ Likewise, Captain Wardlaw Miles noted that "A fierce exasperation burned in the hearts of the Company Commanders who were constantly obliged to give to other units their best non-commissioned officer material."¹⁹⁵ As alluded to in previous chapters, when they were faced with the steady drain of their best soldiers and NCOs, a number of junior officers worked hard to subvert the system.

At the beginning of the war, the soldier's company commander filled out the man's qualification card listing any specific technical training, education, or experience. As these cards were the local Adjutant General's only way of determining whether a soldier possessed the skills that were needed elsewhere in the army, it was easy for the officers to camouflage the man's true

¹⁹² *Order of Battle*, Vol. 2, 383-5.

¹⁹³ Report from Intelligence Officer, 89th Division, to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, dated 25 March 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 5, Camp Funston file.

¹⁹⁴ Report from Intelligence Officer, 31st Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, dated 22 February 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 17, Camp Wheeler file.

¹⁹⁵ Miles, *History of the 308th Infantry*, 14.

worth from the prying eyes of the outsiders. Going one step further, Captain Kerr Rainsford admitted that he and his peers came to view the transfers as a “safety-valve” or quick means for ridding themselves of, “the man whose face seemed irreconcilable with a steel helmet, whose name on the rollcall consisted only of consonants, or who had cast his rice pudding in the mess-sergeant’s face.”¹⁹⁶ As it was also in their interest to have efficient small units, often the company commander’s superiors tacitly supported their obstructionism. After his unit endured a particularly large loss of current and would-be NCOs, one regimental commander later confessed that he turned a blind eye when his company commanders later listed “especially qualified men as farmers” so as to keep the soldier off of subsequent transfer orders.¹⁹⁷

Unfortunately, perhaps, the army’s personnel officers were quick to pick up the captains’ subterfuges. In the Adjutant General Office’s official history of the war, the personnel managers condemned the fact that “all too frequent instances came to light where the company commander had deliberately hidden the good men by reporting them as laborers or farm hands instead of the engineers, accountants, and telegraphers which they were, thus reducing the likelihood of losing them by transfer to other companies.”¹⁹⁸ To remedy this, the Adjutant General simply had the divisional personnel office code all new men’s qualification cards and make copies of the records before assigning them to their units.

In fairness to the personnel officers, for the first time in the nation’s history, the demands of time and mass industrial warfare demanded that the nation and the army devise a system for most efficiently using its human resources. Still, one can readily sympathize with the infantry company commanders. Mustering all the fawning condescension that only a grey bureaucrat can

¹⁹⁶ Rainsford, 6-7.

¹⁹⁷ Unprinted manuscript in the Julian L. Schley papers, Box 1, United States Military Academy Library Special Collections., 16.

¹⁹⁸ Adjutant General, *The Personnel System of the United States Army*, Vol. I, *History of the Personnel System*. 12.

wield, the personnel managers expressed the belief that “nothing is more disheartening to officers or soldiers than to see some of their best personnel suddenly removed, just at the time when strenuous enthusiastic training has brought about a measure of group competence.” The personnel officers expressed sympathy over the fact that they had taken “the very men of superior native ability whom the company commander had selected as promising material for his non-commissioned officers and whom he was loath to lose.” But in the end, the minor problems of a 250 man company paled in comparison to the Adjutant General’s challenges and the greater needs of the army trumped the small unit’s need for good leaders and cohesion.¹⁹⁹

Whatever their justification, the frequent levy of soldiers from the division caused massive and lasting disruptions to the training and cohesion of the army’s small units. In the realm of training, the loss of NCOs and privates forced officers to continually readjust their training plans to account for the influx of raw recruits. With each new levy, the officers and remaining NCOs also had to reassert their authority and try to rebuild the “group spirit” of their units. This constant “reinventing of the wheel” was but another obstacle to the leaders’ efforts to advance their own professional development. An officer in the 305th Infantry described the process that followed after “each company had been sifted down to a mere hundred or so.” As soon as new men arrived, “all over again, the company commander would have to organize his unit, re-size and re-distribute his men in order to balance the platoons; start in once more on the rudiments of drill, spending long days on the rifle range teaching the infant mind to shoot.”²⁰⁰

On the plus side, Private Archibald Hart believed that while the constant influx of new men disrupted the units training, the mixture of “veteran” and green troops allowed the later to

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 24-5.

²⁰⁰ Tiebout, *A History of the 305th Infantry*, 26.

be trained more quickly.²⁰¹ Although this was partially true, these gains were not worth the costs in morale and training time. For example, in March 1918, the Camp Lewis Assistant Intelligence Officer reported that in the 91st Division a “lack of arms and the necessity of going back over close order drill for the instruction of incoming recruits caused a noticeable slump in the morale of some of the men in the infantry regiments.”²⁰² The “old hands”’ resentment at having to again go through the drudgery of close order drill and other basic tasks would not have aided leaders (who often shared the “veterans”’ resentments) in crafting *esprit de corps* within their units.

Since the War Department did not approach the issue of reassigning men to fill deploying units in any methodical manner, it exacerbated the training problems into both the gaining and the losing units. The Chief of Staff of the 89th Division, for example, freely admitted that to fill the War Department’s urgent levy orders, the division had no other choice than to send only “partially trained” men to fill the quotas.²⁰³ Given the fact that no two divisions were ever truly training on the same subjects at the same times, and that the travel times involved in shifting soldiers from one post to the next, the units gaining the Camp Funston soldiers now had to scramble to fill in the holes in the men’s training.

For the units that had lost the soldiers to transfer, they were eventually refilled with partially trained men from other posts or, even worse, brought up to strength with recently drafted recruits. For the 89th Division, this meant,

Early in May a large contingent of newly drafted men reported in number sufficient to fill all vacancies. These men were received within two weeks of the departure of the Division for overseas...They were equipped, trained in the elements of marching and of the manual of arms, given their typhoid prophylaxis

²⁰¹ Archibald Hart, *Company K of Yesterday* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969), 29.

²⁰² Report from Assistant Intelligence Officer, 86th Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, Subject: “Conditions in 91st Division and Auxiliary Organizations,” dated 4 March 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 9, Camp Lewis file.

²⁰³ English, 37-38.

and vaccination, all at breakneck speed. But nearly all of their time they spent upon the rifle range.²⁰⁴

This was a no win situation for all the parties involved. The new recruits were thrust into an alien world where they did not have the time to gain confidence in themselves, their comrades, or their leaders. They were also well aware of their sketchy training and the fact that would all too shortly land in combat. The leaders and “veteran” soldiers of the units in which the new recruits were assigned did not know the rookies’ strengths, weaknesses, and dependability, and were equally concerned with whether the new men had enough training to allow them to pull their weight in action.

The levies also further hindered efforts by commanders to standardize their training across all subordinate units. Colonel H. O. Williams reported in July 1918 that the transfer of a vast number of relatively trained men, and their subsequent replacement with raw recruits, had greatly slowed the training of the 84th Division. Furthermore, the changes in troops had left the division with a poor balance of experienced and green soldiers within its infantry units. The failure of the division staff to reorganize these units after the War Department’s levies mean that the 167th Infantry Brigade had a disproportionate level of raw recruits with “less than a week’s training under arms.”²⁰⁵ This of course led to a situation where training in that unit fell far behind others in the division. The fact that large groups of raw recruits continually and unpredictably arrived in divisions throughout the winter, spring, and summer of 1918, only exacerbated the challenges of the army’s small unit leaders. In the final analysis, the constant effort given to integrating the raw draftees into their units, and the time dedicated to constantly

²⁰⁴ Ibid. For another example of the negative impact that large drafts of green recruits had on unit training, see, Huidenkopfer, 22, 27, 30.

²⁰⁵ Memorandum to Adjutant General, from Colonel H. O. Williams, Subject: Report on inspection of troops at Camp Sherman, Ohio, dated 31 July 1918, in RG 165, Army General Staff, Army War College Historical Branch, G5 Schools, 7-51.3, Box 185-A NM-84, Entry 310, “Camp Macarthur, Texas, Infantry Training Center.”

rebuilding unit NCO cadres, left even less time for the officers and NCOs to move on to more advanced levels of unit training or to devote the time they needed to improve their own competence through self-study.

As both S. L. A. Marshall and Henderson argued, the close personal bonds and “social identities” that link soldiers together and build ties between the soldiers and their leaders in small units are the fundamental basis for the cohesion and combat effectiveness of armies. In addition to all the wreckage of training and leadership left in the wake of the incessant transfers, the greatest damage inflicted by the moves was in these areas. Two officers from the 89th Division were keenly aware of these abiding problems. Captain Charles Dienst, of the 353rd Infantry, noted that the constant turnover of the officers and soldiers of his unit, “seemed at the time to be striking at the progress and efficiency of the organization. There’s something in the association of men as “bunkies” that ties them together once [and] for all.” He recorded a conversation between two of these “bunkies” shortly before one of them was transferred to another post.

“I’m ready to go,” said the transferred man, “but I should like to go with my old outfit.” And the man who was left behind answered, “We’re going to be filled up with strangers. I don’t like it either.”²⁰⁶

In July 1918, the Camp Funston Intelligence Officer reported that morale at his post was being undermined by the “constantly shifting of men to other camps.” He wrote that, “Many friendships are no sooner made than broken. No man knows from one day to the next whether he will be in Camp Funston or sent to fill up another division.”²⁰⁷

The poignancy of broken friendships masked the deeper problems of unit cohesion. With the exception of some National Guard units, upon entering military service the majority of the army’s soldiers were cast into a strange world and largely cut lose from the close association of

²⁰⁶ Dienst, 2-3.

²⁰⁷ Report from Intelligence Officer, Camp Funston, KS, to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, Subject: “Morale at Camp Funston, Kansas,” dated 19 July 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 5, Camp Funston file.

friends and family. In the early weeks of training, the soldiers established new bonds of friendship and a “surrogate family” developed within their units. As the levies caused units to be “filled up with strangers,” the “surrogate family” was torn apart and was replaced by “one day to the next” uncertainties and worries. The importance of strong unit solidity is that it provides the essential psychological armor that the individual and the unit require to face the mental, physical, and spiritual challenges of fighting. As the transfers cut deep chinks into this psychological armor, the ability of the unit’s officers and NCOs to lead in combat grew exponentially more difficult. An officer of the 307th Infantry observed, everything at Camp Upton was so hurried and confused, and his unit was so buffeted by constant personnel transfers, that it “never really found itself” until it departed for France.²⁰⁸ Since having a unit “find itself” is the goal of military cohesion-building, the fact that a unit was unable to accomplish this key task until it reached the war zone was an indication of the serious challenges that lay before the AEF.

The mobilization of the U. S. Army was a mighty but flawed undertaking. The nation’s general lack of military preparation and the press of time resulted in vast shortages of equipment and defective and incomplete plans for training the mass of new soldiers and officers. With its flawed personnel policies and other missteps, the War Department itself often tripped-up unit training plans and the efforts of its junior leaders to build cohesive units. The OTC graduates were both victims and obedient minions of a training system that improperly prepared them for combat and then loosed them to spread ignorance among the draftee masses. While many motivated and well-intentioned young officers and NCOs attempted to transcend the host of training and leadership problems that confronted them, their greatest obstacles were their own limitations and inexperience. Captain Charles Dienst recalled that as his 353rd Infantry boarded the train from Camp Funston for the embarkation ports, “its equipment was still incomplete; its

²⁰⁸ Rainsford, 16.

training was still unfinished; and its organization was still untried...Both officers and men realized the inadequacy of their preparation.”²⁰⁹ Regrettably, his unit was far from being alone in this sad circumstance. The inbred and ingrained flaws in leadership, training, doctrine and organization that the army’s units carried with them to France would bear bitter fruit in the campaigns of 1918.

²⁰⁹ Deinst, 14.

Chapter 9
“My God! This is Kitchener’s army all over again”
Leader Training in the American Expeditionary Forces in France

A soldier in the 27th Division’s 105th Infantry recalled that after seeing his unit arrive at a British training area in France, one of the British instructors noted with tears in his eyes, “My God! This is Kitchener’s army all over again. We have nothing like this now; we have nothing left but boys.”¹ While the American chose to interpret the remark as a comment on the poor state of the British Army in 1918, the statement could equally be applied to the Americans’ innocence and lack of training. Like the “Kitchener” divisions that swelled the ranks of the British Army in 1916, the Americans of 1918 were young, energetic, and woefully unprepared for the shock of battle that awaited them.

Deploying to France did not end the U. S. Army’s problems with developing competent junior leaders. Officers and NCOs arriving overseas faced new sets of challenges and obstacles to their leadership development. The AEF’s own unique training policies, uncertain tactical doctrine, and mistrust of the Allies often hindered efforts to create leaders with the tactical and technical skills needed to overcome an experienced and able foe. Moreover, dramatic changes in the military situation in 1918 further sidetracked and overshadowed unit and leader training in France. By the time the American units became involved in large-scale combat in the spring and summer of 1918, the AEF had made few breakthroughs in improving the readiness of its junior leaders to command in war. General John J. Pershing is reported to have stated, “The only thing a soldier needs to know is how to shoot and salute.”² Although this quotation may be apocryphal, in many ways it did encapsulate much of the Iron Commander’s views of discipline,

¹ Robert S. Sutcliffe, *Seventy-First New York in the World War* (New York: Seventy-First Regiment Association, 1922), 67.

² Robert D. Heinl, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 329.

training, and the individual skills he felt were essential to wage modern war. Ultimately, it was going to take more than shooting and saluting to prepare company-level officers and NCOs for the challenges that awaited them in combat.

The training and doctrine of the AEF has long been a popular subject among historians of the era. James Rainey, Timothy Nenninger, and more recently, Mark Grotelueschen have all examined the shortcomings of Pershing's open warfare doctrine and the problems that the AEF faced in preparing its units for combat. Rainey noted that Pershing's open warfare doctrine suffered from inherent contradictions, unrealistic visions of combat, and a rather vague looseness in its doctrinal definitions.³ He has also argued that this flawed doctrine, when combined with a faulty philosophy of training, shortages of equipment, and unsound personnel policies, undercut the AEF's efforts to effectively train its units for war.⁴ Similarly, Timothy Nenninger maintained that while systemic problems with fielding a large army in France, and the German offensives of 1918 dogged Pershing's efforts to weld the AEF into an efficient fighting force, ultimately, things that were under the Americans' control, such as doctrine and personnel policies, could have been better managed to increase the effectiveness of the AEF's divisions.⁵

In *The AEF Way of War*, Mark Grotelueschen expands on the arguments of both Rainey and Nenninger and agrees with their negative assessment of Pershing's nebulous open warfare doctrine. However, Grotelueschen maintains that American divisions overcame the AEF GHQ's doctrinal blunders and crafted their own firepower-centric combat methods. These methods, which eschewed the GHQ's concepts of "self-reliant infantry" for ones that maximized the use

³ James W. Rainey, "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I," *Parameters*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (September 1983), 34-46.

⁴ James Rainey, "The Questionable Training of the AEF in World War I," *Parameters*, Vol. XXII, No. 4 (Winter 1992-93), 89-103.

⁵ Timothy K. Nenninger, "Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (October 1987), 177-181. Nenninger further expanded his argument in, Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, *Military Effectiveness*, Vol. 1 *The First World War* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 142-149.

of artillery, ultimately led to better combat performance in these adaptive units and fewer American casualties. He argues that despite the adherence of senior officers to the GHQ's "rifle and bayonet" dogma, most of the new tactics were spawned by junior officers who had been heavily influenced by Allied schools and advisors.⁶

This author has little to add to the debate over Pershing's open warfare doctrine. Rainey, Nenninger, and Grotelueschen have done a superior job of highlighting the problems with these tactics and the flawed assumptions upon which they were based. Thus, discussion of open warfare will be limited to those points where the doctrine intersected with the training of company-level leaders. It is interesting to note that in the War College Division's *Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action*, the authors used the terms "trench-to-trench attack" and "attack in open warfare" to delineate between the different methods of attack. However, they also stated, "it can not be too thoroughly recognized that although it may be necessary to slightly vary the preparations and forms of assembly for the attack in these two circumstances, the actual tactics to be employed will usually be identical."⁷ There is much wisdom in this statement, and at the company-level and below, much of the debate over the tactics, formations, and realities of open versus trench warfare may well have been a tempest in a teapot. For the captains, lieutenants, and NCOs, the problem remained the same: how do you

⁶ Mark E. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 343-352. However, one should not be so quick to dismiss the potency of Pershing's open warfare doctrine. It must be stated that it was far more pernicious than Grotelueschen admits. Harold Fiske, Pershing's Chief of Training (G5) possessed a missionary zeal for pushing Black Jack's open warfare canon. Although no one in the AEF could define open warfare, when the inspector-minions of the G5 or the AEF Inspector General came to view a unit's training, they had damn well better be able to show a grasp of it, or at least mouth the open warfare mantra. In his final report Pershing would boast, "Approved and systematic methods were maintained and enforced largely by the continued presence of members of the Training Section with the troops both during the training period and in campaign." While, as in most things, Pershing overestimated the coercive power of the GHQ and its ability to oversee and standardize training, there is little doubt that Pershing ruled the AEF with fear, and welded a powerful sword in his penchant for relieving commanders for real or assumed transgressions. If for no other reason than this, the infantry-centric open warfare doctrine remained a fixture in most AEF divisions throughout the war.

⁷ War Department, *Instructions for the Training of Platoons for Offensive Action* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 5.

cross an enemy kill zone with enough strength and firepower remaining to defeat the enemy and hold the ground that you have gained?

Upon landing in France, one of the first major problems that Pershing had to face was how to prepare the units under his command, who arrived with wildly varying levels of training, to fight an experienced enemy. Viewing the half-trained state of his supposedly “regular” 1st Division in June 1917 underscored to him the Americans’ unreadiness to wage a modern war. Pershing believed that only a top-down driven standardized training plan could whip the Americans into shape and overcome their glaring shortcomings. In the fall of 1917, Pershing envisioned that all of his divisions would go through a three month program of training, with the first month taken up with individual and small unit technical and tactical training conducted under the watchful eyes of one of the Allied armies. The divisions’ second month of instruction was to be devoted to learning the intricacies of trench warfare by serving on an inactive sector of the lines, and the third month was devoted to large unit training for open warfare. Pershing justified the plan by noting,

In order to give the troops the advantage of the latest tactical and technical developments and make up for the defects of training at home, the plan contemplated an additional period of training for divisions of about three months after reaching France. This gave us an opportunity to secure a certain uniformity in standards, and was especially valuable in affording the newly arrived troops the benefit of experience in the immediate atmosphere of war.⁸

In other words, this plan would close the Americans’ training gaps and also give them a degree of combat seasoning prior to any major combat operations of the AEF. Pershing envisioned that by 1919, the trained and robust AEF would be the key Allied army on the Western Front.⁹

⁸ John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. 1. (New York: Frederick Stokes Company, 1931), 154.

⁹ Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 146-147., David Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking: 1917-1918* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 78-79.

The AEF GHQ's first effort to impose a standard training plan on its units came on 6 October 1917 when it issued the "Program of Training for the 1st Division." To some extent, this program became the model (or at least the point of departure) for the subsequent training for all other AEF divisions. The memorandum stated that the training would be "based on developing sound leadership in succession in the squad, or group, the platoon, the company and finally the higher unit." The program called for six periods of progressive instruction totaling 16 weeks of training. The first two periods, totaling seven weeks, focused on the training of individuals and units from squad to battalion. The third and fourth periods devoted three weeks each to the training of regiments and brigades. The fifth period, of three weeks duration, was to train the division. The sixth period ended the divisions' training with an inspection of their readiness for combat by the corps commander or GHQ.¹⁰

As with the stateside guide for instructing divisional units, *Infantry Training*, the "Program of Training for the 1st Division" detailed the amount of hours that were to be devoted to training all of the subtasks that each echelon required to be tactically proficient. The biggest difference was that while *Infantry Training* basically stopped at the battalion level, the AEF's "Program of Instruction" extended instruction all the way to the division.

The 1st Division program also listed Pershing's "General Principles Governing the Training of Units of the American Expeditionary Forces." These principles would be found in all subsequent divisional training plans and were even integrated into the plans of some divisions still training in the United States. The AEF's five training principles were,

- a. The methods to be employed must remain or become distinctly our own.
- b. All instruction must contemplate the assumption of a very vigorous

¹⁰ AEF GHQ, "Program of Training for the 1st Division, A.E.F.," 06 October 1917, in, *World War Records, First Division*, Vol. XX, *Training First Division* (Washington D.C.: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

offensive. This purpose will be emphasized in every phase of training until it becomes a settled habit of thought.

- c. The general principles governing combat remain unchanged in their essence. This war has developed special features which involve special phases of training, but the fundamental ideas enunciated in our Drill Regulations, Small Arms Firing Manual, Field Service Regulations, and other service manuals remain the guide for both officers and soldiers and constitutes the standard by which their efficiency is to be measured, except as is modified in detail by instruction from these headquarters.
- d. The rifle and the bayonet are the principle weapons of the infantry soldier. He will be trained in a high degree of skill as a marksman both on the target range and in field firing. An aggressive spirit must be developed until the soldier feels himself, as a bayonet fighter; invincible in battle.
- e. All officers and soldiers should realize that at no time in our history had discipline been so important; therefore discipline of the highest order must be exacted at all times. The standards of the American Army will be those of West Point. The rigid attention, upright bearing, attention to detail, uncomplaining obedience to instructions required of the cadets will be required of every officer and soldier of our Armies in France. Failure to attain such discipline will be treated as a lack of capacity on the part of the commander to create in the subordinate that intensity of purpose and willing acceptance of hardship which are necessary to success in battle.¹¹

These principles highlight a number of the tactical and leadership assumptions that the AEF's training was built upon and offers some insight into Pershing's conceptions of modern warfare.

The "principles of training" make it crystal clear that Pershing intended to train and fight using American methods, and that whatever the Americans adopted from the Allies, they would still be grounded in the concepts of the *IDR* and *FSR*. This was also seen in Pershing's fixation with offensive operations and the continued superiority of rifles and bayonets. The focus on American methods reflected both a faith in American exceptionalism and the continuity of the flawed pre-war American doctrine. However, this may have also been a plank in Pershing's efforts to stave off Allied efforts to amalgamate American soldiers and units into their

¹¹ Ibid.

formations. If the Americans adhered to a unique doctrine, he could argue that the mixing of American and Allied units was unfeasible. This focus on “American methods” also foreshadowed some of the tensions between American and Allied officers that limited, to some degree, the effectiveness of instruction given by Allied soldiers to American units.

It was Pershing’s focus on making his expectations of discipline in the AEF “those of West Point” that caused some of the greatest problems with junior leaders. Pershing never questioned his assumptions that the near automaton-like discipline expected of the army’s cadets was suited to the nation’s wartime citizen soldiers and officers. Just as had been the case in the United States, leaders in the AEF found themselves in the quandary of needing to balance the call for discipline with the demand of battlefield initiative. Pershing’s insistence on rigid and “uncomplaining obedience to instructions” often came at the price of the enterprise and willingness of junior leaders (and their superiors) to make decisions on the battlefield that deviated from their last orders. Ironically, at the same time that Pershing was demanding absolute and unquestioning obedience in his subordinates, he was also insisting that the War Department change its stateside training practices to bring them more in line with the AEF’s doctrine because, “open warfare...demands initiative, resource, and decision upon part of all commanders,” and “requires that all organizations be made into highly developed flexible teams capable of rapid maneuvering to meet swift changes in situation.”¹² As with Pershing, the AEF as a whole never resolved this inherent dilemma.

This dichotomy was also seen in the AEF’s printed materials. In *Instruction for the Offensive Combat of Small Units*, battalion and regimental commanders were warned to “prevent their subordinates from developing the habit of a rigid scheme of combat, which may dull their

¹² U.S. Army Center of Military History, *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14 *Reports* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 306.

initiative and mental activity,” yet it also stated that commanders must “require the most rigid discipline in the ranks.”¹³ The manual reasonably concluded that officers and men must, “become imbued with the idea that initiative, which must be exercised in various incidents of the fight, must also be directed to the end desired by the battalion commander, and that *all the efforts of a unit must contribute to the accomplishment of the commander’s plan of action*” (original emphasis).¹⁴ The problem was establishing the line at which initiative became counterproductive or insubordination. Pershing’s proclamation that any lapses in his perfect West Point discipline would be “treated as a lack of capacity on the part of the commander,” placed a dead hand on the desire of many commanders to allow their subordinates to test the limits of their initiative and independence. The problem with this approach was that whether Pershing or other commanders down the line liked it or not, the modern battlefield was going to place junior officers and NCOs in positions where they had to make decisions that countered or were not covered in their orders.

Whatever the issues that were raised by the “General Principles Governing the Training of Units of the American Expeditionary Forces,” at least they represented a desire to standardize and focus the training of all AEF units. These efforts fell far short in other areas. Although the AEF GHQ attempted to craft a standardized training plan, within a week of its issuance of the “Program of Training for the 1st Division,” it published a different plan for the training of the 2nd Division. While the “Program of Training for the 2nd Division” contained much of the same verbiage as the 1st Division’s plan, the 2nd Division was to undergo eight periods of training lasting 19 weeks. The 2nd Division plan devoted six weeks of training for the individual, squad, platoon, and company, and only two weeks each for the training of the regiment, brigade, and

¹³ Ibid., 10, 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

division. Another difference was that during the two weeks of divisional instruction, the unit's artillery brigade would be fully integrated into the training plan. It appears that after it published the 2nd Division training plan, the AEF GHQ merely changed the name and reissued this scheme to other divisions as they arrived in France.¹⁵

Despite the AEF GHQ's departure from their standardized training plan between the 1st and 2nd Divisions, in early 1918 it still tried to hammer-out a regular training plan for the divisions that were scheduled to arrive in France in the spring. At the Versailles Conference on 30 January 1918, the AEF and British Expeditionary Force General Headquarters (BEF GHQ) agreed to an arrangement where the British would transport to France and train six complete American divisions in March and April. This "Six Division Plan" stipulated that "The training will be progressive; by platoon, company, battalion, and regiment until such times as the American division is fit to take the field as a division, when it will be handed over to the American Commanders-in-Chief."¹⁶

The plan gave the local British corps commander the responsibility for the Americans' training, and placed American units under British commanders when they were occupying parts of the line while attached to British formations. The British also agreed to provide one officer per American infantry, machine gun, signal, and engineer battalion to assist in training. American units would be equipped with British weapons during their stint with the BEF.¹⁷

After consultation with the AEF, on 21 March 1918 the BEF GHQ provided general guidelines to its subordinate commanders on training the Americans. The training was to occur

¹⁵ AEF GHQ, "Program of Training for the 2nd Division," in NARA RG 120, G5- Army Candidate School, Box 1637, File 350 "Information in regard to schools and courses." This file also contained training plans for other AEF divisions that simply substituted the references to the 2nd Division for the new division and changed the dates given for the various periods of training.

¹⁶ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, *Training and Use of American Units With the British and French* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 36, 59. The six divisions were to be the 77th, 82nd, 28th, 78th, 80th, and 30th.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 37, 61.

in three periods (A, B, and C), which roughly corresponded to the AEF's general three month training plan for arriving divisions.

For example, Period A was to last at least four weeks and was intended to give the Americans basic weapons and tactical training. The British planned to establish divisional schools or send their American charges to existing British schools for specialty training. The schools would provide training on the Lewis and Vickers machine guns, hand and rifle grenades, trench mortars, musketry, signals, military engineering, and gas warfare.¹⁸ In this period, American officers and NCOs would also conduct visits to the frontlines for 24 to 48 hours to gain some first hand experience in the trenches.

During Period B, the British would train the Americans on trench warfare by attaching U.S. units to British formations occupying sectors of the front. This period would begin with small parties of American officers and NCOs learning the intricacies of trench warfare shadowing their British counterparts in the front lines for 24 to 48 hours. Once the American junior leaders were familiarized with the front, over the course of three weeks, complete American units would be attached to British formations in progressively larger increments. In other words, an American platoon would serve at the front as part of a British company; then the American company would do a tour as part of a British battalion, and so on up to the regimental level. While attached to a British unit, the Americans would come under the command of the British senior officer.¹⁹

The last phase of training, Period C, was to last three to four weeks, and was intended to provide American units, up to the regimental level, with advanced tactical training. The focus of this period was on maneuvering large units and integrating machine guns, liaison, signaling, and

¹⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁹ Ibid., 64.

supply into the Americans' operations. To meet the AEF GHQ's demand for its units to be trained "American methods," the British specified that all of the training manuals for this last period were to be supplied by the AEF.²⁰

Unfortunately, the Germans had failed to read the Six Division Plan or Pershing's other training schemes. The Ludendorff Offensive of March 1918 disrupted the training plan before it even got started, and the subsequent German attacks in the spring and summer completely shattered Black Jack's hope for a methodical and standardized approach to American unit training.

The ferocity and success of the initial German attack on the Somme sent waves of panic across the British and French Armies. Two days after the start of the German offensive, the British government wired Washington without consulting Pershing to beg the Americans to expedite the transportation of their infantrymen.²¹ On 7 April 1918, the BEF GHQ directed its subordinate commanders to shorten their training periods for the American units under their supervision. Under the new plan, American battalions were to be sent into a quiet sector of the line "after a short period of training," that consisted mostly of rifle firing, specialist training, and instruction in gas warfare.²²

Unbeknownst to Pershing, the British were also working on an agreement with Washington and General Tasker Bliss, the American representative on the Allied Supreme War Council, to meet the Allies' growing manpower situation by radically changing how American forces would be deployed to Europe. Under the terms of what became the London Agreement of 27 April 1918, the Americans and British settled on a plan where the British would transport only American infantry, machine gun, engineer, and signal units. The intent of this plan was to

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 71.

²² Ibid., 83-4.

get warm American bodies into the lines in France as soon as possible to relieve some of the manpower strains the Allies were feeling due to the German offensives. The American divisional artillery and support units would sail after the emergency passed.²³

Although Pershing managed to negotiate with the British to ship divisional artillery and support units as soon as surplus transportation became available, the changes disrupted the AEF's efforts to train whole divisions as they arrived in France. This further exacerbated existing problems with American combined arms training. More importantly, the chaos caused by the German attacks led to a further fragmentation of the American training efforts as AEF regiments and brigades were shuttled across the front in the spring and summer of 1918 to have them close at hand in the event of any emergency. The Chief of the AEF Training Branch, Brigadier General Harold Fiske, admitted that while "circumstances invariably prevented... [the three month training program] from being carried out," the AEF at least tried to retain this basic concept for the training of newly arrived divisions. But even Fiske confessed that under the crush of events, the programs for the late arriving divisions were severely curtailed, with the "open warfare" phase often reduced to "six days to two or three weeks."²⁴

Ultimately, the AEF's own interferences in unit training and the unsettled situation in France resulted in the situation where no two American divisions went through the same training programs in France. An examination of the division assignments listed in the AEF *Order of Battle* and unit histories reveal wildly differing types and amounts of training given to American divisional units between April and September 1918. Although the first four AEF divisions, the 1st, 2nd, 26th, and 42nd, came the closest to achieving Pershing's three month training plan, all bets were off with the amount of training time the later-arriving divisions received.

²³ Smythe, 100-112., *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, 91-2.

²⁴ "Final Report of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5," *U. S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, 300-301.

Due to anxious conditions in France following the German's March offensive, the new divisions often found their training disrupted as its units constantly shifted their billets based on the events at the front or the whim of far-off staff officers. The 28th Division's 109th Infantry was a case in point. The regiment arrived at Calais on 19 May 1918. When it reached its billets on 22 May, it was to begin "a long period of training" under the tutelage of the British Army's Tyneside Scots. However, less than three weeks later, after receiving little more than weapons training on British small arms, the regiment was on the move to the French sector. It picked up whatever training it could along the way until finally arriving at the French lines near Montmirail on 24 June.²⁵

The 33rd Division faced similar problems with seemingly arbitrary moves and their effect on training. The division's 131st Infantry was assigned to a training area in the British XIX Corps sector soon after arriving in France. After working out a training plan with their British cadre, coordinating for drill grounds, and establishing firing ranges, the unit "was beginning to feel that some practical work was to commence." Just as their progressive training was getting into gear, the AEF GHQ ordered the unit to move to another sector of the British front. After only eight days of training with a new cadre of British soldiers at their new billets, the regiment was again ordered to change its station. After being hurried through "classes in defense against gas, bayonet work, bombing, rifle practice, trench mortar and 37mm gun practice," the regiment was ushered into a quiet area of trenches on the British front lines. The total time from the regiment's arrival in France to their occupation of the British trenches was 30 days, with much of it taken up with marches from one area to another.²⁶

²⁵ Major General Charles M. Clement, ed., *Pennsylvania in the World War: An Illustrated History of the Twenty-Eighth Division*, Vol. I (Pittsburgh: States Publication Society, 1921), 334-5.

²⁶ Joseph Sanborn, *The 131st Infantry in the World War* (Chicago: Privately printed, 1919), 29-35. This problem was endemic. After inspecting machine gun units within the II Corps, Major Walter Short reported on

This lack of standardization in the training of American divisions carried with it grave challenges for the AEF's future operations. One of the main goals of unit training is to create a certain uniformity of expected performance in an army's forces. Thus, while there may have been differences in the human composition between divisions A and B, their superior commanders could generally expect the two units to operate and respond to enemy actions in roughly similar manners. Pershing's desire to "give the troops the advantage of the latest tactical and technical developments and make up for the defects of training at home" in his training plans was an effort to accomplish this overarching goal.²⁷

As American divisions were divided up by brigade, regiment, and sometimes battalions for training or operations with the Allies, any degree of standardization was lost. Since, as noted in the last chapter, the divisions left the United States with uneven training experiences, their subsequent training in France did not overcome this failing, and at times even exacerbated it. Ultimately, American units from the battalion level and above were forces of unknown quality and abilities to their higher commanders until they actually saw combat. The idiosyncrasies caused by this fragmentation of training also meant that the instruction given to infantry and machine gun companies, platoons, and squads were hit or miss depending on when the unit arrived in France and the whims of the times and their trainers.

Since the training that the AEF's formations and leaders received was so distinctive from unit to unit, it is difficult to offer more than an overarching impression of the general quality and effectiveness of the Americans' instruction in France. All American divisions that would eventually see combat had some degree of basic instruction under the tutelage of the British or

5 July 1918 that the machine gun training programs for the 27th, 30th, and 78th Divisions was extremely poor and unsystematic. He blamed much of this on the fact that units were moved so often that coherent training was difficult. *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, *Training*, 162.

²⁷ Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. I, 154.

French as soon as they arrived in France. The first four American divisions were instructed mainly by the French and spent more time in training with the Allies than any subsequent American divisions. Grotelueschen argues that in the case of these early divisions (especially the 1st and 2nd Divisions), this training time allowed these units to shake off the obsolete practices of the *IDR* and *FSR* and, through their close association with the French, gain a deeper appreciation for the primacy of firepower in modern war.²⁸

Despite all of Pershing's ranting about open warfare, the first divisions actually spent the vast majority of their training time studying trench warfare. This extended training, with its focus on combining and synchronizing the new weapons of warfare now organic to infantry companies and supporting weapons, such as artillery and machine guns, also allowed junior infantry leaders to become much more technically and tactically proficient than their peers in later arriving divisions. The officers and soldiers in the early divisions also seemed to have had a much more realistic training regimen than those units training in the States. Major General Robert Bullard noted that the 1st Division trained with the French in a vast and detailed training trench system where, "nothing was omitted or left to the imagination of the soldier." He observed, "Almost everything except the actual busting of shells" was duplicated by the French to make the Americans' training as realistic as possible.²⁹

²⁸ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 60-3, 203-5. Not everyone agrees with Grotelueschen's conclusions. Douglas V. Johnson argues that the 1st Division's early training was characterized more by show than substance. He concluded that the unit's training emphasis was "on soldierly bearing and appearance" and that "fighting matters appear to be decidedly in second place." Douglas V. Johnson, "Training the First Division for World War I" in Steven Wiengartner, ed. *Cantigny at Seventy-Five: A Professional Discussion* (Weaton, Ill.: Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, 1993), 69-71.

²⁹ Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925), 103. The diary of Brigadier General Beaumont Buck supports the contention that the early divisions spent more time learning trench warfare. Buck, who commanded the 1st Division's 2nd Infantry Brigade from September 1917 to August 1918, left a meticulous record of the training in his unit. Buck noted that from the time of his arrival in France through the winter of 1918 his unit constantly trained on occupying, attacking and defending trenches. It was not until 21 November 1917 that Buck mentioned open warfare at all, and this was only to note that he was working on a series of open warfare map exercises sent to his unit from GHQ to prepare his headquarters for the third period of its training. Unpublished diary of Major General Beaumont Buck, entry for 21

While the early divisions may have benefited from training with the French, they also had to cope with some of the same systemic problems of equipment, junior leadership, and shortages of supplies that had also dogged the training efforts of their stateside brethren. On top of this, they also suffered from having to provide the officer and soldier “overhead” for establishing the AEF’s corps and higher headquarters as well as the Services of Supply (SOS).³⁰ The experiences of the 1st Division offer an insight into the problems faced by the first American divisions in France.

As the U. S. Army was woefully short of machine guns, artillery, mortars, and the other weapons of modern war, the Americans relied on the overstressed Allies to provide essential war material. Over the course of the war, the French alone provided 3,672 field and railroad artillery pieces and 40,884 light and heavy machine guns.³¹ Despite this largess, the AEF still faced shortages that effected soldier comfort and training in its early months in France. In the late fall of 1917, Colonel Robert McCormick noted that in the 1st Division,

...supplies were short; clothing could not be kept up; the meat rations had to be obtained from the Canadians; payday was irregular; the mails were dilatory; forge was lacking, and the horses suffered. Artillery drivers bought oats out of their own scant funds to feed the government horses that the government did not provide for.³²

He also noted that when the division moved to the front on 6 January 1918, “it was still short of much essential equipment, and the artillery had never been supplied with the telephone equipment needed to train its telephone details.”³³

Perhaps the most pressing issue that the first divisions faced was the inexperience of its

November 1917, U.S. Army Cavalry Museum Archives, Fort Riley, Kansas. I must thank Sandra Reddish and Doctor Robert Smith for bringing this newly rediscovered diary to my attention.

³⁰ George C. Marshall, *Memories of My Service in the World War: 1917-1918* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 15.

³¹ Robert Bruce, *A Fraternity in Arms: America & France in the Great War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 105.

³² Colonel Robert R. McCormick, *The Army of 1918* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 64.

³³ *Ibid.*, 65.

junior leaders. As he prepared to depart for France in June 1917, the commander of one of the 1st Division's infantry regiments, Colonel George Duncan, noted with dismay that only 17 of the officers in his unit had at least a year in the service and that many of his best NCOs were to remain in the United States to attend OTCs.³⁴ Colonel George Marshall, a 1st Division staff officer, observed on 27 August 1917 that, "Owing to the number of officers detached from the Division...there exists a serious shortage of field and company officers in the command. There are companies with only two officers present for duty and the latter have rarely had more than five months' service, and frequently less."³⁵ Although he supported sending officers to the front to observe the conditions of modern war, he worried that this, and the future detailing of 15 officers per regiment to attend schools, would only exacerbate the officer shortage.

The relative greenness of the American officers and the steep learning curve they faced in modern warfare frequently hindered unit training. In December 1917, the 1st Division's exasperated commander, Major General Robert L. Bullard wrote, "I have much difficulty in getting officers who know anything...many even of our regular officers can never be worth anything in this war [they are] unadaptable and immovable."³⁶ More tellingly, he later noted, "The training also showed in American officers, except those of the very latest education, a love of tactical prescriptions, rules of thumb, a demand for orders that should fix the method of tactical procedure for all things."³⁷ Even after the division had been in training for nearly six months, Bullard's comments indicate that all was not well when it came to leadership in the AEF. They also suggest that the officer corps had a long way to go to develop the initiative and

³⁴ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army 1898-1941* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 209.

³⁵ George Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, Vol. I, The Soldierly Spirit December 1880-June 1939*, edited by Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 120.

³⁶ Quoted in, Coffman, *The Regulars*, 209.

³⁷ Bullard, 106.

flexibility demanded of combat on the Western Front.

This situation was worsened by GHQ personnel policies that, like those in the United States, promiscuously transferred officers from one organization to another. McCormick recalled that in the spring of 1918, "...there was a constant flow of junior officers through the organizations. Those who had received training at the front were ordered to other organizations, their places been taken by new arrivals from America and from the artillery schools." He laconically observed that while, "the system increased the difficulty of conducting the division...it was necessary and in the greater interest to preparing the army for its future role."³⁸ In an effort to overcome this problem, McCormick's commander ordered him to establish a unit school to teach the new arrivals the lessons that the Americans had learned up to that time about fighting in France. McCormick soon discovered,

Our inexperienced troops were ignorant of many military accomplishments not touched upon in this simple course. The points I sought to cover were essentials in which most of the officers would come to the 1st division from America and from training schools in France either not been taught or had totally failed to comprehend.³⁹

This constant "revolving door" policy also meant that many junior leaders never truly mastered the tactical and technical skills of their positions, nor were they able to hone their leadership by building cohesive units. McCormick and the other "old soldiers" of the AEF were also quickly learning that the units and officers arriving in France were woefully short of the basic knowledge and skills required to fight the Germans, and that time was against them.

As noted before, the training of the early American divisions in France was rather long, and as such, it was not truly indicative of the training experiences of most of the AEF's units. An examination of the training of these more typical AEF units goes far in uncovering some of

³⁸ McCormick, 72-3.

³⁹ Ibid., 113.

the key issues that undercut the combat effectiveness and cohesion of the U. S. Army's small units. Most of the divisions that arrived from April 1918 to the end of the war, and saw combat, managed to at least spend a month or more of their first phase of training with the Allies.

However, the quality and quantity of this training varied greatly from division to division. If Robert McCormick is to be believed, the only thing that the arriving units had in common was their total ineptitude. He caustically observed of the new units,

They had been practiced in marching formations, and receive small arms bayonet training, and had been taught infantry tactics so far as these had developed up to the summer of 1917. They had not studied the use of the modern infantry weapons of assault, the trench mortars or infantry cannon. They have not learned the use of cover, which only comes from service at the front... They were totally uninformed as to the methods of attack developed and perfected by the French at the end of 1917...⁴⁰

McCormick's trenchant remarks neatly encapsulated the challenges that the AEF faced in molding its new units, and the French and British trainers who took charge of their instruction had their hands full in trying to shape this rude clay into a fighting force.

After taking out the first four divisions and those units that the AEF skeletonized or transformed into depot divisions, roughly half of the Americans received their first phase of training with the British Army. Although the British generally worked within the framework of the original Six Division Plan, their approach to training contained inherent problems that tended to negate the effectiveness of the instruction that they gave the Americans. The British viewed the first phase of the Americans training as a crash course in the new weapons of war and as a means of honing the discipline of the unpredictable doughboys.

The experiences of the 27th, 28th, and 82nd Divisions, who trained with the British in May and June of 1918, illustrate the problems with the first phase training plan. The British broke the divisions into battalion or company sized units and widely scattered them around

⁴⁰ Ibid., 104.

Flanders for training. Units of the 27th Division, for example, were quartered in a roughly rectangular area measuring 14 by 30 miles centered on Saint Valery.⁴¹ An officer in the 82nd Division wrote, “Our Brigade is badly scattered. It takes hours to get around.”⁴² This scattering made training in anything larger than a battalion difficult. Furthermore, the Allies trained field artillery and machine gun battalions separate and independent of the infantry regiments that they would support in combat. This precluded combined arms training and prevented battalion, regimental and divisional commanders and their staffs from learning how to control and supply their units as a whole.

The actual training that the infantry units received also left a lot to be desired. In an effort to ease problems of supply and the need, after the March offensive, of having American units in training readily available to occupy a point in the line, Pershing agreed to the British desire that the Americans undergoing their instruction be armed and trained with British weapons. As such, upon arrival in the British sector, the Americans turned in their M1903 Springfield rifles and other small arms and were issued No. 1, MK III Lee Enfield rifles, Lewis Guns, and Vickers machine guns. Not only did the turn in and issue of new weapons consume valuable training time, it also forced the Americans to learn how to operate, maintain, and employ a totally novel set of weapons. This further complicated the efforts of junior leaders to hone the technical skills of their soldiers. First Lieutenant Louis Brockway, recalled that during the space of one year, his infantrymen had been issued with four different types of weapons. He noted, “You might say our men were a little confused” by the frequent change in armament.⁴³

American accounts of the first phase of training with the British frequently stressed the

⁴¹ William F. Clarke, *Over There with O’Ryan’s Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 33.

⁴² W.A. Sirmon, *That’s War* (Atlanta: The Linmon Company, 1929), 92.

⁴³ Quoted in, Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 363.

amount of time their trainers devoted to weapons training. Although the soldiers often noted the time they spent in weapons familiarization and at the range firing, not all of this training accomplished much. As with their American cousins, the British Army had a fixation with the painstaking step-by-step introduction to weapons known as “naming the parts.” This method focused more on nomenclature than operating the weapon. The 28th Division’s Chester Baker also questioned the utility of much of his weapons instruction. After he had swapped his M1903 Springfield for “the hated English Lee-Enfield,” he discovered that the bore of the new rifle was “so worn it looked like a shotgun.” Despite the pointlessness of trying to fire with such a dilapidated weapon, he and his comrades were dully sent to the range. After failing to do much damage to the targets, Baker gave his rifle to the British instructor who fired several shots with even less effectiveness than the American. The Britisher merely grinned and said, “Well it’ll will get a Jerry at 100 yards.”⁴⁴

Except for those American II Corps divisions who later fought with the British Army, the greatest problem with the British weapons training was that as soon as the Americans’ training time with the British ended, the doughboys turned in all of the British weapons they had so laboriously come to know, and never saw or used their kind again. The machine gun battalions and companies of the 28th Division were issued with British Vickers machine guns and began a training program conducted by British officers and NCOs. Before the month of training was even completed, the units were ordered to turn in their Vickers in preparation for the division’s

⁴⁴ Chester Baker, *Doughboy’s Diary* (Shippensburg, Pa: Burd Street Press, 1998), 49. In general the American soldiers were not happy about exchanging their American rifles for British Lee-Enfields. Colonel Christian Bach noted that the NCOs and officers of the 4th Division protested vociferously about the change and labeled the British weapon “heavier and clumsier” than their cherished M1903 Springfield Rifles. Christian A. Bach and Henry N. Hall, *The Fourth Division: Its Services and Achievements in the World War* (New York: Country Life Press, 1920), 48. However, not all Americans were disappointed in their British weapon. The soldiers of the 307th Infantry expressed great regret that after weeks of training with British weapons, as soon as their stint with the British Army was complete, they had to return the “now beloved Lewis Gun,” and other of their ally’s equipment., Kerr Rainsford, *From Upton to the Meuse with the Three Hundred and Seventh Infantry* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920), 35.

move to a quiet sector of the French front. Upon arrival, the Americans were issued the French Hotchkiss machine gun and began their training all over again.⁴⁵ This sad farce happened time and time again, and wasted valuable training time that could have been employed to better effect in other areas. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Buxton, of the 82nd Division, recalled laconically that as soon as his soldiers turned in their British machine guns and other arms for those of the French, “The Division...once again addressed itself to the task of obtaining and mastering new weapons.”⁴⁶

Despite the inherent problems associated with constantly switching out weapons, it must be admitted that given the shortages of machine guns and other modern weapons in the States, some soldiers still benefited from basic training with any of these weapons. Charles Minder admitted that his machine gun training was so poor that when he went to the range to fire on targets only 50 yards away, he only hit them with three of the 25 rounds he fired. In a letter home he wrote that his lieutenant sarcastically commented on his inability to hit the side of a house. Minder noted, “I wonder what they expect of us fellows who were civilians six months ago and up to last week had never fired a machine gun!”⁴⁷ After he returned to the machine gun range a few days later, he confessed to his mother, “We all fired 50 shots with the machine guns, twenty shots for ranging fire, and thirty for application fire. They were all the same to me. I don’t know any more what they mean than you do.”⁴⁸ Although Minder’s firing did improve, ultimately he still faced the problem of rapidly changing out one weapon for another. Minder recalled that after training in the States on the Colt machine gun, and spending weeks with the

⁴⁵ Clement, *Pennsylvania in the World War: An Illustrated History of the Twenty-Eighth Division*, Vol. 1, 287, 313; Vol. II, 467.

⁴⁶ Edward G. Buxton, ed. *Official History of the 82nd Division* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1919), 12. For similar observations on weapons training with the British, also see, Sirmon, 96-100., Clarke, 38.

⁴⁷ Charles Minder, *This Man’s War* (New York: Pevensey Press, 1931), 90.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

British learning the Vickers machine gun, in Mid-June 1918 his unit finally received the Hotchkiss machine guns that they would use in combat. These sudden changes required that he and his officers were “studying night and day, learning all we can about the new French machine gun.”⁴⁹

The remainder of the training in the first period was a rather mixed lot. A soldier of the 28th Division noted that his training “consisted of six-mile hikes each day to a hillside drill field where we practiced throwing dummy hand grenades and listened to lectures.”⁵⁰ Another of the division’s doughboys was also far from impressed with his experience with the British. He later recalled,

...the doughboys and engineers whiled away the long, warm days, drilling and hiking, doing much bayonet work, polishing and cleaning rifles and other equipment and putting in time as best they could...That may be said to have been one of the most trying periods of their long probation.⁵¹

An officer in the division’s 112th Infantry had a different take on the training. In a very telling passage, he maintained that, “Under British training they made surprisingly rapid progress, becoming especially skilled in bayonet work.”⁵² However, the doughboys already had a bellyful of bayonet work and needed to address subjects, such as tactical movement and command and control, which would serve a more useful purpose in combat.

To some extent, the training with the British was also hindered by tensions between the British Tommies and the doughboys. The American chaplain Rabbi Lee Levinger wrote that the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁰ Baker, 49.

⁵¹ H. G. Proctor, *The Iron Division in the World War* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1919), 26.

⁵² Clement, *Pennsylvania in the World War*, Vol. II, 570. The fixation with the bayonet remained a fixture of American training throughout the war. Although bayonet training was justified, with some merit, as a means of building aggression, it had little true military utility, and ultimately wasted a lot of valuable training time. An officer of the 307th Infantry later stated that “it was improbable that any soldier of the regiment either there or elsewhere, ever used his bayonet at all. In fact, “In innumerable conversations with officers from almost all the American combat-divisions,” he had “never heard an authentic and first hand account of bayonet-fighting.” Rainsford, xix.

Tommies were people "whom our boys could never quite understand."⁵³ Another American officer noted,

Coming from the rather Anglophile part of New England, I was truly shocked by the hostility of the average American doughboy toward the "Limey." When word went out that Britishers were billeted in the vicinity, they were positively sought out for a quarrel and a fight.⁵⁴

The doughboys particularly bridled at the British tendency to denigrate the Americans and their avowed belief in the supremacy of the British Empire over her former colony. A soldier in one of the two American divisions "loaned" to the British for operations in Picardy noted:

Tommy considered himself a superior soldier to the American and took no pains to conceal it....Our soldiers resented any such attitude and denied that it was a fact.⁵⁵

In a similar vein, Lieutenant Colonel Ashby Williams noted that the soldiers in his battalion, "seemed to take at once a violent dislike for everything British." He attributed this to "the inclination of the average Britisher to regard anything that Britain and the Britishers do as a little better than can be done by anyone else in the world."⁵⁶ To deflate the Englishmen's pretensions, the Americans seemed to take a perverse delight in proclaiming that AEF actually stood for "After England Failed." Much of the conflicts in Anglo-American relations seems to have stemmed from the clash of overblown national egos that both sides brought into the fray.

American officers tended to have more positive views of their British Allies and were

⁵³ Lee J. Levinger, *A Jewish Chaplain in France* (New York: MacMillan, 1921), 35.

⁵⁴ William L. Langer, *Gas and Flame in World War I* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), xxi. A 35th Division soldier wrote, "It can be said in justice to the Tommy that he thought as little of us as we did of him." Charles B. Hoyt, *Heroes of the Argonne* (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1919), 31.

⁵⁵ LTC Calvin H. Goddard, *Relations Between the American Expeditionary Forces and the British Expeditionary Forces: 1917-1920* (Washington DC: Army War College Historical Section, June 1942), 12. Note original report in USAMHI AWC HS 7200E, Part 1, No. 5. Negative comments about the Britishers' snobbishness and superiority attitudes are frequently found in the USAMHI Surveys. Frederick Shaw wrote that he did not like the British soldiers because they were "overbearing and cocky." Frederick Shaw, 18 IN, 1 Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey #6344, Pandelis Cristo (Survey #764, 327 IN, 82 Div) noted that he disliked the British because they had "swelled heads."

⁵⁶ Ashby Williams, *Experiences of the Great War* (Roanoke: Stone Printing, 1919), 18-19.

more avid in their efforts to learn from the veterans. Many commanders, such as Ashby Williams, ordered their officers to attend special lectures from British officers and NCOs on trench warfare during their stint behind the British lines.⁵⁷ Another noted the benefit of receiving training that was “up-to-the-minute, vigorous and very interesting,” from those who were, “but a few days out of the line.”⁵⁸ While other officers respected the British for their experiences, they still believed that there were limits to what the Americans could learn from them. For example, Captain Evan Edwards, noted of his British NCO instructors,

...one could not tell them anything and one could not argue with them. A British non-com does the accustomed thing. He does not think. He dreads anything strange or new. And his always unanswerable reply ‘It simply isn’t done you know’ produces one to helplessness.⁵⁹

Despite the knowledge that the British could impart to the American novices, these “clashes of cultures” certainly added a degree of friction into the first phase of the Americans’ training.

Taken as a whole the AEF’s phase one divisional training plan for infantry units was far from a resounding success. Chief of Staff Peyton March later noted that the pawing off of American instruction to the Allies had been a mistake. He stated,

The practical effect of Pershing’s policy was that large bodies of American troops, divisions whose morale was at the highest point, who had four to six months of training...found the keen edge of their enthusiasm dulled by having to go over again drills and training which they had already undergone in America.⁶⁰

There was much merit in March’s criticism. Captain W. A. Sirmon, of the 82nd Division, lamented on 23 May 1918 that, “The routine is practically the same we had at Camp Gordon. No

⁵⁷ Williams, 37.

⁵⁸ Gerald F. Jacobson, *History of the 107th Infantry U.S.A.* (New York: The De Vinne Press, 1920), 27.

⁵⁹ Evan A. Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun: The Official History of the 140th Infantry* (Lawrence: The World Company, 1920), 29. Another American officer noted that while the British NCOs knew their business, “he sure does make of job of it when he tries to think.” Sirmon, 97.

⁶⁰ Peyton March, *The Nation at War* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1932), 258. March’s statements were in response to Pershing’s criticism of American stateside training in Black Jack’s autobiography. In both cases the Generals’ criticism was valid. The stateside training of units and replacements had been poor, and much in the first phase of training in France was redundant.

one seems to realize the training our men have had, and we are starting them over like raw recruits.”⁶¹ Far too much of the training in the first phase was a return to the basic recruit-type training that the units had to endure in the States. More importantly, this training did little to address the instructional needs of the American officers and NCOs. For most units, there was little to no tactical unit training conducted in the first phase. However, units did send large numbers of American officers and NCOs to British schools during this period. Unfortunately, most of these schools focused more on the basic technical aspects of weapons and not enough on their tactical employment. Furthermore, the schools removed the leaders from their units at key times when the leaders should have been focusing on sorely-needed unit cohesion-building.⁶² This last problem set a precedent that would later become endemic in the AEF.

Although the training of the AEF’s infantry units was slighted, the same could not be said for its artillery regiments. Both the AEF GHQ and the Allies realized that the training of the American artillerymen had been rather sparse in the United States and took strenuous measures to ensure that the cannoners received abundant instruction once they reached France. Pershing went so far as to demand that divisions scheduled for deployment send large numbers of artillerymen in their advance parties so they could attend French and AEF artillery schools prior to the arrival of their units.⁶³ The 5th Division, for example, sent 50 officers and 350 enlisted men in their advance party so they could learn the operation and employment of the never-before-seen French 75mm and 155mm guns and modern indirect fire control.⁶⁴ While infantry formations frequently had their instruction curtailed or stalled by short-notice moves, artillery

⁶¹ Sirmon, 96.

⁶² Buxton, 11-12., Frank Sibley, *With the Yankee Division in France* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1919), 46., Emil B. Gansser, *History of the 126th Infantry in the War With Germany* (Grand Rapids: Dean Hicks Company, 1920), 52-3.

⁶³ James J. Cooke, *Pershing and His Generals* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 82.

⁶⁴ The Society of the Fifth Division, *The Official History of the Fifth Division* (Washington D.C.: Privately published, 1919), 54.

units seldom faced these challenges. While the Pennsylvania doughboys of the 28th Division were sent to the trenches with less than a month of instruction, their artillery comrades spent a full three months of training at Meucun prior to rejoining their already bloodied infantry brethren.⁶⁵

Ironically, the American artillery units that received the least amount of sound training in the United States, under the relatively short but intense training French and British taskmasters, rose to become some of the most effective combat units in the AEF. The Allied instructors showed no mercy on their ignorant charges. After being sent to a French artillery school, one officer noted the trouble that he and his fellow Americans were having with trigonometry. He noted that the French cadre were amazed “that we held commissions in artillery,” and ruefully confessed that “The French know this isn’t an Indian war.”⁶⁶ Historian Mark Grotelueschen has gone as far as to argue that the firepower and know-how wielded by these Allied-trained artillerymen made them the true practitioners of the “AEF way of war,” and established an American obsession with firepower that has lasted to the present.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, this degree of expertise in the American artillerymen came at a price. If one looks under the “detached” units listed for American divisions in the AEF *Order of Battle*, you quickly get an appreciation for the amount of time that the AEF’s artillery brigades and regiments spent away from their parent units for training. The 82nd Division’s 157th Field Artillery Brigade, for example, was absent from the division for training at La Courtine from 2 June through 21 August. The divisions who arrived in the spring and summer of 1918

⁶⁵ Clement, *Pennsylvania in the World War*, Vol. II, 634, 666, 689.

⁶⁶ Anonymous, *Wine, Women and War: A Diary of Disillusionment* (New York: J.H. Sears and Company, 1926), 14.

⁶⁷ Mark E. Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Fire: American Artillery Employment in World War I* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 138-149., Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 343-364. Grotelueschen is at his best when dealing with the use of artillery in the AEF. His two works have unquestionably forced a historiographical reevaluation of the doctrine and practices of the wartime cannoners. Most of the AEF’s infantry units, however, never attained the degree of tactical expertise as their artillery comrades.

generally underwent their course of training (both in and behind the lines) without the presence of their organic artillery units.⁶⁸ This led to reoccurring problems with infantry-artillery cooperation that plagued American operations throughout the war, and all-too-often meant that junior infantry leaders had little comprehension of, or experience in, working with artillery on the battlefield.

Generally speaking, the divisions that trained with the French (or later, the mix of French and Americans) during their first phase of training had somewhat of an easier time than those who trained with the British. First of all, there were none of the problems of training on weapons that the soldiers would never use in battle. Secondly, the available evidence suggests that the French-trained units underwent fewer disruptions to their training caused by frequent moves. Furthermore, the French tended to more seamlessly blend the different phases of training together, making their instruction more fluid and coherent to the Americans.

The French also seem to have made more of an effort to accommodate the Americans' pride and psyche. On May Day of 1918, Marshal Pétain issued a bulletin to his subordinates that advised them how to train the Americans who were rapidly descending on them. Pétain warned his countrymen that while the Americans were only partially trained, "they have an extremely highly developed sense of amour-propre, based on their pride in belonging to one of the greatest nations of the world." As such, "an attitude of superiority over them should be assiduously avoided" and "patience and tact" should be the French trainers' watchwords. The Marshal wanted the French trainers to stress the need for the integration of all arms in combat and to counter the American belief that the French had nothing to offer in the realm of open warfare

⁶⁸ *Order of Battle*, Vol. 2, *American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions*, 347. The 7th Division's 64th Infantry arrived in France on 4 September 1918 and occupied frontline trenches on 30 September. The Division's 7th Field Artillery Brigade was so far behind on training and equipment issue that it was never even attached to the division during its entire time fighting at the front. Captain Edgar Fell, *History of the Seventh Division, 1917-1919* (Philadelphia: Seventh Division Officer's Association, 1927), 50, 56.

doctrine.⁶⁹ This was a major sticking point to the French throughout the war.

To a large extent Pétain's approach worked. Upon entering the lines with their Gallic Allies, an infantry officer of the 29th Division reported, "French soldiers of all ranks were of invaluable assistance, and gave freely of their veteran experience in war as far as limitations of language would permit."⁷⁰ A soldier in the 26th Division was equally impressed with the French. He believed that his instruction in trench warfare was very productive. He noted that his unit practiced both offensive and defensive tactics using a very realistic training trench system and, following each iteration of training, his officers would participate in detailed critiques of the event led by experienced French officers.⁷¹

Regardless of whether the French or British initially trained the Americans, the pace of training in the spring and summer of 1918 was blistering. Soldiers from the 4th and 91st Divisions left detailed records of their training regime during this period that highlight the bewildering rapidity of their instruction. Colonel Christian Bach, the 4th Division's Chief of Staff, recalled that his division had to work hard in their first weeks in France to overcome the shortcomings of their initial training at Camp Greene. Although the unit initially trained with the British, it was not until it began training with the French in mid-June 1918 that its units received their Chauchat automatic rifles, had the opportunity to throw live grenades, and was able to complete the rifle training that one of the division's infantry regiments had missed in the States. Bach noted that in addition to the weapons training, the French also taught the Americans "their method of attack," and "how to pass through barrages with a minimum of loss."⁷²

The record of the 4th Division's 47th Infantry illustrates the quick tempo of the unit's

⁶⁹ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, 294-5.

⁷⁰ John Cutchins and George Stewart, *History of the 29th Division, 1917-1919* (Philadelphia: MacCalla & Co., 1921), 90.

⁷¹ Sibley, 48-9.

⁷² Bach, 49-50, 58-9.

instruction that followed a rather pointless period with the British. The regiment arrived in France on 25 May 1918 and spent much of the next three weeks moving from one spot to another in Flanders and Picardy. It was not until 14 June that the unit began serious training with the French Army. For a month the unit was put through their paces in the following events:

- 17-19 June- The regiment is equipped and trained on the Chauchat and Hotchkiss guns, grenades and mortars. The unit also dug and trained in trenches.
- 20 June- Brigade open warfare problem
- 21 June- Division open warfare problem
- 23-24 June- Rifle and pistol practice
- 25 June- Open warfare maneuvers
- 27 June- Division open warfare problem without troops
- 28-30 June- "Strenuous drills"
- 1-3 July- Rifle practice and on 2 July, the first group of officers and NCOs conduct tour of the French trenches
- 5 July- Regiment moves to French reserve trenches
- 7-8 July- Unit training
- 12 July- Division open warfare maneuver
- 15-17 July- Regiment goes into French front lines⁷³

The 47th Infantry's experience illustrates some of the trends and problems with the Americans' training. Given the breakneck speed of the instruction, one wonders if the regiment was truly able to overcome the unit's poor stateside training and learn the new methods being taught in France. It is clear from the schedule that the 4th Division devoted much training time to open warfare, and an officer in the 47th Infantry stated that "Most drill periods were devoted to extended order drill and to the new formations which were soon to be used by the regiment in actual fighting."⁷⁴ However, given the rush to get the unit into the French reserve and frontline trenches, how detailed and thorough could this training have been?

The infantry regiments of the 91st Division went through a similar training program. Captain Clarence Minick, of the 361st Infantry, recounted his early training in France in his diary.

⁷³ James E. Pollard, *The Forty-Seventh Infantry, A History 1917-1918-1919* (Saginaw: Press of Seeman & Peters, 1919), 28-33.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

Soon after arriving in France on 20 July 1918, he observed that his unit was “commencing drill like [at] Camp Lewis- only [we] have more spirit I think for we know we are going to get into a fight before many months.”⁷⁵ After a week of getting settled in to their new surroundings, the 361st Infantry got down to training. Given the crush of events on the Western Front, the 91st Division, like many others arriving in the summer of 1918, had its training plans greatly abridged. Given this fact, it is no wonder that Minick’s schedule for August 1918 was rather full...

- 2 August – Established firing range “used cans and everything else for targets”
- 3 August- Battalion field problem
- 7 August- Company hike
- 9 August- Brigade maneuvers
- 13 August- 12 kilometer hike
- 16 August- Brigade field problem
- 17 August- He umpired a Brigade field problem in the morning and a Regimental field problem in the afternoon. Both were on “how to take German machine guns.”
- 20 August- Regimental field problem
- 21 August- Regimental field meet competition- events: gas mask donning, semaphore signaling, bugler match, shooting match for rifles, pistols, and automatic rifles
- 22 August- Brigade field problem
- 25 August- Regimental maneuvers
- 26 August- Night maneuvers
- 27 August- Overnight hike
- 31 August- Brigade field problem
- 3 September- Unit begins move to the front.⁷⁶

While training at Camp Lewis, the 91st Division’s training was plagued by similar equipment shortages, a rapid turn-over of personnel, and poor weather that had hindered the training of the 4th Division. As with the 4th Division, one does wonder if the pace of the 91st Division’s training in France actually allowed it to make up for previous shortcomings in their training as well as preparing them for their upcoming debut in combat.

⁷⁵ Diary of Captain Clarence J. Minick, Clarence J. Minick Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

It is hard to gage from Minick's terse entries the realism of the training in this vastly accelerated program. It is interesting to note that in his description of the brigade maneuvers he participated in on 9 August, he wrote, "we hiked and imagined we drove the Huns back for about 8 kilometers and returned."⁷⁷ This seems to indicate that the training had more to do with marching than realistically fighting and maneuvering to drive back the Hun. There are also indications that the Americans still retained a penchant for far too much close order drills, the outward displays of discipline, and needless ceremonies. After a guard mounting ceremony resulted in half of a unit's officers missing a lecture from a veteran French officer, the Frenchman exclaimed, "Very beautiful ceremony...but I question if you will win ze war wiz it.(sic)" One of the chastened Americans saw the Frenchman's point and lamented the fact that "some of our fat-head generals care more about snappy saluting than accurate gunnery."⁷⁸

As the Americans entered their second phase of training, learning trench warfare by occupying sections of Allied trenches in quiet sectors, the doughboy's training was again rather hit or miss. Once more, the American training in the line varied greatly from unit-to-unit depending on the area of the front the soldiers occupied, the period of the war that they trained, and the predilection of their enemy to make mischief during their tour of duty. In this, the enemy played the greatest role in the Americans' training and seasoning. The 35th Division's Sergeant William Triplet recalled that his training in the French trenches,

...was a kindergarten rather than the first grade in the school of war. The enemy were Bavarian Gebirgstruppen and they were too easy on us. They generally behaved like amused adults indulgently watching the antics of mischievous children until the little monsters stepped out of line. When we really annoyed them we'd get a stinging slap on the wrists...⁷⁹

When the enemy was active, however, the Americans' schooling could be brutally direct. An

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Anonymous, *Wine, Women, and War*, 60., Johnson, "Training the First Division for World War I," 71.

⁷⁹ William S. Triplet, *A Youth in the Meuse-Argonne* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 95.

officer of the 1st Division noted of his foes,

The Germans did all they could to assist our training... thus, American indiscretions invariably were punished. Trenches, reserve positions and batteries which were revealed by the least carelessness receive chastisement. Sometimes this came in the form of harassing fire, or fire for destruction, or, in the event of a trench raid by either side, the enemy artillery would fire upon every American position known to it. Thick heads and dull, which had failed to learn the teachings at school, had the lessons of war pounded into them by the German schoolmasters, whose model was: "he who will not heed must feel."⁸⁰

Pershing intended that the second phase tour in the trenches "harden and accustom" his soldiers "to all sorts of fire and make veterans of the individuals."⁸¹ The early AEF divisions certainly accomplished this goal and made great progress in the unforgiving school of hard knocks. In one massive German trench raid against the 26th Division occupying French front line trenches at Seicheprey on 20 and 21 April 1918, the unit lost 80 men killed, 195 wounded, and between 130 to 180 taken prisoner.⁸²

However, most of the divisions that arrived from the spring of 1918 onwards generally occupied less active areas of the front, usually in the slumbering French lines of the Vosges sector. Unfortunately, the Vosges sector was often too quiet to provide much practical combat experience or give the Americans the seasoning that they so desperately needed. The lines occupied by Lieutenant W. A. Sirmon's 325th Infantry, for instance, were so quiet that he shot quail and gathered plums and apples in no-man's land.⁸³ For nearly two years a tacit truce between the French and Germans had kept the sector relatively calm. Neither the French nor the Germans were particularly enthusiastic at having the raw and rambunctious Americans

⁸⁰ McCormick, 71.

⁸¹ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 301.

⁸² Emerson G. Taylor, *New England in France 1917-1919: A History of the Twenty-Sixth Division* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 122-131., Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 157-9.

⁸³ Sirmon, 163, 176-80.

disturbing the region's "live and let live system."⁸⁴

The Americans neither understood nor respected the truce between the French and Germans. When units of the 35th Divisions were assigned to the Vosges front to undergo their seasoning in the trenches, the French officers in the sector told the Americans that "it is much better to lie quiet...If we do not bother the Boche the Boche will not bother us, and we can rest and hold our ground." When the eager Americans stated, "That's a fine way to win the war. Let's go right through them," the Frenchmen responded "The war will not be decided in these hopeless mountains...The high command has no desire for a battle here."⁸⁵ Another 35th Division doughboy contemptuously noted, "This ain't a war. The Frogs and Krauts got it fixed up between 'em to spend their vacations where their ain't nothin' to bother 'em but scenery."⁸⁶ The French officers assigned to the American units did everything within their power to control and divert the aggressiveness of the newcomers, but were only marginally successful in this endeavor. Long after the war, a 42nd Division infantryman summed up the greatest source of tension between the Americans and their French comrades by writing, "They are a whole lot more experienced than we are. They want to live. We want to fight."⁸⁷

Despite the pleas of their allies, the Americans tried assiduously to change "the quiet Vosges sector to a fairly lively one" with trench raids and other aggressive actions.⁸⁸ A soldier of the 32nd Division remarked that while the French desire to keep things calm in Alsace, "stifled a lot of budding initiative," the Americans were not to be denied. He boasted that, "Soon shells

⁸⁴ The informal "live and let live system" allowed the French, British and Germans to maintain calm areas of the front to rest and rebuild shattered units and maintain the area with an economy of force. Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1980), 14-20, 129-142.

⁸⁵ Clair Kenamore, *From Vauquois Hill to Exermont* (St Louis: Guard Publishing, 1919), 45.

⁸⁶ Charles B. Holt, *Heroes of the Argonne* (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1919), 41. Similar comments appear in Kenamore, 44-5. The Americans were not happy with the confinements of the "live and let live system" and the apparent timidity of their allies. Frank A. Holden, *War Memories* (Athens, Ga.: Athens Book Company, 1922), 103-4. Holden served as an infantry lieutenant in the 82nd Division's 325th Infantry.

⁸⁷ Leslie Langille, *Men of the Rainbow* (Hamond, In.: W. B. Coakley Company, 1933), 66.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

were falling on both sides of the line, where no shells had fallen for months, and the front line trenches were no longer a place to spend a quiet evening.”⁸⁹ Despite this apparent brisling of aggressiveness, the 32nd Division could not have stirred up much trouble for they only lost 56 men killed in action or died of wounds and slightly over 300 wounded (most to shelling) during their time in the trenches.⁹⁰

In addition to French interventions, other factors also limited the Americans’ aggressiveness. Americans’ accounts of their time in the trenches are replete with sheepish admissions of the neophytes’ nervousness and over-reaction in the trenches. These humbling experiences, and the feelings of foolishness that accompanied them, may have done more to cool the doughboys’ ardor than French exhortations. While occupying a section of French trench, the 140th Infantry’s Sergeant William Triplet and his soldiers got a bit spooked. In response to a slight sound in no man’s land, Triplet launched off 21 flares, nearly a months stock of the pyrotechnics, and his troops threw 15 hand grenades and fired off several bursts of rifle and Chauchat fire. With daylight, they discovered that they had killed one rat. He ruefully noted, “After this if anybody threw a grenade or fired a shot at night he’d have to show a body or blood on the ground at stand to the next morning and the body had to be something bigger than a rat.”⁹¹ Sergeant Triplet eventually concluded that his month of training in the trenches with the French was a “vacation from our previous grueling experience...in a never ending pursuit of war on the British front.”⁹²

⁸⁹ Joint War History Commissions of Michigan and Wisconsin, *The 32nd Division in the World War* (Madison: Wisconsin Printing Company, 1920), 44.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁹¹ Triplet, 98-9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 95. For other examples of these experiences, see, Hugh Thompson, *Trench Knives and Mustard Gas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2004), 46-52. Corporal Frank Faulkner recalled that he and his comrades spent much of their first night in the trenches blasting away at artillery-shattered tree stumps who they believed were Germans lurking in the darkness. Unpublished manuscript in CPL Frank L. Faulkner, 23 IN, 2 Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey. Not all of these encounters ended well. Lieutenant Frank Holden, of the 82nd Division, noted that

The Americans' opinion of their training in the trenches was mixed. A number found the experience to be a boring let down. Sergeant Elmer Straub complained that "I am rather disappointed because we can hear only an occasional shot, and things do not seem at all lively." He later caustically wrote of his French allies, "They sure live a soft life and its no wonder they can't win the war."⁹³ Although Sergeant Richard McBride and his comrades from the 82nd Division's 325th Infantry expected their time in the Allied trenches to be "our Baptism of Fire," they found it to be "a dull period as men sat for days in the trenches gazing intently at the enemy lines but seeing nothing to shoot at. Patrols were made every night without contact with the Germans."⁹⁴ Soldiers of the 5th Division were equally disappointed at the lack of war-like activity on the Vosges front. The permanence of the trench and shelters, as well as the "live and let live system" led one soldier to remark dismissively, "trench warfare was here...in its most settled development."⁹⁵ One doughboy dryly noted in 1919, "The training in the Vosges did not prove of great value to the men in the Argonne battle."⁹⁶ The 28th Division's Private James Murrin was not impressed with his unit's French instructors and believed that the Americans' own previous training was better than that given by the French.⁹⁷

The commander of the 77th Division, Major General Robert Alexander, believed that his unit's experience in the quiet sector of the Vosges had actually done more harm than good, for it failed to adequately prepare either the leaders or the men for their coming ordeals. He noted that

his men were "nervous and high pitched when they first went into the trenches," and that as a result, several casualties resulted from quick triggered guards. Holden, 71-3.

⁹³ Elmer Straub, *A Sergeants Diary in the World War*, Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. X (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1923), 43, 118.

⁹⁴ Sergeant Richard McBride, 325th IN, 82nd Div, Unpublished manuscript in File WWI 2178, USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁹⁵ *Official History of the Fifth Division*, 60.

⁹⁶ Kenamore, 65.

⁹⁷ James A. Murrin, *With the 112th Infantry in France: A Doughboy's Story of the War* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott, 1919), 101. An officer in the 89th Division concluded that despite the best efforts of the French, language barriers and other problems meant that the training "was not regarded as successful on the American side." Rainsford, 45.

in the quiet sector, “an occasional trench raid and routine gun fire had been the limit of their warlike activity.” When the division moved to the front near Vesle, “it was an entirely different war...[one where the soldiers] were harassed day and night by shell fire and air raids, troops in [the] front line were constantly deluged with gas,” and one where the enemy, “could, and did, make movement even of individuals most hazardous.”⁹⁸

Sometimes lack of training areas or realism further hindered the effectiveness of the Americans’ training. George English noted that the 89th Division’s company commanders followed the advise of their French trainers and dutifully selected men to serve as critical specialists, such as runners, scouts, and signalers. Unfortunately, the officers later discovered,

Neither the training schedule nor the drill ground afforded opportunity for the training of the personnel selected. The training schedule already included more than could be accomplished. Runners and signal men therefore either drilled or wasted their time on visual signaling...Limited space on the drill ground made the service of runners unnecessary and safe distance from danger made shelter and cover useless. As a result of these conditions, officers and enlisted men carried with them to the front false ideas of distance and terrain- the most important information of a soldier in modern warfare.⁹⁹

Of course these problems would not become apparent to the leaders until they actually entered combat.

Some Americans took a more positive view of their training and tried to milk the most from the experience as they possibly could. Their time in the trenches seemed to build self-assurance in the Americans of their capabilities and eased their soldiers into the status of veterans. An officer in the 140th Infantry stated that after his men stopped a German attack, “our success in repelling the raid helped the confidence of our men a great deal,” and they also

⁹⁸ Robert Alexander, *Memories of the World War: 1917-1918* (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1931), 16-18, 112.

⁹⁹ Captain Charles Dienst, et al., *They’re From Kansas: History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment, 89th Division, National Army* (Wichita: The Eagle Press, 1921), 36.

“gained increased confidence in their officers.”¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, this confidence often turned to hubris. After serving in the Alsace sector, a soldier in the 32nd Division’s 126th Infantry believed, “the officers and men of all ranks felt certain that they could give a good account of themselves anywhere.”¹⁰¹ Another soldier of the division boasted that, “In short order we learned most of the tricks it had taken four years to perfect and had figured out a few on our own account.”¹⁰² Of his time in a quiet sector of the front, a 29th Division soldier keenly observed, “It had its advantages and disadvantages.” He went on to recount, “While it gave the individual soldier the exalted morale so valued by military leaders, it also inclined to give him a careless disregard for the future and a contempt for enemy power that often induced him to take unnecessary chances.”¹⁰³

Other soldiers were equally incisive in their evaluation of their time in the trenches and its effectiveness in preparing them for their future combat. Shortly after the war, the 35th Division’s Charles B. Hoyt recalled,

The value of the training in the Vosges ... must be measured more by the atmosphere of war it gave rather by the actual benefits of the training. For what the infantry learned of trench warfare was of no practical value to it in carrying on open warfare in the Argonne; for what the artillery learned in emplacing guns it had pretty nearly to unlearn in the days to come; so [too] with the field signal work and medical men. The importance of the Vosges sector for training was that it also gave the Thirty-Fifth those conceptions under which war must be carried on. Feather beds and waffles for breakfast, they learned, were not a part of it.¹⁰⁴

Hoyt’s comments neatly encapsulate the experience of many, if not most, American soldiers as they trained for trench warfare during their second phase of training.

Given the problematic nature of this training, what did it do to improve the expertise of

¹⁰⁰ Evan A. Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun: The Official History of the 140th Infantry* (Lawrence: The World Company, 1920), 42.

¹⁰¹ Gansser, *History of the 126th Infantry in the War With Germany*, 87.

¹⁰² *The 32nd Division in the World War*, 44.

¹⁰³ John Cutchins and George Stewart, *History of the 29th Division, 1917-1919* (Philadelphia: MacCalla & Co., 1921), 91.

¹⁰⁴ Hoyt, 51.

the AEF's junior leaders? Although, as with most things in the AEF, it depended on the units involved, for all its faults the training did provide the company-level officers and NCOs some practical experience with coping with the fear and uncertainty of combat. The initial stint in the trenches was particularly wearing on the junior leaders. A soldier of the 305th Infantry recalled, "From the caution our platoon lieutenant took in those support trenches, and from the worried look he always wore, one would think that the fate of the army, the safety of democracy and the political freedom of the next generation depended upon our staying up all night."¹⁰⁵

For the first time the officers also had to wrestle with the fact that their actions carried deadly implications and that they had to set an example for their men while controlling their own fear of the unknown. Lieutenant W. A. Sirmon freely admitted that during his first trench raid he was "badly frightened" and "shaking badly, but swearing to myself I would not run."¹⁰⁶ Other leaders found that war was not as tidy as their training had led them to believe. After one trench raid, an officer of the 113th Infantry reported,

It was practically impossible to carry out the plan as practiced. There were no trenches. The destruction was absolute, and instead of the trench lines they had expected to encounter, the Scouts met shell hole after shell hole, heaps of earth and projecting duckboards and wire, which impeded individual progress and made extremely difficult the task of keeping groups together. Each group leader was compelled to act on his own initiative, following only as a general direction, the original plan of attack.¹⁰⁷

Their time at the front and exposure to even the briefest of danger did aid officers in honing their leadership skills, developing their battlefield wisdom, and furthering cohesion-building in their units.

However, the Americans' time in the trenches did bring to light serious problems with the

¹⁰⁵ Frank B. Tiebout, *A History of the 305th Infantry* (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, 1919), 74.

¹⁰⁶ Sirmon, 166.

¹⁰⁷ Cutchins and Stewart, 120.

training of the AEF's junior leaders. While serving on the French front, the 82nd Division lost 44 men killed in action and another 327 wounded.¹⁰⁸ Many of these casualties can be traced back to the lack of training of both officers and men. Seventeen of the 44 soldiers killed were lost in a single incident after a German shell slammed into an overcrowded trench. The War Department's 1917 *Field Service Pocket Book* had warned officers of the need to disperse their soldiers in the trenches for "economizing personnel" and "minimizing the effects of the enemy's artillery fire."¹⁰⁹ This incident highlights the fact that by this late date the officers in this unit had yet to even master trench warfare, not to mention "open warfare."

Most of the division's wounded resulted from exposure to gas. A general lack of training and supervision by junior leaders in gas warfare would plague the AEF, and ensure that the Americans would suffer inordinate casualties to poison gas when compared with the other combatants.¹¹⁰ Archibald Hart noted that even after his unit sent soldiers to the Gas Warfare School, his company's gas training was rather sparse. Upon his return from the gas school, the battalion's gas NCO gave a few lectures and "suggested that we don gas masks marching to and from the drill ground." After the soldiers followed this advice for a few days, Hart noted that the men grew weary of wearing the uncomfortable masks and halted the procedure. He laconically recalled, "that was the extent of our training in gas warfare."¹¹¹ In the 89th Division, an inspector discovered that one infantry battalion gas officer, "had no training whatever in gas, and who knew nothing whatever about the subject, which may account for some lack of knowledge about

¹⁰⁸ Buxton, 15-16.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of War, *Field Service Pocket Book* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 117. This book was a weatherproofed and updated version of the *Field Service Regulations* intended to serve as a guide for officers in the field.

¹¹⁰ Charles Heller, *Leavenworth Papers No. 10, Chemical Warfare in World War I: The American Experience, 1917-1918* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 91-4.

¹¹¹ Archibald Hart, *Company K of Yesterday* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969), 37.

gas among the Company Commanders.”¹¹²

Far too many American officers and NCOs took a cavalier attitude toward gas training. Leslie Baker, of the 27th Division, remembered that the level of gas training within his unit was not as thorough as it needed to be. He related one incident that illustrates the lackadaisical attitude that both officers and men took towards gas warfare training. When the division gas officer queried Baker and his comrades on the extent of their gas training,

It will never be forgotten how surprised he was when we foolishly admitted we had never worn our gas marks for four hours [as required]. Consequently, the very next day we were ordered to wear our gas masks from eight o'clock in the morning until noon, which we did- most of us.¹¹³

However, he related that since “it was such a wonderful day...and we had wasted so much of it in this fashion,” the company commander cut the training short and with a wink and a nudge told his soldiers before dismissing them, “I hope that everyone will remember he has had his gas mask on for four hours in case anyone should ask him.”¹¹⁴ This casualness and indifference in training, sanctioned or propagated by junior leaders, later reaped its own deadly rewards. In the fighting of June 1918, one officer noted in his diary that a “combination of Yank ‘take a chance’ carelessness, and German gas, [was] responsible for 85% of casualties so far.”¹¹⁵

Inspections of Americans undergoing their training with the Allies also revealed other serious deficiencies that could often be traced back to poor leadership and instruction by

¹¹² E.W. Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks Upon the American Expeditionary Forces During the World War*, The 89th Division, dated 15 February 1928, in the CARL archives, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2. Sometimes the officers’ and NCOs’ lack of gas training was due to circumstances beyond their control. An inspector found that the 81st Division, “had no gas training in the first training area owing to the fact that respirators were not received until the day before the Division went into the line.” It was not until the unit was relieved from their first tour of frontline duty that the division was able to conduct any gas training. This consisted of going through the tear gas chamber and attending an hour of gas training a day for a week. Luckily, the division only encountered a small amount of exposure to gas during the last three days of the war. E.W. Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks Upon the American Expeditionary Forces During the World War*, The 81st Division, dated 15 February 1928, in the CARL archives, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2.

¹¹³ Baker, *The Company History*, 87-8.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, *Wine, Women, and War*, 113.

company-level officers and NCOs. After inspecting machine gun units within the II Corps, Major Walter Short reported on 5 July 1918 that the machine gun training programs for the 27th, 30th, and 78th Divisions “had not been consistently followed” and that in those units, “shooting had been largely neglected.” Short noted that this fault was due to commanders willfully deviating from the training program.¹¹⁶ Less than a month later, an inspection of the 27th Division revealed that the unit’s officers and men lacked “sufficient knowledge of [the] properties of gas and gas defensive measures” and that its infantrymen were “generally deficient in map reading, sketching, intelligence, signaling, scouting patrolling, grenade practice, and rifle practice.” More important, junior infantry officers were “not properly instructed in [the] tactical handling of platoons and companies.”¹¹⁷ Lastly, on 30 June 1918, Lieutenant Colonel K. T. Riggs found that the 30th Division had serious problems with the level of gas warfare and machine gun training of the unit’s soldiers. Furthermore, in the 119th and 120th Infantry, “the methods of training used by the officers...[was] sketchy, with the result that men are not thoroughly trained.”¹¹⁸

The third phase of training, where large unit open warfare maneuvers were to occur, was the most variable part of the American training plans. This phase, more than the others, was the one that was given short shrift when training time was curtailed. As Captain Clarence Minick’s diary illustrated, units made efforts to conduct this critical large unit training, but the time and realism afforded these events were limited.¹¹⁹ A battalion commander in the 29th Division noted that the scant three weeks his unit spent behind the French lines in what should have been their third phase of training, “presented the only opportunities the organization ever had for

¹¹⁶ Reports quoted in *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, *Training*, 162.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 208-9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 221-2.

¹¹⁹ Diary of Captain Clarence J. Minick, Clarence J. Minick Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

deployment as an individual combat unit, or for problems in attack as provided in the new tactics laid down in the instructions from G.H.Q. for open warfare” prior to going into combat.¹²⁰

Despite the importance of these large unit exercises to the overall effectiveness of the U. S. Army, they often lacked realism. Lieutenant Colonel Ashby Williams sardonically recalled that just before leaving the French sector,

...we had our last of those famous division problems before we went into actual war. A division problem is where you imagine you have some troops and you imagine there is an enemy and you walk over a field where they are not. Very simple, isn't it? It is, however, the only opportunity the staff officers have of demonstrating to you how much they know about war. Perhaps the best thing about these problems is that they are easy to forget when you go to meet a real enemy and have to use common sense.¹²¹

All of this sometimes appeared quite comical to the junior officers. B. A. Colona noted that as his unit's training period came to an end, “Regimental, brigade, and divisional problems began to be the rage. Since nobody below major ever got any information as to what these are all about, the troops were usually represented by flags.”¹²² Colona and his company-grade peers should have been more concerned over the antics of their regimental, brigade, and divisional commanders and their staffs. The failure of these exercises to realistically address the higher headquarters' fire support, supply, medical, and command and control functions would soon greatly complicate the leadership challenges of junior officers and NCOs.

Having addressed the problems of the AEF's unit training plans, it is now important to discuss some of the overarching training issues that influenced the leadership and skills of the junior officers in Pershing's army. The first of these is the matter of doctrine. At the close of the war, Pershing boasted that the AEF had prevailed due to “its determined insistence on an

¹²⁰ Cutchins and Stewart, 91.

¹²¹ Williams, *Experiences of the Great War*, 60.

¹²² B. A. Colonna, ed. *The History of Company B, 311th Infantry in the World War* (Freehold, NJ: Transcript Printing House, 1922), 26.

offensive doctrine and upon training in warfare of movement” and its ability to overcome the soldiers’ idiosyncratic stateside instruction with “a system based on correct principles.”¹²³

Unfortunately, Pershing’s doctrine was never quite as doctrinal as he believed.

Senior American commanders and staff officers like to boast that the Americans had crafted the most advanced doctrine of the war.¹²⁴ Hunter Liggett maintained,

The American High Command had made a thorough study of the experiences of the French and British during the war in the matter of organization and had, as a basis of our own organization, adopted the best of both foreign systems, with modifications to suit our psychology and problems peculiar to our own development.¹²⁵

On 4 July 1918, Harold Fiske even conveyed to the AEF Chief of Staff his belief that, "Berlin cannot be taken by the French or the British armies or by both of them. It can only be taken by a thoroughly trained, entirely homogeneous U. S. Army," one, of course, trained in “American methods.”¹²⁶ This was all well fine and good on paper, but in execution, the creation, dissemination, and training of infantry doctrine was far from clear cut.

Even though the AEF’s doctrinal bible for platoons and companies, *Instruction on the Offensive Combat of Small Units*, was largely a translation of a French manual, the contracting out of much of the Americans’ training to the Allies ensured a lack of uniformity in tactics and doctrine. For example, Captain Wardlaw Miles, of the 77th Division’s 308th Infantry, stated that

¹²³ Final Report of Gen. John J. Pershing, *War Department Annual Report of 1918*, Vol. 1, 561.

¹²⁴ Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 72-73., Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. I., 88, 150-154.

¹²⁵ Hunter Liggett, *Commanding an American Army* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), 18.

¹²⁶ "Report of Training in the American Expeditionary Forces," from AEF G-5 to AEF Chief of Staff AEF, dated 4 July 1918, 29. Timberman-Fiske Papers, USAMHI, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. More junior ranking AEF officers were not so sanguine as their superiors about the Americans’ doctrinal superiority. Colonel McCormick observed “There had been too much talk of “American methods.” Any method we had were the result of experience in the Civil War, the Spanish war and the Philippine war, none of which form any accurate criteria of which the great European war was like...the views entertained by our Army... were crass and ineffective when compared to the tactics developed in four years of actual fighting.” McCormick, 68.

“Under the tutelage of the British 39th Division, American methods were largely abandoned.”¹²⁷ Similarly, Captain John Stringfellow noted that staff officers inspecting his unit training with the British were never reticent about criticizing British “methods of conducting combat,” yet his unit clung to them as their primary combat technique.¹²⁸ On the other hand, Captain Paul Schmidt, a company commander in the 32nd Division’s 127th Infantry, recalled that during his month of training in France, his company underwent intensive instruction in “formations and French tactics, under French instructors.”¹²⁹ However, despite their French training, a 5th Division officer maintained, “The Americans still clung to the idea that the rifle was the main dependence in warfare, and pushed that training with that arm to the utmost...”¹³⁰

This system of dueling doctrines certainly complicated the efforts of junior leaders to train their units for combat. In a reflection of this confusion, one 78th Division infantry officer observed,

...some men would go to a British school and qualify as instructors, only to come back and find that the American system was being used, and vice versa. Both systems might have had their good points, and did have, but the rate at which orders and instructions and ways of doing things changed from day to day was enough to bewilder old hands at the game; and we were greenhorns.¹³¹

Even the French recognized this problem and attempted to get the Americans to take a more holistic approach to tactics. On 10 December 1917, Major Beaugier of the AEF’s French Training Mission recommended to General McAndrews, Commandant of the AEF Schools, “that American officers and candidates should not imagine that there are two different ways of making war, viz; war in the American fashion, in accordance with the Field Regulations, and war ‘a la

¹²⁷ L. Wardlaw Miles, *History of the 308th Infantry* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927), 33.

¹²⁸ Captain John S. Stringfellow, *Hell! No!* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1936), 146.

¹²⁹ Captain Paul Schmidt, *Co. C, 127th Infantry in the World War* (Sheboygan: Press Publishing Company, 1919), 17.

¹³⁰ *Official History of the Fifth Division*, 61.

¹³¹ Colonna, 19.

Francaise,' according to the [French] Platoon Commander's Manual and Trench Polygone."¹³²

Unfortunately, the hodge-podge of doctrine was never truly resolved. The fact that the American officers were making distinctions between "American methods," "British methods," and "French tactics," does beg to question the degree of uniformity of the training and doctrine of the U. S. Army.

The other challenge with junior leaders absorbing a coherent doctrine was the rapid pace at which tactical methods changed in the AEF. Kenneth Hamburger maintains that the AEF GHQ went to great lengths throughout the war to adjust its doctrine based on its hard won "lessons learned."¹³³ Although militaries must constantly assess their tactical doctrines in wartime and make adjustments based on changes in technology or enemy tactics, these changes must be accompanied by a period of time for units to absorb and train on the new concepts. This also assumes that the units have a sound grounding in basic tactical skills and principles; a problematic assumption for many of the AEF's infantry units.

As had happened in the United States, units in training were often drowned in a flood of doctrinal manuals and other publications. In addition to the publications printed in the United States by the War Department, the AEF itself printed 154 manuals and pamphlets. It ultimately issued nearly 1.5 million copies of these publications over the course of the war.¹³⁴ This was almost enough to give every doughboy at least one doctrinal manual to carry in their packs. Most of the AEF's publications were technical manuals related to the new weapons filling the army's inventory. Many of the remaining tactical manuals suffered from some of the same

¹³² Letter from Major Beaugier, French Military Mission to General McAndrew, Commandant, American Army Schools, dated 10 December 1917, NARA RG 120, Records of the AEF, G5 Schools, Army Candidate School, Box 1639, File 325.16 "Instructors French."

¹³³ Kenneth Hamburger, *Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces* (Washington D. C.: United States Army Center of Military History, 1997). Unfortunately, capturing "lessons learned" and acting upon them at the lower levels were not always the same thing.

¹³⁴ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 329-333.

problems that had plagued those of the War Department. The AEF's editions of *Instruction for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* and the *Manual for Chiefs of Infantry Platoons*, for instance, contained differing formations and tactics, and the GHQ made no effort at reconciling them.

Again, the officers and NCOs had to become their own interpreters of doctrine as they groped their way through their tactical training. As an officer in the 29th Division lamented,

Numerous, varied and exhaustive pamphlets were issued... These were presumed to be absorbed by the officers and imparted to the men. There was much in them that was good... much that had to be learned and forgotten, because the game of war is not constant; but they were issued in such quantity and covered so wide a scope that it was impossible for officers to master them and at the same time attend to their varied duties...¹³⁵

Another officer noted that as his unit progressed through training, "More attention was now paid to extended formations than had been in the past." He quickly found that "no formation was standard or final." This was caused by the fact that, "each new instructor and each succeeding pamphlet brought new combinations." However, he did admit that "while this instruction was indefinite and discouraging at the time," by its very fluid nature it actually "fitted well into the requirements of future campaigns."¹³⁶

The pace of doctrinal change could be baffling to those junior officers attempting to understand and impart the new tactics and formations to their units. Robert Bullard admitted that as soon as his 1st Division came out of its time in the trenches, he instituted a hurried bust of training where, "everything new in tactics that we could hear of, whether of the Allies or the enemy, we tried."¹³⁷ One company commander found out just how quickly doctrinal change could occur in France. Just after returning from a tour in the trenches, Captain B. A. Colonna

¹³⁵ Cutchins and Stewart, 49.

¹³⁶ Dienst, 31.

¹³⁷ Bullard, 179.

recalled,

...an orderly brought around late that night some red covered books and leaflets, and we were told that these would be put into effect the next day. These were the new system of combat formations, involving absolutely new extended order drill, and formation of the company. Lieut. Moore had drilled a few times in these formations; the rest of us knew no more about them than the company cooks did. So the next morning we sallied forth, books in hand, and worked the formations out step by step. Everyone was quick to see that this was something like business, as of course our old army regulations were absurd when it came to using the new special weapons, such as automatic rifles, hand and rifle grenades, and so on.

Colonna maintained that given this step-by-step approach, “the new formations were mastered remarkably quickly.”¹³⁸ However, mastering formations and being able to match and combine them to account for variations in the terrain and enemy are two separate issues. The evidence suggests that many American units became relatively competent in the former, but not so skilled in the later.¹³⁹ This problem became evident as the doughboys of the later arriving division entered combat.

Part of the problem of matching tactics and formations to the terrain and enemy was due to shortcomings in the AEF’s “official” doctrine. The *Instruction for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* (mostly likely the “red covered” manuals that Colonna referred to) was the closest that the AEF ever came to a printed infantry doctrine during the war.¹⁴⁰ The manual was a departure from many of the pre-war precepts that lived on in the *IDR* and contained sound advice for junior leaders in how to operate in combat. It decisively departed from the army’s prewar

¹³⁸ Colonna, 22-3.

¹³⁹ George English stated that in the 89th Division, “More important even than target practice was the training given in the new method of platoon attack. This instruction showed the platoon leader how to scatter out his platoon into lines twenty or thirty yards apart, with men six or seven yards from each other and each line. Troops were taught that the machine gun which held up their advance must be taken by flanking, and not by a frontal attack. The proper formations for artillery fire were rehearsed, and general instructions given in the *Offensive Combat of small units*.” George H. English, Jr. *History of the 89th Division, U.S.A* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing Company, 1920), 46. Similar comments were also made by Captain Ben Chastaine, of the 36th Division. Ben Chastaine, *Story of the 36th* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1920), 48, 51-2. In both cases, their units’ subsequent combat performance revealed a problem with adjusting formations to meet evolving battlefield situations.

¹⁴⁰ The much ballyhooed *AEF Provisional Infantry Drill Regulations*, which was intended to correct the doctrinal shortcomings of the *IDR Corrected to December 1917* and encapsulate the vaunted principles of open warfare, was not printed until December 1918.

doctrine of “building up the firing line,” by noting, “When a line is stopped by organized defenses, which are intact and occupied by the enemy, has little chance of producing success- it will simply increase losses.”¹⁴¹ The manual also enjoined junior leaders to always seek enemy flanks rather than pushing frontal attacks, and that once platoons and companies came under fire, they should break into smaller elements and proceed forward “employing short rushes at top speed” or “advance by filtering over ground furnishing but little cover.”¹⁴²

While Pershing and Fiske might cavil over open warfare and the superiority of the bayonet steeled rifleman, the *Instruction for the Offensive Combat of Small Units* advocated for a close cooperation and integration of artillery, tanks, mortars, machine guns, and the other new weapons of war in assisting the infantry in killing the enemy and taking ground. Although the manual stated the obligatory mantra that “the rifle remains the first weapon of the infantryman in all the circumstances of war,” it went on to describe how the infantry had to employ its other organic weapons and synchronize its operations with artillery to accomplish its missions.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the manual directed company commanders to shatter resistance “by employing all the means at hand.”¹⁴⁴

What *Offensive Combat of Small Units* lacked, however, were the details of application. Although the pamphlet provided excellent general guidelines, it was much sparser in its discussion of how the junior officer was to accomplish this seamless transition from one formation to another and from the approach to the assault. While it is easy on paper to state that the officers must maneuver to attack the enemy’s flank, it was quite another thing in practice. Given the uneven training of the army’s junior leaders and soldiers, it was incumbent on the AEF

¹⁴¹ *Instruction for the Offensive Combat of Small Units*, 6 May 1918 edition, 11.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 10, 20, 24-7.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12-14, 32-34. The manual frequently stressed the need for the infantry to adjust its maneuver to rolling barrages.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

to make the transition of doctrine on paper to doctrine in action as smooth as possible. Some of the manual's great failings were its illustrations and its texts describing how the leader combined formations with tactics. Although it adequately showed the basic formations, the way that the leader was to move his unit from one formation to the other was mostly left to the reader's interpretation of the snaking arrows illustrating the move, or his reading of the somewhat turgid accompanying texts.

While the manual represented a leap forward in the Americans' tactical thought, the AEF continued to adhere to concepts of battle space, and command and control that were unrealistic for the Western Front. As stipulated in the publication, the distances between individuals, units, and echelons, when deployed for combat, were also much too close for safety. For example, the distances between individuals for a platoon in the assault echelon of an attack was five paces (roughly 8-10 meters), making for a frontage of about 125 meters for each of the two waves of the deployed platoons. These distances were close to the intervals given in the *IDR*.¹⁴⁵

Based on his experience in combat, Henry Burdick noted shortly after the war that the formations presented in *Offensive Combat of Small Units* were too dense, with poor spacing between units and individuals. He attempted to correct this problem by greatly increasing these intervals and increasing the use of "half platoons" to ease command and control.¹⁴⁶ While the issue of spacing, intervals, and illustrations may seem to be pole vaulting over the smallest of historical minutia, as Burdick suggests, small changes in such arcane matters could, and did, mean the difference between life and death as a machine gun traversed through its ark of fire.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Plate 5 and accompanying description text. War Department, *Infantry Drill Regulations, 1913, corrected to December 31, 1917* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 42, 110-111. In some of the illustrations the reader was simply advised that "intervals and distances as in the *IDR*" were to be used.

¹⁴⁶ Major Henry H. Burdick, "Development of the Half-Platoon as an Elementary Unit," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV, No. 10 (April 1919), 799-807. In one change, Burdick changed the interval between soldiers in the assault echelon from five to ten paces.

The great hinge upon which the formations presented in *Offensive Combat of Small Units* swung was command and control. Although combat command and control was the perennial problem that plagued all the war's combatants, it was a particular difficulty for the Americans. In an effort to give his units staying power through the depth of the attack, in October 1917 Pershing convinced the War Department to adopt a massive structure for all AEF units.¹⁴⁷ The end result of this change was the creation of ponderous 28,000 man divisions, which at the lower level were made up of huge 250 man infantry companies and 59 man platoons. Overnight Pershing presented his half-trained junior leaders with monumental problems in maneuver, supply, combat, and command by saddling them with these cumbersome units. *Offensive Combat of Small Units* tried to address these challenges by keeping the formations relatively close, thus giving the platoon and company commanders a better ability to see and direct their men, and by offering these leaders the option of organizing their platoons into "combat groups" or "half-platoons."¹⁴⁸ The idea was that these divisions of platoons would give the platoon leaders less subordinates that they would have to directly control while also creating smaller, more flexible, sub-units capable of semi-independent combat action as the situation demanded.

In theory, the concepts of half-platoons and combat groups were a brilliant solution to some of the problems with command and control that dogged infantry operations of the First World War. *Offensive Combat of Small Units* directly addressed the realities of confusion and friction in combat. It admitted that the use of these sub-units and other "temporary groups" often

¹⁴⁷ Cooke, *Pershing and His Generals*, 9.

¹⁴⁸ The "half-platoon" was just that. The 59 man platoon was cut in half, with one of the half-platoons under the control of a "Sergeant, Assistant to Commander," and the other half under the direct control of the platoon leader. The platoon leader, however, was still responsible for the overall direction and control of the whole element. The "combat group" was the breaking down of the platoon into specialties. In the illustration for combat groups presented in Plate 4 of *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, the combat groups were divided by riflemen, bombers (hand and rifle), and automatic riflemen.

“can not be avoided on account of incidents of the fight and the conditions of the terrain.”¹⁴⁹ As such, it was imperative that the soldiers be prepared for these unavoidable eventualities. The key to success was when these planned or accidental groups of men occurred, a leader “whether he be non-commissioned officer or private, must rise spontaneously to direct his comrades, carry them forward when they hesitate, and prevent them from giving group.”¹⁵⁰

The emphasis that the manual placed on NCO leadership raised troubling issues. As noted in Chapter 8, the lack of any systematic plan for identifying and training NCOs had all-too-often led to a culture of junior officer micromanagement of their combat units. For the vast majority of American NCOs and privates, nothing in their previous training or experience had prepared them for “spontaneously” rising to assume these combat leadership roles. While some American enlisted men later rose to this occasion in combat, they did so spite of, rather than because of, their training in the United States and France. Thus, while the infantry doctrine promulgated in *Offensive Combat of Small Units* was often quite sound, it frequently demanded more of junior officers and NCOs than they were prepared to do.

The way that the new doctrines were used during the Americans’ time in the quiet sectors illustrated that while the doughboys may have understood the mechanics of the evolving doctrine, their understanding of its application remained dangerously underdeveloped. This was best seen in some of the employment of machine guns. During the war, the British had developed a system of machine gun barrages. The idea was to use machine guns in an indirect fire mode aimed at creating a lethal “beaten zone” of machine gun bullets falling on crossroads and other potentially crowded areas behind the German lines. The goal of this “harassment and interdiction” fire (to use the modern term) was to create casualties and undermine German

¹⁴⁹ *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. 20.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

morale by eliminating safe rear areas and slowing the flow of food and supplies to the forward trenches. The American machine gun officers adopted the British method with relish, and at times in the war used it to great effect.

However, the American officers often failed to realize the inherent problems and risks of their new-found doctrine. Sergeant Charles Minder recalled his first exposure to the concept of the machine gun barrage while in the Vogues,

The Lieutenant came back about ten last night with a spirit level and elevated the gun a certain degree. Then he turned the gun to the left and I had to go out in front of it, about ten feet, and stick a branch in the ground about three feet high. Then he turned the gun to the right to a certain point, and I stuck another branch in the ground... Then we started to shoot from right to left between the two branches, and the bullets were supposed to fall on a cross roads behind the German lines... The Lieutenant [later] told us that we did a great deal of damage. How they got this information was beyond me, unless there are spies behind the German lines...¹⁵¹

The next night the officer again had Minder fire on the target. He was to fire 50 rounds, wait a minute, and then fire fifty more. They had to keep up the fire for half an hour. When the officer directed Minder to fire on the same spot in the same manner that he had the night before, retribution from the Germans was not long in coming. The Germans mercilessly shelled all around his position, and only barely missed the machine gun.¹⁵² Being on the receiving end of an inexpertly employed doctrine meant that Minder certainly experienced his combat “coming of wisdom” long before his officers.

The 29th Division also used machine gun barrages as harassing fire against the German rear area of their quiet sector of the French front. An officer in the division laconically observed, “The enemy responded promptly with artillery as well as machine gun fire. As a result the sector

¹⁵¹ Minder, 154.

¹⁵² Ibid., 162-4, 199. Minder quickly discovered that, “When the Germans see us, they do not fire at us right away. They dope out the range and their artillery gets instructions to lay down a few on us. This will probably happen tonight. It always does, after the officer leaves.”

lost rapidly its reputation as a 'quiet sector.'¹⁵³ To make matters worse, the Germans also countered this American aggressiveness with a series of deadly trench raids against the 29th Division's infantry units in late August 1918.

The Americans tried to counter these brutally effective German raids with raids of their own. Again one sees the doughboys' lack of training and full comprehension of doctrine. After weeks of practice behind the line, a select American raiding party of approximately 125 men from K Company, 115th Infantry launched a retaliation attack against the German front lines in the early hours of 31 August. The raid was to be preceded by a five minute bombardment of the German trenches by trench mortars and supported by machine gun and 37mm gun fire. Although the raid managed to enter the German trenches and kill some of its occupants, it failed in its objective of bringing back enemy prisoners. The Americans were woefully unprepared for the enemy's reaction to their attack. The raiding party was caught in no man's land by German artillery and machine gun fire and subsequently lost nearly half of its men killed and wounded before straggling back to the American lines. A raid by a company from the 113th Infantry six days later again netted no prisoners, but at least resulted in no American fatalities.¹⁵⁴

Another overarching problem with the AEF's efforts to prepare its junior leaders and units for combat was, ironically, the AEF's school system. Soon after arriving in France, Pershing and his staff were made painfully aware of the state of the Americans' ability to wage modern war. The solution to this problem was apparent to the Iron Commander and his Leavenworth-trained staff: create a vast system of schools that would train the American novices in the new technical and tactical rites of combat on the Western Front. In his memoirs, Pershing maintained that,

¹⁵³ Cutchins and Stewart, 106.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 113-121.

A school system would have been desirable in the best of armies, but it was indispensable in an army which had to be created almost wholly from raw material. The training of troops for combat was, of course, the primary objective, and schools for instructors were merely a means to that end.¹⁵⁵

The actions of Pershing and his staff in establishing the schools reflected the precepts of the “cult of professionalism” that had so influenced the army for the past twenty years. True to the “cult’s” principles was the unshakable belief of Pershing, Fiske, Bullard, and other key commanders and staff officers that education would be the salvation of the American Army, and they approached it with a missionary zeal. Bullard later remarked,

Among the officers of the 1st Division there largely prevailed our old idea that experience in war was the only proper teacher of war-making, and that war having come, schools should cease: We should take to the field and learn war there...The division commander and many of his officers seemed to regard the school idea as puerility, a fad of schoolmen; very troublesome and irritating at a time when everybody was getting ready to fight. These ideas remained among Americans until they had seen real war at the front. Then every commander wanted officers and men who had been through these schools. The demand for school instruction soon became so great that it could not be met.¹⁵⁶

While this “road to Damascus” moment may have brought the 1st Division’s officers back to the high church of education, it also blinded them to many of the problems that the schools created.

First of all, the administration and faculty of the schools required a large overhead of officers, NCOs, and “school troops” to keep the courses running. This meant that the GHQ constantly levied AEF units for officers and men to fill these slots. Often, the schools received permission from GHQ to retain the best students of their graduating classes to fill their instructor needs. From 5 March 1918 to 11 November 1918, the Infantry Specialist School alone retained 504 officers from its courses as instructors. This meant that approximately 9 percent of the

¹⁵⁵ Pershing, Vol. 1, 154. For the AEF’s internal discussion of establishing the school system see, *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, 291-299.

¹⁵⁶ Bullard, 64.

students attending the courses did not return to their parent units following graduation.¹⁵⁷

Although these numbers seem low, their significance increased as units began to suffer losses of officers due to casualties and other levies of personnel.

This means of obtaining teachers for the host of the AEF's schools and courses perpetuated the corrosive "blind leading the blind" system of wartime instruction and unintentionally encouraged mediocrity in both the students and instructors of the courses. As one infantry lieutenant commented, "Officers feared to make good grades in school because of the danger of becoming an instructor."¹⁵⁸ Of his time at the Engineer School another officer noted, "The instructors were 2nd Lts, who had finished the previous course. It was not their fault that they didn't know [the material], but it was a joke."¹⁵⁹ A 126th Infantry officer noted that "every company officer was required to attend" I Corps schools for "a month of instruction in new formations and the use of the new weapons we received." He complained that much of the instruction "was of little account," and "the instructors generally were officers who never had active service at the front and their theories were sometimes complexing to the veterans just in from the line."¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, to prevent the potential loss of their best junior leaders, some senior commanders opted to send their less talented officers and NCOs to fill their unit's school quotas. This practice further eroded the quality of instruction in the AEF's schools, prevented good officers from obtaining some technical training, and did nothing to resolve the overall loss of junior leaders in the units.¹⁶¹ Also, as the GHQ intended that the graduates of these courses to be the primary unit tactics and weapons instructors when they returned to their formations, this

¹⁵⁷ Report of Infantry Specialist School, Langres, France, dated 11 November 1918 in *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, 347.

¹⁵⁸"Replies to Officers' Questionnaires" from Morale Branch of the War College and War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, dated 5 November 1919, in NARA, RG165, NM84, Entry 378, Box 6 (here after cited as Morale Branch Officers' Survey), 44

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶⁰ Gansser, 52-3.

¹⁶¹ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 340, 401.

further hindered unit training.¹⁶²

In addition to the American instructors, the AEF also turned to the Allies for qualified teachers. Unfortunately, the AEF's officers were just as willing as their stateside peers to limit the scope of instruction given by Allied instructors. Generally, Allied instructors were used only for the technical side of weapons training and bayonet instruction. Some senior American officers feared that the Allied instructors were contaminating the Americans with their defensive mindsets and focus on "foreign methods." This, of course would make the Americans ripe for amalgamation. In July 1918, Harold Fiske wrote to the AEF Chief of Staff,

The offensive spirit of the French and British has largely disappeared as a result of their severe losses. Close association with beaten forces lowers the morale of the best troops. Our young officers and men are prone to take the tone and tactics of those with whom they are associated, and whatever they are now learning that is false or unsuited for us will be hard to eradicate later. . . The junior officers of both allied services, with whom our junior officers are most closely associated, are not professional soldiers, know little of the general characteristics of war, and their experience is almost entirely limited to the special phase of the war in the trenches. . . The tutelage of the French and British has hindered the development of responsibility and self-reliance upon the part of our officers of all grades. All our commanders from the division down have constantly at their elbows an Englishman or Frenchman who, when any difficulty arises, immediately offers a solution. A great fraction of our officers have consequently permitted themselves to lean very largely upon their tutors with a resultant loss of initiative and sense of responsibility. The assistance of our Allies has become not an asset but a serious handicap in the training of our troops. . . An American army can not be made by Frenchmen or Englishmen.¹⁶³

To combat the "bad influence" of Allied soldiers and minimize the "damage" caused by Allied training, Fiske had vigorously petitioned Pershing to purge the AEF's schools education centers

¹⁶² Captain Allan Briggs, an early player in establishing the AEF's school system, stated the ultimate purpose of the AEF's schools was to train officers and NCOs to "become the instructors at divisional schools and also to train their own men." He also maintained, "Other objects are to bring officers and noncommissioned officers of various regiments together to exchange ideas, to get them out of the 'trench groove' and open their minds to other lines of thought by teaching open warfare, to insure uniformity of doctrine and encourage *esprit de l'armie*, to give students a rest from trench life, to foster a strict sense of discipline, and lastly to help the students realize by lecture the gigantic task that is to be accomplished. . ." Captain Allan L. Briggs, "Training in Morale," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (October 1917), 243-245.

¹⁶³ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 303-304.

of all “counterproductive” Allied influences. This was accomplished in August 1918 with Pershing’s order removing all French and British instructors from the U. S. Army’s schools and units.¹⁶⁴ Although these purges were never completed, they did rob the AEF of a fruitful and labor-saving source of experienced instructors.

The AEF’s schools often failed to impart realistic training to their pupils or focused the instruction in the wrong areas. When Major General Robert Alexander inspected the AEF’s schools in the winter of 1918, he found numerous problems. The schools focused on the technical and specialist skills of the new weapons of the war instead of concentrating on how to best use those weapons. He reported that the courses should center less on specialist training and more on the “fundamentals of the infantry soldier’s education,” which he described as “leadership, musketry, and discipline.” At Gondrecourt, Alexander discovered that one six week course was devoted to nothing but the use of the bayonet. He believed that more than two weeks of instruction in this subject was a “waste of invaluable time.” For all of his fixation on open warfare, the general accurately noted that “any system of infantry training must be, for the subaltern and sergeant the ability to direct platoons and sections under fire, for the corporal the same ability in the control of his squad.”¹⁶⁵

Alexander’s observations were absolutely on the mark. The Machine Gun School, for example, taught “the mechanical operations of various types of machine guns; practice in known distance machine gun firing; calculations for and practice in various methods of indirect machine

¹⁶⁴ Smythe, 170. Understandably, the French had a different take on the American position. A French officer assisting the 26th Division remarked, “It seems to characterize the present attitude of the Americans, who realize that they’ve got a lot to learn, but don’t want anyone to tell them so,” quoted in Lee Kennett, “The A.E.F. Through French Eyes,” *Military Review*, Vol. LII, No. 11 (November 1972), 6. The policy was not as uniformly implemented as Pershing and Fiske may have wanted. The II Corps schools reported that their French instructors did not depart until October 1918. *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14 *Reports*, 403.

¹⁶⁵ Alexander, 16-18.

gun fire; a certain amount of machine gun tactics; pistol and grenade practice.”¹⁶⁶ It is obvious from the Machine Gun School report that giving the students “a certain amount” of tactical knowledge was not the thrust of the course. The schools failed to find the balance between the “technician and the tactician” that was so desperately needed in the AEF’s junior leaders.

This flaw was also illustrated in the training of Corporal Fred Takes. Takes, of the 325th Infantry, recalled that he spent nearly a month in an AEF school learning the Chauchat automatic rifle. He wrote that the training was mostly technical in nature and that he spent only one day of the course in learning the tactical employment of the weapon. He noted that this training was conducted on the drill field and consisted of moving “in lines of skirmish in two waves, the first wave firing as they marched. We walked about 30 yards and then lay down and fired for a while. Then we advanced about 30 yards and jumped in trenches and fired from there.”¹⁶⁷ Again, the focus was on the mechanics of the weapons and formations rather than on a sound appreciation for the gun’s tactical employment.

As Alexander also noted, in many cases the training was simply overdone. Too many of the AEF’s schools demanded far too much of the student’s time to train subjects that should have occupied far less space on the calendar. As one infantry officer commented soon after the Armistice,

Three weeks courses were given in courses that any reasonable man ought to learn in three days. If he couldn't learn grenade throwing, for instance, in three days, he ought not be an officer. . . Somebody's obsession regarding the necessity for schools kept about 50% of officers away from their units all the time, when they ought to have been giving their time to their men.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 354. The commandant of the II Corps schools recognized these problems and tried to limit technical instruction in his schools to 50% of the course time while increasing tactical training to the “utmost limit.” By the time this change was implemented in late September 1918, however, the improvements came too late to aid most of the school’s students.

¹⁶⁷ Corporal Fred Takes, 325th IN, 82nd Div, unpublished manuscript in File WWI 1760, WW I Veterans Survey, USAMHI Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

¹⁶⁸ *Morale Branch Officers’ Survey*, 54.

This officer's last observation revealed the greatest problem with the AEF's school system.

In the end, the AEF had to choose between increasing the technical knowledge of its leaders in modern warfare or allowing junior leaders to build cohesion in their units by remaining with them through the trials of unit training. Caught between this Scylla and Charybdis of training, the AEF GHQ chose to give preference to the schools. In doing so, the AEF's senior officers merely continued a precedent that had long been established in the Regular Army. In the twenty years leading up to the war, the regulars had simply gotten used to a perennial shortage of officers in its units caused by to need the staff and fill the army's various schools. But what could be safely practiced in peace could not always be so in war. This fact was not lost on the junior officers themselves. The phenomenal growth of the training courses, and their voracious demand for students, led one disgusted officer to quip, "The Germans begin a great offensive, and we retaliate by starting another school."¹⁶⁹

Unit histories and personal accounts of the war are replete with tales of units losing vast numbers of officers and NCOs to the AEF's voracious schools. The AEF GHQ demanded that its units provide a quota of students for each course and brooked no rebuttal from subordinate commanders based on unit hardship or military necessity (which of course encouraged them to simply send their "lame and halt" to the schools). One 7th Division officer noted that, "The schools alone, prescribed by higher authority...threatened to absorb all the time and energy of officers and non-commissioned officers whose principle occupation should have been the care and training of their units."¹⁷⁰ Frank Sibley, a Yankee Division infantryman, noted that while his unit was undergoing training with the French, it had to supply a steady stream of officers and NCOs to fill the new AEF schools. He observed that given the training that needed to be

¹⁶⁹ Sirmon, 104 and 119.

¹⁷⁰ Fell, *History of the Seventh Division, 1917-1919*, 22. For similar comments see, 328th Infantry Historical Committee, *History of the Three Hundredth and Twenty Eight Infantry Regiment* (Privately published, 1922), 21.

conducted in the unit, the loss of these leaders was “more than could really be spared.”¹⁷¹ Even George Marshall, a high practitioner of the “cult of professionalism,” decried the fact that the green divisions bound for the Meuse Argonne Offensive were “absolutely scalped” of their officers “in order that the next class at Langres might start on scheduled time.”¹⁷²

Unfortunately, the AEF's draconian schools quota system yanked the leaders from these evolving platoons and companies while they were both “learning the ropes” of modern war and jelling as identifiable groups. Generally, a young captain or lieutenant in the AEF could expect to attend at least one school during his service in France, and lose approximately one to two months of time with his soldiers. For example, after arriving in France, First Lieutenant C. E. Crane was assigned to the 55th Artillery Regiment on 18 April 1918. Crane spent all of June and half of August 1918 in various signal and artillery schools. When he went into action with his unit for the first time on 28 August, he was virtually unknown to his men and had precious little time to build a sound and symbiotic command relationship with his soldiers.¹⁷³

As previously noted, the army's personnel system had severely undermined unit cohesion through frequent and sudden transfers of soldiers and officers. Little in the training of junior leaders had taught them how to motivate, manage, and care for their troops. The interpersonal leadership skills that were not learned in training had to be obtained through trial and error by the leaders in their units. All too often, attendance at AEF schools prevented junior leaders from gaining the “hands on” leadership experience that bonds units together. As the military sociologist Darryl H. Henderson stressed, combat leaders had to establish “personal,

¹⁷¹ Sibley, *With the Yankee Division in France*, 46.

¹⁷² Quoted in Millett and Murray, *Military Effectiveness*, Vol. 1, *The First World War*, 147.

¹⁷³ C. L. Crane, “The Great War: 1917-1918-1919.” Original unpublished diary in the possession of Dr. Conrad Crane of the Army War College. A copy of the diary is in the possession of the author. Memoirs and diaries of officers from the period contain many references to their frequent absences from their units for training, leave, and medical care. When the Spanish influenza pandemic hit the AEF in the fall of 1918, unit cohesion was further damaged by the hospitalization of a number of leaders and soldiers.

empathic, and continuing face-to-face contact with all soldiers in the unit” to build and maintain cohesion.¹⁷⁴ He noted that leadership was one of the greatest determiners as to how well a unit “hung together” and performed under the stress of combat. Henderson argued,

Men in danger become acutely aware of the qualities of their leaders. They desire leadership so their immediate needs can be met and their anxieties controlled. In this regard, well-trained and respected company grade officers and sergeants relay a sense of competence and security to their soldiers and, if successful over a period of time, gain a degree of influence and control over members of their units.¹⁷⁵

Soldiers gain this appreciation of “the quality of their leaders” through training, daily contact, and shared hardships and experiences. Unfortunately, the AEF GHQ remained oblivious to this demand, and small unit leadership and cohesion in the U. S. Army consequently suffered.

Time and time again, doughboys were struck by the sudden transfer or unexpected departure of their leaders at critical points in the unit’s history. An infantryman in the 33rd Division recalled that his company had five different commanders during its 18 months of service.¹⁷⁶ His experience was far from rare. Connell Albertine and his comrades were distraught by the fact that just as they were going to the front to serve with the French, his company commander was ordered to a month-long school. As their lieutenant had already departed for another lengthy course, they were detailed an unknown lieutenant to serve as their acting platoon leader during their first time in the trenches.¹⁷⁷ An officer in the 89th Division’s 2nd Battalion, 353rd Infantry noted that in the midst of some of the battalion’s most strenuous training in France, the battalion commander, several of his officers, and “a picked sergeant from each company were called to Langres for special tactical instruction.” These key leaders did not

¹⁷⁴ William D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 108-9.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Walter L. Wolf, 129 IN, 33 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veteran Survey.

¹⁷⁷ Connell Albertine, *The Yankee Doughboy* (Boston: Branden Press, 1968), 73.

return to their unit until after it had already moved to the front.¹⁷⁸ Another 89th Division officer, Lieutenant John Madden, recalled that just as his unit was committed to the Meuse Argonne Campaign, he was sent to the rear to fill his unit's quota for a ten day class in rifle and hand grenades. Because of this assignment, the young officer missed most of the fighting and his platoon was left without its leader.¹⁷⁹ The absence of the officers at these key points in their unit's history prevented them from sharing the hardships and experiences that tend to weld the leader to the led.

Ultimately, the GHQ's decision to privilege schooling over troop time for its junior leaders was the wrong one. Despite the Americans' glaring lack of technical and tactical training, leadership and unit cohesion was still the more pressing issue. Some in the GHQ's hierarchy also recognized this issue. In August 1918, an AEF staff officer observed that in the 27th Division, "The battalion and company commanders were frequently away on courses, thus missing the great opportunity of gaining practical experience" of serving with their commands on the front line with the Allied armies. He went on to note,

While many of the officers have attended a number of courses and have acquired a considerable amount of theoretical and tactical knowledge, their knowledge of their duties as regimental officers is not thorough. They do not often realize what their position demands of them, what their responsibilities are as regards to their men, and fail to exercise fully their powers of command.¹⁸⁰

Sadly, no one heeded this officer's advice, and the AEF's schools continued to demand their

¹⁷⁸ Dienst, 35. Another officer lamented that "These schools were continued during hostilities...officers were detailed every month to attend these schools, being taken away from their companies while engaged in battle and when they could be the least spared, notwithstanding that a great shortage of officers always existed in line companies, and when officer instructors could have rendered a greater service by being at the front where they were so badly needed." Gansser, 52-3.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in, Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance*, 383-4. Madden's orders proved to be an unexpected boon for the members of his platoon. Since his platoon was without its leader, it spent much of the battle as the company reserve and thus largely missed the bloodletting of taking out ten German machine guns. Unfortunately, few company commanders had the desire or luxury to hold back this degree of manpower, and shortages of leaders seldom hindered operations.

¹⁸⁰ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, *Training*, 213.

pound of leader flesh from combat units at the most inopportune times. .

In April 1918, Pershing convened a board of officers to study the AEF's overall "lessons learned" from the war. This so-called Lewis Board, named after its chairman Major General Edward M. Lewis, found much that had been wanting in the army's performance. During the proceedings, the commander of the 7th Division, Major General Edmund Wittenmyer, commented that,

. . . Every organization after its arrival in France was to a great extent disorganized by the system of instruction adopted by the G.H.Q., in constantly withdrawing officers and noncommissioned officers to send them to school; thus leaving the organizations entirely without their complement of instructors. While these officers and noncommissioned officers were benefited. . . the organization itself lost by their absence more than was gained by the individuals that attended the schools. . . The action of superior authorities in taking away large numbers of officers of all grades, and enlisted men, to attend school and receive instruction absolutely destroyed all results in the way of instruction in the companies and battalions, and I consider these two organizations to be the very best schools for both soldiers and junior officers.¹⁸¹

Although Wittenmyer's trenchant observation came too late to aid the AEF, it did at least show that some of its leaders understood the price that combat units paid due to the army's school policy. The AEF's difficulty in building those vital "face to face" relationships between the leader and the led in small units, which Henderson claims is the key to unit cohesion and effectiveness, later bore bitter fruit in the combat it endured in the second half of 1918.

Before closing on the AEF's school system, it is important to discuss one specific school which has a bearing on this study. On 10 October 1917, AEF General Orders 46 established the AEF Army Candidates School. Colonel Paul Malone, the AEF's first Chief of Training, made clear that the candidates school was "to provide standardized officer material to replace our losses in battle." Based on British and French estimates that the AEF could expect to lose 75

¹⁸¹ General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No.98, GHQ AEF 09 April 1919*, Annex R, 19. (Here after cited as the Lewis Board) in Army War College Library.

percent of its junior infantry officers per year, he initially planned to have the divisions provide 150 enlisted men each to attend the course.¹⁸²

In December 1917, Pershing directed that the candidates' school instruction in minor tactics would focus on reconnaissance, security (advance, flank and rear guards and outposts), combat orders, marches and convoys, camping and billeting, Combat operations (attack, defense, and night fighting), minor trench warfare, field sanitation, and liaison. He further stipulated that the "course will be based on Field Service Regulations and Infantry Drill Regulations, modified in detail whenever necessary to conform with the present organization of the American units in France." As a secondary text the school was to use translations of the French *Manual for the Chief of Platoon of Infantry*. As usual, the school commandant was given no guidance with how to reconcile differences between the *FSR* and *IDR* with the French manual.¹⁸³ Ultimately, the AEF's candidate schools commissioned 10,976 officers by 14 November 1918, and was planning on having 22,000 more candidates under instruction by January 1919. Pershing later admitted, "It must not be thought that such a system is ideal, but it represents a compromise between the demand for efficiency and the imperative and immediate necessity for trained replacement officers."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Memorandum from Chief of Training Section to AEF Chief of Staff, Subject: Organization of the Army Candidates School at Langres, dated 17 November 1917, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidates Schools, Box 1637, File 350 "Information in regard to schools and courses." The Army Candidates School was formed from the core of an infantry officers' training school that had been established at Valbonne in 1917. The Army Candidates School at Langres was intended to produce infantry officers. Although the AEF established other officers' training schools for engineers, artillerymen, and other branches at Samur and Mailly, unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to "the candidate school" relate to the Army Candidates School at Langres.

¹⁸³ Memorandum from the AEF Adjutant General to Commandant, Army Candidates' School, Subject Course of Instruction in Minor Tactics, dated 21 December 1917, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidates Schools, Box 1637, File 350 "Information in regard to schools and courses."

¹⁸⁴ Final Report of Gen. John J. Pershing, *War Department Annual Report of 1918*, Vol. 1. 560. During the war the AEF held four courses for infantry candidates, four for signal corps candidates, and six for engineer candidates. The Infantry Candidate School commissioned 320 officers in March 1918, 602 in June 1918, 1461 in September 1918, and 853 in October 1918. Interestingly, the army course also commissioned 65 Marine Corps officers during the four courses. Memorandum for Monthly Returns Section, Statistical Division, AGO, AEF from

In theory, the curriculum of the Infantry Army Candidate School reflected Pershing's demands for more focus on the tactics of open warfare. In late October 1918, the three months of instruction was to total 468 hours of training and study. The tactical terrain exercises were to have accounted for 190 hours of the total instruction with 160 of these hours devoted to open warfare training, and only 12 hours on subjects related to trench warfare.¹⁸⁵ In other words, the tactical training was to have been much more robust and intent than that given to candidates in the United States.

Unfortunately, several factors prevented the AEF's infantry candidates school from achieving these lofty training goals. As the casualties and the need to man staff positions in the SOS and newly formed corps mounted in the summer and fall of 1918, Fiske admitted that "to meet the imperative demands for officers several courses had to be considerably shortened."¹⁸⁶ After completing only two months of his three month candidate school, Joseph Lawrence was commissioned in late September 1918 and assigned as an infantry platoon leader in the 29th Division.¹⁸⁷

The actual training conducted in the school also indicates that much of the instruction given the budding officers was problematic. The training schedules for the candidate school for October 1918 show that a great deal of the training remained at a fairly basic level, with a focus on close order drill, bayonet and physical training, and instruction on musketry and grenade throwing. The school also lacked training aids and publications. A 20 October 1918

Headquarters Army Schools, Statistical Section, dated 11 January 1919, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidate Schools, Box 1619, File 065.

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum from Headquarters Infantry Candidates School, Subject: Outline of instruction for a three month's course, Infantry Candidates School, dated 29 October 1918. in NARA RG 120, Entry 424, G-5 Schools: La Valbonne Infantry Candidates School, Box 1521, File "Training Schedules."

¹⁸⁶ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, 298., "Memorandum for Monthly Returns Section, Statistical Division, AGO, AEF" from Headquarters Army Schools, Statistical Section, dated 11 January 1919, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidate Schools, Box 1619, File 065.

¹⁸⁷ Joseph D. Lawrence, *Fighting Soldier* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 55.

memorandum from Colonel S. L. Pike, the school director, noted that “instruction in Infantry Drill Regulations must be given in the form of conferences as no books are available in France for issue.” Pike directed his instructors to use the *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates* as a substitute for the *IDR*. The fact that the school was using a very basic manual for instructing officers seemed to have raised few concerns among the cadre. Furthermore, Pike ordered his instructors to focus on “developing smartness and precision in close order drill...when adequate facilities for other instruction are lacking.” Two days later the director ordered that until the school could overcome its shortages of equipment and facilities, “instructors are expected to exercise ingenuity in making the instruction interesting, as well as thorough.” Despite Fiske’s and Pike’s best intentions, it seems as though the AEF’s officer training was little better than that provided by the stateside OTCs and COTSS.¹⁸⁸

Over the course of its history, the AEF’s candidate school suffered many of the same problems of the stateside OTCs and COTSS. Some of lapses in the AEF’s officers’ training programs were due to Colonel Pike’s difficulties in obtaining qualified instructors. As happened with the COTSS, Pike resorted to the shortcut of retaining “a number of the smartest and enthusiastic graduates” as instructors for new classes.¹⁸⁹ In April 1918, he held eight recent graduates as instructors. In June, Pike requested that 31 students be retained as instructors, and on 26 September, he asked that 82 of the officers who were to graduate on 30 September be assigned to teach at the school.¹⁹⁰ As was the case in the United States, there would be no end to the “blind-leading-the-blind” school of officer instruction in France during the war. Even Pike

¹⁸⁸ Memorandum No. 10 and No 21, from Director Army Candidates School, dated 20 October and 22 October respectively, in NARA RG 120, Entry 424, G-5 Schools: La Valbonne Infantry Candidates School, Box 1521, File “Training Schedules.” The stipulations on the use of manuals and close order drill remained in subsequent training memorandum.

¹⁸⁹ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 340.

¹⁹⁰ NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidate School, Box 1639, File 352.16 “Instructors.” Part of the reason for the dramatic increase in Pike’s request for graduate-instructors was that he needed to fill the cadre of a new infantry candidate school being established at Valbonne.

had to admit that his instructors, “in most cases, had never received any tactical instruction and many had received little serious instruction of any character” prior to their assignment to the school.¹⁹¹ Also, the retention of these newly commissioned officers further deprived combat units of much needed leadership.

At first, the AEF’s candidate school employed Allied instructors to aid in the training of its future officers. On 31 March 1918, the school had 23 French officers assigned as instructors; with nearly all of them teaching “specialist” weapons, such as machine guns, the Chauchat automatic rifle, the 37mm gun, and grenades.¹⁹² Keeping with established American practice (both in the United States and in France), Pike ensured that the Allied instructors were strictly limited to technical training and generally not allowed to stray into areas of tactics and doctrine.

Just as in other AEF schools, over time the candidates school sought to purge Allied instructors from its cadre. As early as 26 January 1918, the Commandant of the AEF’s Schools, Brigadier General McAndrews, directed the Director of the Candidates’ Schools to provide a list of the French instructors that they could dispense with, “without impairing the efficiency of your work.”¹⁹³ However, the real push to rid American schools of Allied instructors did not become serious until the summer of 1918.

In a confidential 30 August 1918 memorandum to the directors of the AEF’s School of the Line, Infantry Specialists’ School, and Candidate School, the overall commandant of the AEF’s schools, Brigadier General Smith, relayed that it was his desire to “Americanize the Army Schools in every respect.” As such, he directed his subordinates to determine the absolute

¹⁹¹ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 340.

¹⁹² “Nominal Roll of French Officers detailed for duty at the Army Candidate School, for the course commencing on April 1, 1918,” dated 31 March 1918, in NARA RG 120, Records of the AEF, G5 Schools, Army Candidate School, Box 1639, File 325.16 “Instructors French.”

¹⁹³ Memorandum from The Commandant, Army Schools to Director, Army Candidates’ School, Subject: French Personnel, dated 26 January 1918, in NARA RG 120, Records of the AEF, G5 Schools, Army Candidate School, Box 1639, File 325.16 “Instructors French.”

minimum number of British and French instructors that they needed for their courses and to provide the “names of those whose services may be dispensed with.”¹⁹⁴ In response to Smith’s directive, Colonel Pike informed his superior that the candidates school had already limited the role of the Frenchmen to merely advising the American instructors. The only subjects that the French officers actually taught to the candidates were field fortifications and liaison work. Pike admitted that “while all French officers could be dispensed with,” he believed that this drastic step would disrupt training. He did confess, however, that he could reduce his French cadre from 21 to ten officers. He also stated that his cadre also contained two British NCOs, both of whom taught bayonet and physical training. Pike disclosed that “the relief of these men would be of no great consequence.”¹⁹⁵ Following Smith’s guidance, Pike gradually reduced his Allied cadre, thus exacerbating his existing problem with maintaining a qualified core of instructors.

Pike’s purge of Allied instructors could not have come at a worse time. As was also the case with the stateside officers’ training schools, by the summer of 1918, the AEF school was having trouble obtaining qualified candidates. In a telling indicator of the overall training and experience level of the AEF’s enlisted men, on 2 June 1918, the candidates school’s Assistant Director informed Pike that “no definite degree of training can be assumed in candidates entering the School.” Because of this, “if any but the most elementary subjects occur early in the course, a large portion of the candidates will be unable to assimilate the work, and practically none will be qualified to act as leaders when detailed day to day.” He recommended that the first month of

¹⁹⁴ Memorandum from Headquarters Army Schools, American E. F. to Directors, Army School of the Line, Army Infantry Specialists’ School, and Army Candidates’ School, dated 30 August 1918, in NARA RG 120, Records of the AEF, G5 Schools, Army Candidate School, Box 1639, File 325.16 “British Instructors.”

¹⁹⁵ Memorandum from Director, Army Candidates’ School to Commandant, Army Schools, dated 4 September 1918, in NARA RG 120, Records of the AEF, G5 Schools, Army Candidate School, Box 1639, File 325.16 “Instructors French.”

the course be dedicated solely to very elementary subjects.¹⁹⁶ In the end, Pike confessed,

A large number of the candidates reporting had received very inadequate instruction [prior to attending the course]...about 30% had never fired any course with the rifle or pistol, and a small percentage from the staff corps and departments had never received any infantry instruction at all. Much time, therefore, had to be spent in rudimentary work. During the short courses, the time devoted to first principles had to be reduced at the expense of smartness and precision.¹⁹⁷

Given that most of the candidates admitted to the course were NCOs, one would have thought that this level of rudimentary instruction would have been unnecessary. If these candidates were indicative of the overall state of NCO and soldier training in the AEF, then it was no wonder that some NCOs had trouble mastering the tactics called for in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*.

The heavy casualties of the summer and fall of 1918 only made matters worse, and the quality of candidates continued to slide. This was seen in the problems encountered in the infantry candidates class that began on 15 September 1918. This class contained 12 candidates who had to be removed from the course because they were illiterate and 27 more who stated that they had been sent to the course against their wishes and desired to be sent back to their units. One of these men, Private Howard B. Peck, stated that he had not even been aware that he was being sent to the course until his orders arrived. When he protested the posting, his commander bluntly informed him that “he had to come as there were no other men” to send.¹⁹⁸ The candidates school’s ravenous demand for students greatly contributed to the overall decline in the quality of its students by forcing field commanders to make a hard choice between the

¹⁹⁶ Memorandum for Director, Army Candidates School, from Assistant Director, Army Candidates School, Subject: Recommendation for conduct of the next course, dated 2 June 1918, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidates Schools, Box 1637, File 350 “Information in regard to schools and courses.”

¹⁹⁷ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 340.

¹⁹⁸ “List of Candidates of the 3rd Battalion, Army Candidates School sent here against their wishes,” in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidates School, Box 1637, File 352 “Candidates Miscellaneous,” and Memorandum to Director, Army Candidates School, from Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, Army Candidates School, Subject: Illiterate candidates, dated 10 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidates School, Box 1639, File 352 “Candidates Rejected.”

immediate needs of their units and the larger needs of the AEF. Although most commanders appeared to have sent their most qualified soldiers to officers' training, a fair number sent their trouble-makers or those men who, like Private Peck, were the most expendable.

The high demand for officers led to the expansion of the AEF's officers' training system and caused the AEF GHQ to squeeze its units for more candidates in the summer and fall of 1918. The AEF expanded its original branch-specific officers' candidates schools at Langres, Samur, and Maily, and opened an additional infantry candidates' school at Valbonne in the fall of 1918. Attendance at the Army Candidates School at Langres more than doubled from 950 in June to 2259 in August. Unfortunately, the fighting in the Meuse Argonne made this surge in attendance unsustainable, and by the time that the 15 September course began, its enrollment was back down to 1125.¹⁹⁹ To fill all of these courses, the AEF GHQ demanded that its divisions and other subordinate units provide a monthly quota of soldiers. On 18 September 1918, for example, the GHQ informed all its divisions that they would send "twenty five suitably qualified soldiers from each infantry regiment" and six soldiers from their machine gun companies to Langres by 6 October.²⁰⁰

This constant levy to fill the divisions' quotas had immediate and negative effects on the

¹⁹⁹ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 298., "Memorandum for Monthly Returns Section, Statistical Division, AGO, AEF" from Headquarters Army Schools, Statistical Section, dated 11 January 1919, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidate Schools, Box 1619, File 065.

²⁰⁰ Telegram from AEF GHQ to Commanding General, 29th Division, dated 18 September 1918, in NARA RG 120, G5 Schools- Army Candidates School, Box 1625, File 300.4. The GHQ sent these "form letters" to all AEF divisions on the same date. In addition to the steady demand for soldiers to attend the candidate school, the army also continued its long range plans for maintaining the Regular Army officer corps. In October 1918, in the midst of the Meuse Argonne Offensive, the AEF GHQ ordered its subordinate units to provide 300 qualified enlisted men to report to Langres to take the examinations for entrance into the United States Military Academy. Of these 300, eighty would be selected to depart France immediately for West Point. While the examination board was expected to select the best candidates, the headquarters also advised that it should be "liberal in marking examination papers." The AEF Adjutant General, Robert Davis, further ordered on 23 October 1918 that after the board completed the West Point selection, the remainder of the examinees were to be sent to the Army Candidate School for training as infantry officers. Memorandum from AEF Adjutant General to Commandant, Army Schools, subject: Examination for U.S. Military Academy, dated 6 October 1918., Cablegram No. 2019-R from GHQ, dated 5 October 1918., Telegram from AEF Adjutant General to Commandant, Army Schools, dated 23 October 1918. in NARA RG120, Entry 424, G5 Schools- Army Candidate Schools, Box 1637, File 351 "Military Academy."

AEF's combat units. From July to September 1918, for instance, the 107th Infantry was tasked to provide 75 enlisted men to attend the candidate school.²⁰¹ Levies such as these dealt serious blows to the efforts of junior officers to build a competent cadre of NCOs and seriously endangered the effectiveness and cohesion of the AEF's small units. The list of the officers commissioned from the candidates school on 31 October 1918 illustrates the effect that officers' training had on the AEF's pool of NCOs. Of the 847 new officers, 41 had been regimental or battalion sergeants major and 195 had been first sergeants in infantry or machine gun companies. In fact, all but 26 of the graduates had been NCOs prior to attending the school.²⁰² Captain Wardlaw Miles noted that the commissioning of a number of 308th Infantry's NCOs, "proved a great loss to the regiment," and forced him and his peers to scramble to replace these losses prior to entering combat.²⁰³ This steady drain of NCOs worsened existing problems with enlisted leadership and led to a greater entrenchment of the practice of officer micromanagement in combat units.

The AEF's schools were not the only source of stress in combat units. In addition to its constant demand for students, many of the AEF's own personnel policies also obstructed training and unit cohesion. Pershing had originally intended that every fourth division that arrived in France would become a depot division to provide replacements for other AEF units. The issue of transforming combat divisions into depot divisions would plague the AEF throughout the war, and serve as another obstacle to effective unit and leader training. Again, the AEF GHQ was often the source of the confusion. For example, the 32nd Division was informed that it was to serve as a depot division when it arrived in France in February 1918. This meant that the

²⁰¹ Jacobson, 40.

²⁰² AEF GHQ Special Orders No. 304, 31 October 1918. The majority of the graduates were buck sergeants. Only 62 had been corporals prior to the school.

²⁰³ Miles, *History of the 308th Infantry*, 67-8.

division's 128th Infantry had a number of its officers and nearly all of its privates scattered to the AEF's four winds. The remainder of the division was detailed to unload ships and provide other manual labor that the SOS required across France. However, after a month of serving as a depot division and working within SOS, the GHQ reversed itself and returned the 32nd to the status of a combat unit. This presented a number of problems. One division officer noted that the AEF's cavalier use of the 32nd "took the edge off the fine state of discipline" of the unit's troops.²⁰⁴ More importantly, the moribund 128th Infantry could only be brought up to strength by transferring men from the division's other infantry regiments. This measure further wounded the efforts of junior leaders to build unit cohesion and meant that the most of the division's infantry companies were already short nearly a third of their strength. A soldier in the 126th Infantry, one of the units "scalped" to refill the 128th, noted that when his unit was brought back up to strength by an influx of recruits, most of the new men "had received very little training before they arrived."²⁰⁵

The 32nd Division was not alone in its rather high-handed and short-sighted treatment by the GHQ. After having only been in France for less than two weeks, in late August 1918, the AEF GHQ ordered the 7th Division's 13th Brigade to transfer an average of 80 men per company to provide replacements for the combat-battered 4th and 26th Divisions.²⁰⁶ While in their first weeks of training in France, the 36th Division lost 45 officers sent for reclassification and another 68 officers to transfers or schools. Shortly thereafter, the division was "called upon to send a large portion of its most seasoned personnel to fill gaps in other divisions that had been fighting at the front."²⁰⁷ All of these changes resulted in a constant breaking and rebuilding of platoons

²⁰⁴ *The 32nd Division in the World War*, 35-6., Gansser, 51-2, 57.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Fell, 43.

²⁰⁷ Chastaine, 47-8.

and companies with all of the resultant problems in training, morale, leadership, and cohesion that came with them.

The constant turnover of leaders greatly contributed to the AEF's shortcomings in tactics and discipline. In August 1918, an AEF staff officer observed that frequent changes in battalion and company commanders in the 27th Division had undermined "discipline and efficiency" within the division's units.²⁰⁸ None of this seemed to register with the AEF's senior leadership, and the GHQ's demands for levies of officers and NCOs never slowed despite what was occurring in training or battle. While training in the trenches, the 77th Division was directed to select one NCO and one officer from each company to return to the States to serve as instructors.²⁰⁹ On 26 September 1918, just as his unit was preparing to enter the Meuse Argonne fighting, the 82nd Division's Richard McBride recorded that this same requirement was levied on every company in his regiment.²¹⁰ These transfers bit hard into the AEF's small units. On 5 August 1918, Sergeant William R. Phillips wrote in his diary, "My Lieut. Niel of the third platoon was sent back to the U.S. to train a new bunch of men. I sure hated to see him leave." Although Niel was replaced with a new platoon leader, Phillips noted that he too was transferred within a week.²¹¹

Taken as a whole, the AEF's attempts to prepare its junior leaders for combat floundered in the wake of doctrinal uncertainty, rushed, incomplete, or unrealistic training, and ill-conceived personnel and training policies. Although the German offensives in 1918 caused or exacerbated some of these problems, many of them were the result of the Americans' own miscalculations,

²⁰⁸ *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, 213.

²⁰⁹ Alan D. Graff, *Blood in the Argonne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 78.

²¹⁰ Sergeant Richard McBride, 325th IN, 82nd Div, Unpublished manuscript in File WWI 2178, USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

²¹¹ Diary of Sergeant William R. Phillips. William R. Phillips Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

hubris, and blunders. Pershing's efforts to correct the training deficiencies that he believed his divisions brought with them from the United States unintentionally damaged unit cohesion in the AEF. The AEF's elaborate schools system offered scant improvements in the tactical competency of the army's leadership at the cost of great disruptions to the "team building" of its small units due to its insatiable demand for manpower. The fragmented state of the Americans' infantry doctrine added levels of confusion and uncertainty in their training and operations that would only be resolved in the crucible of combat. Ultimately, the failure of the AEF's training plan left its ill-prepared junior leaders with no other option than to muddle through their combat preparations as best as they could with units that often lacked the "corporate spirit" that was so essential to success and survival in battle. As the AEF prepared to enter major combat in the summer of 1918, the unheeded ghosts of Kitchener's Army warned the Americans of what lay ahead.

Chapter 10 “Gone Blooey”- Rejects, Replacements, and Retreads The AEF’s Systems for Addressing Officer Incompetence and Inefficiency

John J. Pershing was a hard man. He was exacting in his expectations of efficiency and discipline and strictly weighed the ability of his subordinates to achieve results on and off the battlefield. He had an unbending concept of duty and was seldom swayed by friendship or long standing personal relationships when it came to accomplishing missions. Major General Robert Bullard, one of the AEF senior officers who consistently lived up to the Iron Commander’s rigorous standards, had worked close enough to Pershing to fully understand the measure of the man. Bullard noted that when Pershing arrived at the front, he was often “good- humored” and “agreeable.” However, Bullard knew “that underneath his easy manner was inexorable ruin to the commander who did not have things right. He shows the least personal feeling of all the commanders that I have ever known, and never spares the incompetent.”¹ This remark was echoed by Major General Robert Alexander, who observed,

It may be said...that in the A.E.F. an individual, whatever his grade, had only one chance to demonstrate his capacity or incapacity. In the later event there was no alternative but to relieve the individual at once. The times were too critical, the lives of our men too precious, the success of our cause too vital to permit considerations of personal interest to have any weight whatsoever.²

Pershing, a man already predisposed to not suffer fools lightly, fully realized that his personal reputation, as well as that of the army and the nation, were inextricably linked to the results attained by the AEF. Given these high stakes, Pershing would try to see to it that no under-performing Regular Army general, over-the-hill National Guard major, or wet-nosed OTC

¹ Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925), 267. Hunter Liggett, another of Pershing’s trusted commanders, noted that the AEF commander’s “standards were drastic.” Hunter Liggett, *A.E.F. Ten Years Ago in France* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927), 254.

² Robert Alexander, *Memories of the World War* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1931), 105.

lieutenant was going to hinder the performance or efficiency of his army.

As the AEF established its operational footprint in France and endured its first combat in the winter and spring of 1918, the shortcuts that the army had taken to produce its corps of junior leaders became glaringly obvious to Pershing and the AEF staff. Given the challenges that it faced, the AEF had to establish a method for identifying and weeding-out those officers its commanders deemed unfit, unsuited, or incompetent to perform the duties assigned them. This chapter will examine the establishment and operation of the AEF's Officer Reclassification Centers at Blois and Gondrecourt, France, and their effects on leadership and command climates in the AEF. It will also explore the records of National Guard and National Army/Reserve infantry majors, captains and lieutenants sent for reclassification to develop an idea of who was being relieved from duty and the reasons given for their removal. This will provide insights into the AEF's overall problems of leadership and training, as well as indications of the characteristics and disabilities that Pershing and his senior commanders found unacceptable from junior combat leaders.

As with most troubles that the AEF encountered, there were indicators that the Americans might have to establish a system for evaluating the competence of its officers long before the United States entered the war. In August 1915, an American military attaché reported that in the French Army, "Since the beginning of the war 218 generals and field officers of the active army and 395 of the reserve and territorial Armies have been returned to civil life, placed in reserve, or retired."³ Still, the Americans gave little thought to this warning, and it was not until problems with officers began to appear in late 1917 that the AEF saw the need to establish a system for

³ Report of Major Spencer Cosby, Military Attaché, "Extracts from Report of Parliamentary Committee," dated 13 August 1915, National Archives RG 165, "Reports by U. S. Military Attaché in France 1914-1917," File 8698, Roll 219.

evaluating the performance and abilities of its commissioned ranks.

On 16 November 1917, Pershing issued General Order 62 directing commanders at the division level or higher to establish local boards for the “examination of officers who have demonstrated their unfitness.” The order instructed that “Company, battalion, and regimental commanders will observe closely the suitability and fitness of provisional and temporary officers under their commands and will report promptly to the division or department commander any officer who is not satisfactory for continuance in the service.”⁴ The divisional boards issued a recommendation on whether the officer in question should be allowed to retain his commission, or be cashiered pending the approval of the president. As Pershing’s ability to cashier or demote Regular Army and Provisional Regular Army officers was strictly proscribed by law and Army Regulations, commanders dealing with the problems of these officers had to submit a more detailed report to the War Department explaining the reasons for the officer’s unsuitability and make a recommendation as to his ultimate disposition. The president could accept or reject the board’s recommendation and had the option of retiring, demoting, cashiering the officer or invalidating any temporary promotions that he had gained during the war.

These first steps that the AEF took in addressing problems with the leadership and performance of its officers quickly revealed major points of friction. The need to refer all cases that recommended invalidating the commissions of National Guard and National Army officers to the president proved too slow and cumbersome, and left the officer involved in the case in a long-term state of limbo. The divisions and other higher headquarters found the establishment of temporary and ad hoc boards to be burdensome on the senior officers appointed to serve at the hearing and too much of a distraction from the unit’s training and operations. As the size of the

⁴ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 16, *General Orders* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 112.

AEF grew, so did the number of officers deemed unfit for combat duty. The early boards only had the ability to recommend that the officer be retained in his present rank and position or returned to the United States for discharge. Given the army's overall shortage of officers, it made little sense to deprive the AEF of officers who, while failing as combat leaders, could serve well as officers in the ever-expanding staff and SOS billets.

To address the worst of these problems, Pershing established standing reclassification and efficiency boards as part of the Casual Officers' Depot at Blois in March 1918. These boards operated under the guidance of the existing AEF General Order 62, as well as new guidelines established on 25 March 1918 in AEF General Order 45.⁵ Furthermore, on 11 April 1918, the AEF's Adjutant General Benjamin Alvord authorized that, "when it is apparent that an officer, who has been ordered discharged, can be of use as a commissioned officer with [the] S.O.S. you are authorized to suspend the actual discharge..."⁶ If those officers redeemed themselves by the satisfactory performance of duties in the SOS, their discharges would be voided. In addition to assigning the officer to the SOS, the boards could also recommend that he be returned back to a combat assignment in another unit, sent to an AEF school or replacement detachment for additional training, demoted to a grade more commensurate with his level of experience, or, if the board determined that his "value to the service in any grade or capacity was questionable," that he be sent back to the United States for discharge.⁷ The Blois depot also held boards for 1,078 officers rendered unfit for combat duty due to poor health or wounds to determine if they could be used in some other capacity within the AEF.⁸

⁵ Ibid., 257-8., Report from Deputy Chief of Staff, SOS, to Commanding General SOS, titled *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, dated 15 May 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Box 2257, "Reclassification System Combat Officers' Depot," 1-5.

⁶ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, 6.

⁷ Ibid., 20-21.

⁸ Lt. John J. McNerny, "A Brief Summary of the Activities of the Casual Officers' Depot at Blois," in bound report summary of the "Physical Classification System of the AEF at Blois" in NARA RG 120, Entry 465,

Although the Adjutant General and the later Personnel Bureau continued to make minor adjustments to the reclassification system, by the spring of 1918 the wartime method for judging the fitness and continued utility of deficient officers had been largely established. While the army had held boards to weed out unfit officers after the Civil War and the Philippine Insurrection, the establishment of a permanent reclassification depot was a novel idea in World War I.⁹ This departure reflected both the realities of an unprecedented mass mobilization as well as the coming of age of American military professionalism as the army insisted on the need to police its own ranks of those members of the officer corps who failed (or appeared to fail) to meet its standards of conduct and performance.

Over the course of the war, over 1081 officers were sent before reclassification boards at Blois after failing in their original units. An additional 270 officers appeared before the Blois efficiency board after their conduct or performance had raised questions as to their fitness to remain in the service.¹⁰ However, these 1361 officers listed in the final report of the Blois Casual Officers' Depot, do not tell the whole story of the AEF's reclassification system, and the actual number of AEF officers cashiered or reassigned was much higher. For example, while the records of the board proceedings for 50 African American infantry officers in the grades of major through second lieutenant are in the files of the Blois Reclassification Depot in the National Archives, only 31 of these officers are listed (and thus counted) in the Casual Officers'

Box 2254. McInerny noted that the AEF had four major classes with which to rate the physical fitness of its officers. Class A signified that the soldier was fit for all duties, Class B meant that the soldier was "temporarily unfit for combat service," Class C was given to soldiers "permanently disqualified... for front line duty," and Class D which denoted soldiers that were totally "unfit for any duty in the A.E.F." The 1,078 officers reclassified were all from Class B and C.

⁹ James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France: 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 481. Harbord called the system "a new undertaking in our Army."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-2.

Depot final report.¹¹ Furthermore, a file of “proposed eliminations for inefficiency” contains the record briefs for an additional 349 officers. Of the 349 officers who appeared before these boards, only 46 had any case files in the Blois records or were listed in the Casual Officers’ Depot final report.¹² Unfortunately, the place and time of these boards is unknown. What is clear, however, is that **at least** 1682 officers in the AEF underwent some form of reclassification or efficiency board after being relieved of their duties or commands.

On 18 December 1918, the AEF GHQ established an additional officers’ reclassification depot at Gondrecourt.¹³ This new depot was to deal only with the cases of combat officers needing to be reassigned or reclassified. With the establishment of the Gondrecourt depot, Blois would hold boards only for officers in the SOS and staff agencies. By the time that the Combat Officers’ Depot at Gondrecourt closed on 30 April 1919, it had only reclassified 161 of the 3500 that had passed through its gates.¹⁴

In May 1919, the SOS Deputy Chief of Staff estimated that approximately 82,000

¹¹ This analysis was based on comparing the individual case reports for infantry officers in the grade of major through second lieutenant in NARA RG 120, Entry 541, Reclassified Officers National Army and National Guard Blois, Boxes 2286-2319, with the 1362 names listed in *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, Tables 7, 7A, and 7B. The 19 “missing” African American officers from the 92nd Division or of the regiments of the 93rd Division were also not listed among the 161 officers boarded after the Armistice at the Combat Officers’ Depot at Gondrecourt. The list of officers sent to Gondrecourt is in RG120, Entry 456, Reclassification System, Box 2257. The officers in question were identified as being African Americans by either being listed as “colored” in their case files, or for having served as enlisted men in the Regular 9th Cavalry, 10th Cavalry, 24th Infantry, 25th Infantry, 8th Illinois Infantry, 15th New York Infantry, or other all-Black units.

¹² These records are found in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Reclassification System Combat Officers’ Depot, Box 2254. The “proposed eliminations for inefficiency” listed the officer’s name, rank, unit, and source of commission, as well as a brief summary of the findings of the board or commanding officer who sent the officer for reclassification. The date, location, and circumstances of these boards are a mystery. Internal evidence in the files in the form of memorandums and marginal notations dealing with the cases shows that some of the boards dated from as early as March 1918 to as late as March 1919. Most of the boards seemed to have been held in the summer and fall of 1918.

¹³ AEF General Order 231, dated 18 December 1918.

¹⁴ Report from Commanding General, Combat Officers’ Depot, to the Adjutant General, A.E.F., subject: “Re-classification of officers,” dated 22 May 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Box 2254, File “The Reclassification System at Gondrecourt,” 1.

officers served in the AEF from 1917 through 1919.¹⁵ Given this figure, he also estimated that “approximately, 1 regular officer in 40, and one temporary [i.e. National Army or National Guard] officer in 80 were found unsuited for the duties they were performing and had to be reclassified.”¹⁶ However, even using 1843 as the number of officers sent for reclassification (numbers drawn from Blois, Gondrecourt, and other known cases), that still meant that only two percent of the AEF’s commissioned ranks were boarded during the war. Still, these miniscule numbers do not accurately represent the powerful influence that the reclassification system held over the AEF’s officer corps.

Major General James Harbord claimed that Blois was a “Human Salvage Plant” which reclaimed “human beings to an untold and incalculable value.”¹⁷ Those sent for reclassification did not see it in this same positive light. Being sent for reclassification was a humiliation for the officers involved. Brigadier General L. M. Nuttman, commander of the Combat Officers’ Depot, recalled that the officers awaiting judgment “arrived in various states of mind which ranged from extreme anger, through a feeling of injury and a passive acceptance of fate, to an entire loss of self respect.”¹⁸ To the Regular Army officers, being reclassified generally represented the shipwreck of their military careers and the personal knowledge that they had failed the highest trial of their profession. For National Guard officers, being removed from their units meant the ultimate embarrassment of returning to local communities with their reputations sullied by the

¹⁵ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, 22. While this estimate does not account for officers killed or returned to the United States prior to the Armistice, is a good baseline for determining the number of officers in the AEF. In the Army Adjutant General’s annual report for 1919, he stated that there were 82,302 officers on duty with the AEF on 11 November 1918. This number included 298 officers serving with the Siberian Expeditionary Force. War Department, *Annual Report 1919*, Vol. 1, 496.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22. Additionally, the SOS staff officer also stated that “approximately 1 regular officer in 125, and 1 temporary officer in 335 were ordered before efficiency boards.”

¹⁷ Harbord, *The American Army in France: 1917-1919*, 426.

¹⁸ Report from Commanding General, Combat Officers’ Depot, to the Adjutant General, A.E.F., subject: “Re-classification of officers,” dated 22 May 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Box 2254, File “The Reclassification System at Gondrecourt,” 6.

stench of failure. To the many young National Army officers who had so eagerly filled the pre-war Plattsburg camps and the wartime OTCs, reporting to Blois indicated that they had failed as men by being tested and found wanting in the Rooseveltian world of the “strenuous life.”

Lieutenant Harvey Harris had a chance encounter with a group of captains who were in route to their new assignments after their reclassification boards. They told Harris that they had been treated as “privates in every sense” at the depot, and one stated that “he would have [to work] for 5 years to get his self respect back.”¹⁹ As these officers could attest, Blois was the boogie man that haunted in the psyche of the American officer.

During the war, the term “blooeyed” or “gone blooey” entered the American lexicon as slang for a failure or a colossal malfunction. In the AEF it carried the same meaning as the British Army’s “Stellenbosched” or the French Army’s “Degommes”: an officer cashiered in disgrace.²⁰ Even though 882 of the 891 officers assigned to the SOS after their Blois boards later “made good” in their new positions, they never truly shook off the impression that somehow they were “damaged goods.”²¹ Soon after becoming the commander of the SOS, Harbord noted,

The spirit of the S.O.S. has been rather low. All officers who fail at the front are sent back to be utilized in the myriad activities of the Service of Supplies where something can be found for one of almost any profession or trade. This record of failure has had a depressing effect on the spirit of the important work of the S.O.S. In many ways it is a bad thing, but it seems almost unavoidable.²²

Thus, while he could gush of Blois being a “Human Salvage Plant,” in his more honest moments, Harbord admitted that for an officer to be reclassified at Blois was the AEF’s version of wearing the scarlet letter.

Given the perception that American officers had of being “blooeyed,” the threat of being

¹⁹ Harvey L. Harris, *The War as I Saw It: 1918 Letters of a Tank Corps Lieutenant* (Saint Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 57.

²⁰ Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), 13.

²¹ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, Table No. 4.

²² James G. Harbord, *Leaves From A War Diary* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1931), 343-4.

sent to Blois was a cudgel which commanders could use to keep their subordinate officers in line. Captain John Castles recalled that the commander of his infantry regiment launched a tirade against his officers and, “ended by saying that twenty-seven new officers from the Reserve were coming to join the Regiment and that any one of the old ones who didn’t attend to business (i.e. do what suited him) would soon go back to the United States ‘with his tail between his legs.’”²³ Another officer later remembered that a division commander threatened to send one of his brigade commanders “to Blois in disgrace” after a failed attack during the Soissons Offensive of July 1918.²⁴ Captain Coby McIntyre stated that one of the few times that he witnessed any nervousness on the part of Colonel Frank Hume, the commander of the 103rd Infantry, was during field problems in France. McIntyre noted that, “In the problem the cards were stacked against Colonel Hume, and he felt, rightly or wrongly, the high command, never considered too friendly to National Guard officers, might look upon any failure on his part as ground for removal from his command.”²⁵ Thus, while the actual number of officers sent to Blois for reclassification was rather small, the fear that the removals inspired rippled through the AEF and influenced the behavior of American officers throughout the war.

What more can the records of Blois reclassification depot tell us about the U. S. Army? An examination of who was sent to Blois, and the reasons for their boarding, offers interesting insights into the overarching leadership and training problems that confronted the AEF during

²³ John W. Castles, Unprinted manuscript, Castles Papers, United States Military Academy Library Archives, West Point, New York, 22. In some units, the fear of being relieved began before they even left the United States. On 18 February 1918, the 38th Division’s Intelligence Officer reported that the morale of the officers was “not good,” and attributed it to a “spirit of unrest” among those officers “that have been or fear that they will be ordered before efficiency boards or general court-martial.” Report from Intelligence Officer, 38th Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Branch, 18 February 1918, in NARA RG 165, Entry 377, Morale at Army Installations, Box 13, Camp Shelby file.

²⁴ Quoted in Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 60. In the incident referred to, the division commander was Charles Summerall, the brigade commander was Beaumont Buck and the objective was the town of Berzy le Sac.

²⁵ Colby L. McIntyre, *The Old Man of the 103rd: The Biography of Frank M. Hume* (Houlton, ME: Aroostock Print Shop, 1940), 53.

the war. This also provides a means for understanding the conduct, skills, and abilities that Pershing and his commanders expected of their junior officers.

The often random process of assigning officers during the war makes it difficult to determine with any exactness if any one source or group of officers was over-represented in the boards conducted at Blois. As arriving divisions were skeletonized or transformed into depot units by the AEF GHQ, it was not unusual for National Guard officers to be assigned to purportedly “regular” or “National Army” divisions. Shortages of regular and guard officers meant that those “National Army” men commissioned from the OTCs and COTS permeated the junior officer ranks of all types of AEF combat units. On 7 August 1918, the War Department recognized this when it abolished any distinction between Regular Army, National Guard, and National Army units in General Order 73.

However, using some admittedly rough baseline estimations of the various composition of the wartime officer corps, it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions. If, after factoring out physicians and those specialists given direct commissions, that roughly 74 percent of line officers were graduates of wartime officers’ training camps, then it seems that this group was under-represented in the reclassification boards.²⁶ National Guard officers in the rank of major, captain, and first lieutenant also appear to have been sent to Blois at a rate greater than their overall numbers in the AEF would merit (see Table 10-1).²⁷ This gives some credence to the

²⁶ This percentage is based on figures given in Leonard Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), 22. Since most of the 16,000 wartime officers commissioned from the ranks also attended an OTC, the actual percentage of total OTC officers could have been as high as 86 percent of all junior officers.

²⁷ Army Adjutant General estimated that when GO 73 was enacted on 7 August 1918, there were approximately 17,000 guard officers in federal service. Given this baseline figure, over 2.7 percent of all National Guard officers were subjected to AEF reclassification or efficiency boards. Since not all of the 17,000 National Guard officers made it to France during the war, the percentage of guard officers sent to Blois would be much higher if limited only to those guardsmen in the AEF. Even if all 17,000 National Guard officers had served in the AEF, they would still have accounted for only 20 percent of all of officers in Pershing’s army. War Department, *Annual Report 1919*, Vol. 1, 498.

assertions of Frank Hume and other National Guard officers that their Regular Army superiors had embarked on an Uptonian witch-hunt of the citizen-soldiers during the war.

While a number, and perhaps most, of the reclassification of National Guard officers were justified, it did not change the fact that the removals exacerbated long-standing tensions between the regulars and the guardsmen and led to ugly recriminations during and after the war.

As the 140th Infantry’s Captain Evan Edwards complained,

We are told that no word should be spoken that criticizes the individual Regular Army officer. But the National Guard officer was criticized- stamped by an efficiency board as incompetent or not fully efficient, and the reasons named. Sometimes they were not even named.²⁸

Another guardsman recalled that the regulars held a, “low view of civilian abilities... they thinly veil their sarcasm for the military standing of the National Guard.”²⁹

Table 10-1: Officers sent to Blois by rank and source of commission³⁰

Rank \ Source of Commission	Regular Army	Regular Army (Provisional)	National Guard	National Army (OTC, COTS, etc)
Brig. General	10		2	
Colonel	33		21	
Lieut. Colonel	23	0	24	4
Major	24	2	88	59
Captain	8	45	140	161
First Lieutenant	0	27	130	237
Second Lieutenant	0	8	69	248
Total & Percent	98 (7.1%)	82 (6%)	474 (34.5%)	709 (51.7%)

The case of the Regular Army is a bit more complicated. Colonel John P. McAdams, the

²⁸ Evan A. Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun: The Official History of the 140th Infantry* (Lawrence: The World Company, 1920), 13.

²⁹ Will Judy, *A Soldier’s Diary* (Chicago: Judy Publishing Company, 1930), 45.

³⁰ The data for this table is drawn from *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, Table No. 1. There were also seven Marine Corps officers and one Navy officer sent to Blois for reclassification. Most general officers removed from command did not go through reclassification at Blois, and were not accounted in its numbers. Regular Officers with provisional commissions were generally those men who applied for entry into the regulars and were granted conditional commissions that would become permanent if the officer was a success in the field. They tended to be graduates of the two OTCs held for provisional officers at Fort Leavenworth in November 1916 and January 1917, or those graduates of four year military programs in college who were recommended by their Professors of Military Science. War Department General Order 73 effectively ended the wartime granting of provisional Regular Army commissions.

Deputy Chief of Staff for the SOS, estimated that 5,000 regular officers (including those with provisional regular commissions) served in the AEF.³¹ If we accept this number, this means that Regular they made up only 6.2 percent of Pershing's officer corps, and were thus only slightly over-represented in the Blois reclassifications. However, while the reclassifications tended to fall heaviest on officers below the rank of lieutenant colonel for the National Army and National Guard officers, nearly 68 percent of the Regular Army officers sent Blois were lieutenant colonels or higher (see Table 10-1). McAdams explained that this was due to the fact that "the differences in the standards of efficiency expected, naturally result[ed] in higher commanders being much more exacting in their requirements of regular officers than of temporary officers performing similar duties."³² Although there is much truth in this statement, it does not appear that senior regular officers were as willing to show as much understanding of the "temporary officers" of the National Guard as McAdams led the reader to believe.

Major General Harbord blamed the high number of regulars reclassified on the "considerable lowering of standards" that resulted from the commissioning of "young and inexperienced" provisional officers. He claimed that these new officers were promoted far too rapidly to ranks and positions that they were unsuited to fill.³³ Harbord was correct in this estimation; the new officers given regular commissions in the war had as little (or less) training as their OTC peers, and were thus equally unprepared. However, the bulk of the Regular Army reclassifications were of its pre-war officers who rose to command positions at the regimental

³¹ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, 22. The problem with the statistical analysis of the composition of the AEF's officer corps is finding out exactly how many of the war's total officers served in France from the Regular Army, National Guard, and National Army. McAdams estimated that the total Regular Army officer corps doubled in size to 12,000 during the war, and only 40 percent, or 5,000 served in the AEF. Ayers stated that the total Regular Army officer corps was numbered at only 6,000 during the war. *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary*, 22.

³² *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, 22. In the report, McAdams lumped both National Guard and National Army officers under the category of "temporary officers."

³³ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 484. Harbord's comments are nearly a direct copy of those made by McAdams on page 23 of *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*.

level and above. These men were just as unprepared to fill these positions as the provisional officers were to fill commands at the company and battalion level.

McAdams was right to argue that Pershing and his senior commanders should have expected higher standards of professional performance from their Regular Army subordinates. The circumstances and conditions that made up the daily world of the pre-war Regular Army officers had done little to prepare most officers for the precipitous climb in rank and responsibility that accompanied World War I. Many regulars like John Hines, Robert Bullard, and Hanson Ely made the well-deserved ascent, while others quickly fell victim to the “Peter Principle.” The relatively high rate of regular officer reclassifications also calls into question the degree that the “cult of professionalism” had truly been absorbed by the overall officer corps.

Although the regulars were more likely than OTC officers to be reclassified, they did benefit from their status. It was rare for the Blois boards to recommend that an officer under investigation be returned to duty with a combat unit. Of the 1371 officers that McAdams listed as being sent through the Blois reclassification and efficiency boards, 150 were returned to combat duty.³⁴ However, while only 11 percent of the National Guard and National Army officers sent to Blois ever returned to combat units, nearly a 25 percent of the regular officers were returned to combat assignments after their boards.³⁵ While this action did represent the regulars’ desires to “take care of their own,” McAdams was correct in noting, “the fact that better material was not available to replace them had a great deal to do with the policy of giving an officer a second trial in another division.”³⁶ He also noted that those reprieved from dishonor at Blois profited by the experience and redoubled their efforts to correct their failings. He asserted

³⁴ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, Table 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

that only 5 percent of the officers who returned to combat duty “were again found wanting.”³⁷

Although Blois dealt with the cases of officers from all the various staff, command and support positions across the AEF, officers from combat units made up the vast bulk of those sent for reclassification. Only 83 officers were sent to Blois from the vast expanse of the SOS.³⁸ It is no surprise then that combat officers comprised the majority of those sent to the depot. In fact, infantrymen, artillerymen, and aviators alone accounted for nearly three quarters of all reclassifications. Nearly 44 percent of all the Blois boards involved infantry officers, and this branch made up the largest number of men sent by any single arm of service. Artillerymen were a distant second, comprising over 23 percent of all reclassifications. Table 10-2 illustrates the statistics from the boards based on service branch and rank.

Table 10-2: Reclassifications at Blois by Branch of Service and Rank.³⁹

Rank Branch	Brig. General	Colonel	Lieut. Colonel	Major	Captain	First Lieut.	Second Lieut.	Total and %
Infantry	8	39	29	93	188	143	98	598 (43.8%)
Artillery	2	7	11	21	58	80	141	320 (23.4%)
Air Service	0	0	0	6	7	62	26	101 (7.4%)
Engineer	0	2	3	13	22	18	12	70 (5.1%)
Medical Corps	0	1	3	17	16	28	4	69 (5%)
Quartermaster	0	0	2	10	14	10	14	50 (3.6%)
Coast Artillery	2	2	1	3	9	16	11	44 (3.2%)
Signal Corps	0	0	0	0	15	18	8	41 (3%)

³⁷ Ibid., 19, 23.

³⁸ Ibid., Table 4.

³⁹ This table is based on information found in Tables 1 and 2 in *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*. It does not include the seven Marine Corps officers and one Navy officer sent to Blois, nor are these men counted in the table’s percentages.

All Others	0	3	2	10	25	19	11	70 (5%)
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AEF General Order 45 stipulated that the elimination boards that sat in judgment of the officers at Blois consisted of between three and five officers, all superior in rank to the defendant. The boards were to swear in witnesses for both sides of the case, allow the officer being boarded to make a statement in his defense, and produce a written record of the whole procedure.⁴⁰ On 7 August 1918, General Order 131 stipulated that the division or higher headquarters that was sending the officer to Blois had to forward the board a packet containing not only the reason for the adverse action, but also a record of the soldier's previous military, civilian, and educational background, as well as the commander's "opinion of the capacity, qualifications and efficiency of the officer reported on."⁴¹ The order further specified that the division corps, or the army commander instituting the procedure (or their chief of staff) was to personally notify the officer in question of the reason that he was being sent to Blois.

Sadly, the provisions of General Order 113 were not uniformly followed by the AEF's senior officers. The packets sent from the units to the board were frequently late or incomplete. For example, of the 515 Blois case files of infantry officers between the ranks of major and second lieutenant, five were so incomplete that it was impossible to determine why the officer was sent for reclassification, or even to establish the units that had sent them. In at least 32 other cases, the packets only identified the division sending the soldier, and provided little other information as to the reasons for their relief.

Although the General Order required the relieving officer to provide detailed information on the officer being relieved and the events that led to his removal, these statements were often

⁴⁰ AEF General Order 45, 25 March 1918. The board also included a medical officer if the case involved the officer's physical or mental condition, or if a medical opinion had bearing on the case.

⁴¹ AEF General Order 131, dated 7 August 1918.

vague and sketchy. This caused the members of the board no end of trouble. The commander of the Combat Officers' Depot reported that the "report was rarely as full and complete as required," and,

More often indefinite expressions were used, such as "lacks initiative," "cannot command men," or "lacks force." It was left to the boards to determine by deposition the specific instances that had brought about the relief. The provisions requiring a statement as to what duty, if any, the officer was considered fitted for was not always followed. "None" or "not known" was often given, when it is believed that a little investigation would have given more specific information.⁴²

This obvious lack of any prior investigation of the charges against the soldier by the senior officers ultimately responsible for removing him made the process seem unjust and arbitrary to those involved. The commanders of the Blois depot had originally intended that most officers would go through the relatively simple administrative process of a reclassification board rather than the more elaborate and time consuming process of an efficiency board. The failure of the combat units to properly investigate and document the cases of the men they sent to Blois meant that the depot often had to conduct reclassification boards using the process of the efficiency boards just to establish the facts of the case.⁴³

Compounding this problem was the failure of the members of the relieved officer's chain of command to inform him of the reasons that he was being sent to Blois. The Gondrecourt depot commander noted that in some cases, "officers appeared at the depot knowing that they were going before the boards, but not knowing the reason for their being relieved. In a few cases the officers did not know until they appeared before the board that their services had been

⁴² Report from Commanding General, Combat Officers' Depot, to the Adjutant General, A.E.F., subject: "Re-classification of officers," dated 22 May 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Box 2254, File "The Reclassification System at Gondrecourt," 2-3.

⁴³ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, 8.

unsatisfactory.”⁴⁴ The problem of late or incomplete packets led the Blois depot to have its Personnel Adjutant interview the incoming officers to “fill in the holes” of the case, obtain an assessment of the officer’s personality and capabilities, fill out the required Officer Qualification Card (if missing), and to get the soldier’s side of the story.⁴⁵

The records of those interviews in the Blois case files reinforce the point that senior commanders often failed in their responsibilities toward the accused officers. Second Lieutenant Robert Hay claimed that his relief came as a complete surprise as he “was informed by [his] captain and Major that [his] work was satisfactory.”⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Lieutenant Evan Lindsey asserted that not only did he not know why he was sent to Blois, but that the move came as a surprise to both his company and battalion commanders.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the 145th Infantry’s First Lieutenant Crawford Taylor stated that not only did he know of “no reason” for his orders to Blois, but also when he confronted his division’s chief of staff over the issue, the senior officer “did not know personally what it was” either.⁴⁸

This failure in communication shook the faith of both the officer being investigated and the other soldiers associated with the case in the fairness and judgment of their superior officers. When he was ordered to Blois, Lieutenant Samuel McClellan was merely informed by his division chief of staff that his regimental commander stated that the young officer “was not considered qualified for infantry line service.” When he pressed his superior for more tangible details, the chief of staff could not, or would not, provide them. McClellan appealed to the board

⁴⁴ Report from Commanding General, Combat Officers’ Depot, to the Adjutant General, A.E.F., subject: “Re-classification of officers,” dated 22 May 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Box 2254, File “The Reclassification System at Gondrecourt,” 3.

⁴⁵ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, 11.

⁴⁶ 2LT Robert Hay, in NARA RG 120, Entry 541, Reclassified Officers National Army and National Guard Blois, Box 2300. (Hereafter cited as Blois Case Files)

⁴⁷ 1LT Evan Lindsey, Blois Case Files, Box 2305. For those infantry officers whose reaction to their relief was captured by the Personnel Adjutant, approximately 20 to 30 percent stated that they were surprised by the action or did not know the cause. For example see, CPT Clayton MacNab, Blois Case Files, Box 2305.

⁴⁸ 1LT Crawford H. Taylor, Blois Case Files, Box 2315.

to return him to a combat unit because “insufficient cause” was shown to justify his reclassification and his unwarranted removal was “a permanent stigma” on his military record. McClellan even had his company commander, Captain Warner Cook, write to the board asserting that the lieutenant’s removal had been unmerited. Cook stressed that McClellan had been removed without his “knowledge or approval,” and that Samuel had consistently performed his duties in a “very conscientious and commendable manner.” The captain went on to note that he had “no fault to find with him in any respect.” Much to McClellan and Cook’s disappointment, the board sided with the colonel and assigned the lieutenant to duty in the SOS.⁴⁹

Although cases such as McClellan’s left the officers involved feeling that they were victims of an impersonal and arbitrary system, other cases reveal that officers could be cashiered for very personal and all-too-human reasons. A number of officers claimed that they had been sent to Blois because of personality clashes or personal animus that had nothing to do with their competence or abilities. Captain Gordon Lawson of the 36th Division’s 143rd Infantry maintained that he had testified against his colonel for being “yellow,” and after the colonel was exonerated of the charge, he knew that “it was only a matter of time before he would be canned.”⁵⁰ Captain Edwin York asserted that he had long-standing problems with his superior that dated back to an incident in Texas when York had been assigned to check the officer’s accounts and had reported them “confused.” The captain had also grown tired of always being “hounded” by his superior and had been seeking a transfer when he was ordered to Blois.⁵¹

Likewise, Captain Charles Price, of the 313th Machine Gun Battalion, claimed that the “personal

⁴⁹ 2LT Samuel G. McClellan, Blois Case Files, Box 2307.

⁵⁰ CPT Gordon Lawson, Blois Case Files, Box 2304.

⁵¹ CPT Edwin R. York, Blois Case Files, Box 2319. Captain William L. Thompson also claimed that he was only sent to Blois because he had requested a transfer to the Air Service. CPT William L. Thompson, Blois Case Files, Box 2316.

animosity” of his major had led to his relief. He also stated that his commander had denied him the opportunity to improve his skills by refusing to send him to school after all of the battalion’s other officers had been afforded that opportunity.⁵²

The 4th Division’s First Lieutenant George Lum also endured the personal wrath of his superior after finding himself caught between the demands of two different levels of his chain of command. Lum ran afoul of his regimental commander when the later discovered him carrying out an action ordered by his battalion commander that the colonel disapproved of. After the colonel raged that he would have Lum “Court Martialed and thrown out of the army and disgraced,” the young officer replied that “any man who made such a statement had to prove it.” Two days later, Lum was on his way to Blois. The Blois Personnel Adjutant checked into Lum’s story, and in a rare act of understanding, sent the officer to a replacement division for more training before being reassigned to another combat unit.⁵³

Lieutenant Edward Dewey’s “run in” with his commander was of an even more personal nature. Dewey claimed that his relief followed shortly after he “had the Colonel’s ‘lady friend’ out the night the Colonel had a date with her.” He maintained that he was “blooyed” to remove him as the colonel’s potential rival for the affection of the “lady friend.”⁵⁴ Cases such as Lum’s and Dewey’s demonstrate that units often suffered from tensions and factions that pitted field officers against company officers and regulars against citizen soldiers. They also show that

⁵² CPT Charles A. Price, Blois Case Files, Box 2311. For other examples of officers who claimed that personal friction between themselves and their superiors led to their reclassification see the following Blois case files: 2LT Mancel Coghlan, Box 2292., CPT Robert A. Dobbins, Box 2295., CPT Earl H. Plumber, Box 2311., 2LT John C. Smuck, Box 2314.

⁵³ 1LT George M. Lum Jr., Blois Case Files, Box 2305.

⁵⁴ 1LT Edward R. Dewey, Blois Case Files, Box 2294. Dewey was not alone in having his career hindered by matters of the heart. 1LT Lewis Graves stated that his long running problems with his unit adjutant came to a head after both officers began courting the same girl. Graves stated that the adjutant “threatened that if he did not stop calling on the girl, he would have him shipped out.” In a rare show of sympathy, the board sent Graves to a replacement depot for reassignment to a combat unit. Perhaps all is fair in love and war after all. 1LT Lewis E. Graves Case Files, Box 2298.

despite set standards and regulations, codes of conduct, and the army's twenty year drive for dispassionate and objective professionalism, personal passions, frailties, and vanities were involved frequently in the human interactions that comprised combat leadership.

The weight that the interviews conducted by the Blois Personnel Adjutant had on the proceedings is not clear. However, his statements as to the character and potential of the officers he questioned reveal a host of the prejudices that he, as a regular officer, brought to the table. Although his time with each officer was rather short, the adjutant felt free to make sweeping generalizations about the man's personal and professional qualities. After interviewing Lieutenant Jenry Loes, he informed the board that the officer was a "'Spoiled Child' type: has some pep of youth but lacks practical knowledge to make it really valuable."⁵⁵ He labeled the 36th Division's Alonzo Drake as merely "a clerk with a born clerk's nature," who was "absolutely unfitted to be a captain."⁵⁶ The adjutant was also quick to dismiss men as "fair weather," "swivel chair," or "street parade" soldiers, "without power of command at moments of stress: no initiative or energy."⁵⁷ Of one poor lieutenant, the adjutant concluded that the "youngster...[is] not fully mentally developed. [and was] possibly inbred."⁵⁸ If these failings were true, one must wonder at the standards of the officers' training camps. One thing was for certain; the Personnel Adjutant had the objective dispassion of a Grand Inquisitor.

The adjutant's comments also point to the power and depth of the regulars' prejudices against National Guard officers. He informed the board that Lieutenant Montgomery Ridgely, was, "a typical N[ationall] G[uard] Officer of the undesirable type, [who] lacks leadership and

⁵⁵ 2LT Jenry Loes Jr., Blois Case Files, Box 2305.

⁵⁶ CPT Alonzo H. Drake, Blois Case Files, Box 2295.

⁵⁷ Blois Case files of 1LT Benjamin L. Kilper, Box 2303., 1LT Isaac N. Quimby, Box 2311., and CPT Claude D. Johns, Jr., Box 2302.

⁵⁸ 2LT Foster Marshall, Blois Case Files, Box 2305.

the power of discipline.”⁵⁹ The old regular opined that the Ohio guardsman Captain Arthur Wicks owed his position and “earning capacity” to being “a mixer” with political pull. He concluded that the captain was “unwarranted as [a] Capt[ain] in [the] line.”⁶⁰ Similarly, the adjutant noted that the New York guardsman and New York City civil servant, Captain Foster G. Hetzel, was “A light weight: conceited regarding his abilities: If not worth more than \$100.00 a month in a city (political) job why should [the] Government pay \$200.00 per month and quarters.”⁶¹ These remarks reflect the regulars’ unshakeable beliefs that the guardsmen were nothing more than military dilettantes who owed their positions to the dirty arts of political cronyism.

In another case, First Lieutenant John F. McCafferty, a Regular Army NCO commissioned from the ranks after 20 years of service, managed to convince the adjutant that his relief was caused by the fact that his National Guard colonel was prejudiced against regulars and angered over the lieutenant’s strenuous efforts to obtain equipment, food, and other items for his soldiers.⁶² These cases highlight the lack of trust and confidence that often accompanied the relations between regular and National Guard officers. If the Personnel Adjutant’s beliefs were at all representative of his Regular Army peers, it is little wonder that guard officers were disproportionately sent for reclassification.

It was not easy for the officers being reclassified to sway either the board or the Personnel Adjutant. Even when the officer was sent to Blois by mistake, the board seldom second guessed the original recommendations of the officer’s superior. In July 1918, both Captain Elbert Fuller’s regimental and brigade commanders wrote to the board admitting that

⁵⁹ 1LT Montgomery Ridgely, Blois Case Files, Box 2312.

⁶⁰ CPT Arthur H. Wicks, Blois Case Files, Box 2318.

⁶¹ CPT Foster G. Hetzel, Blois Case Files, Box 2300.

⁶² 1LT John F. McCafferty, Blois Case Files, Box 2307.

sending him to Blois had been a mistake, and requested that their previous negative recommendations be revoked. Despite the regimental commander's plea that the loss of Fuller would be a "keen loss" to his unit, the board still sent him to the SOS.⁶³ The Personnel Adjutant admitted that he was "not supposed to have a heart" when dealing with the cases and generally lived by this code.⁶⁴ In one exceptional case he was so impressed by the fortitude and bearing of a young lieutenant who had stood up to his colonel for cursing him, that he recommended to the board that if they were going to send the officer to the SOS, he would like to see him assigned to duty with the Blois depot.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, these cases were few and far between, and the lieutenant was a rare bird indeed.

One of the most common reasons that the number of officers returned to combat duty was so low was that the boards seemed unwilling to second guess the field commanders. Ironically, while the depot's officers complained that the reasons that the field commanders usually gave for sending their officers for reclassification were vague or formulaic, the board members themselves very frequently merely parroted the verbiage and justifications of the original packets in their findings. In his June 1919 report on the reclassification system, General Wilson Burt maintained that,

In most cases [the] investigation disclosed the fact that there was but one conclusion to arrive at, and that was, that the action of the Division Commander should be upheld...There were extremely few cases investigated in the manner set forth, where the conclusions arrived at, showed that any mistake had been made. These cases served only to show that the very highest motives had been the ruling considerations in the request for relief of the officer and leads one to assert that

⁶³ CPT Elbert E. Fuller, Blois Case Files, Box 2297.

⁶⁴ This statement was drawn from the adjutant's comments in the case of CPT William McCowan. McCowan, a 51 year old infantry captain asked not to be discharged on account of his age, and noted that his service had "broke up his home" and subjected him to the ridicule of being called a "tin soldier." The adjutant pleaded with the board to "give him a chance here" for he had run "straight" and "clean." The board followed his advice and assigned the captain to command a Prisoner of War company. This was also one of the rare cases where the adjutant stood up for a National Guard officer. CPT William L. McCowen, Blois Case Files, Box 2308.

⁶⁵ 1LT Joseph S. Driskell, Blois Case Files, Box 2300. The board agreed with the adjutant's assessment and recommended that Driskell be reassigned to any combat unit outside of the 36th Division.

the same high standards of personality and character actuated the vast majority of commanders.⁶⁶

Burt also asserted that, “very few cases, if any, occurred where officers were relieved from command upon snap judgment, for pique, spite, or any other ulterior motive on the part of the superior whose order it was.”⁶⁷ A number of the officers who went through the Blois mill would not have agreed with Burt’s assessment or veracity. In the end, the reclassification system extended the domination of Regular Army officers in all facets of the AEF and reinforced a culture within its upper ranks that focused on keeping junior officers squarely “under the thumbs” of their superior commanders. As will be seen, this also furthered the problem of developing initiative within the ranks of the AEF’s junior leaders.

Having examined some of the problems of the reclassification system, it is now time to scrutinize the reasons that officers were sent to Blois. Given the rising importance of technology in warfare, and the trend towards professionalization in many civilian occupations, there was often a direct correlation between the specific expectations and demands of the officer’s arm of service (especially the more technical ones) and his removal for reclassification. In April 1918, the AEF GHQ established a policy where those officers who failed out of AEF or Allied schools would be considered unfit to serve in their respective branches, and thus be sent to Blois for reclassification.⁶⁸

This school provision fell hardest on artillerymen and aviators. For example, of the 318 records for National Guard and National Army artillerymen in the ranks of major through second lieutenant in the Blois case files, 160 (50 percent) were sent for reclassification due to their

⁶⁶ Report of Brigadier General W. B. Burt, to C. in C. American E. F., dated 12 June 1919, entitled, “Report upon relief of duty of officers of the combat Forces,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Box 2254, File “The Reclassification System at Gondrecourt,” 6-7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁸ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, 5.

failure at the DeSource, Samur, or Coetquidun Field Artillery Schools, or after demonstrating that they could not master the technical and mathematical skills required of modern artillery officers.⁶⁹ A good example of this process was evident in the case of the 36th Division's Lieutenant Charles Appling. Appling was relieved from duty with the 133rd Field Artillery when he achieved a grade of only 25 percent at a French artillery school.⁷⁰ The great number of artillerymen reclassified due to course failures reflects the massive technical and tactical changes that accompanied the rapid evolution of artillery from a direct to an indirect fire weapons system. The enforcement of rigid standards in the artillery schools also helps to explain why the AEF's artillery units became so lethal and effective over the course of the war.

The Air Service also placed much emphasis on the training proficiency and technical skills of its officers. It had no place for officers who struggled with the requirements of its ground schools or flight tests. For instance, First Lieutenant Arthur Chamberlain, a graduate of the Georgetown University Law School, was reclassified as a military policeman after being "relieved from duty with the Air Service on account of his failure in classroom work and inability to successfully perform missions assigned to him in the air."⁷¹ Even though Lieutenant Powhatan Clarke had twenty flying hours in the United States before arriving in France, he found

⁶⁹ This analysis was based on comparing the individual case reports for artillery officers in the grade of major through second lieutenant in NARA RG 120, Entry 541, Reclassified Officers National Army and National Guard Blois, Boxes 2286-2319. Of the other artillery officers, 65 (20.4%) were reclassified because they were unfit or incompetent for "artillery work" (which might also have been tied to poor technical or mathematical skills); 59 (18.5%) exhibited poor leadership or an inability to command; ten were too old or physically unfit for duty; five were due to inability to work with their superiors; five were caused by misconduct, moral failing or intemperance; five more were due to inexperience; three cases were unknown because the files were incomplete; one officer was reclassified because he was surplus to his unit, and one more because he was accused of consorting with the enemy. These cases also reinforce the point that the official number of 1371 reclassifications is too low. Blois claimed to have reclassified 320 artillerymen of all sources of commission in the ranks of brigadier general to 2LT, yet the author found that its files contain the case records for 318 artillerymen in the rank of major to 2LT from the National Guard and National Army combined.

⁷⁰ 2LT Charles D. Appling, Blois Case Files, Box 2286. For other examples of reclassification for this reason, see Blois case files, 1LT Frank D. McLony, Box 2307., CPT Oscar E. Carlstrom, Box 2291., 2LT Lewis Cherry, Box 2292.

⁷¹ 1LT Arthur N. Chamberlain, Blois Case Files, Box 2292. For further examples, see Blois case files for 1LT William N. Nelting, Box 2309., 1LT Harry Oatman, Box 2309., 2LT Earl Curtis, Box 2294.

that the Neiuport fighter that he was assigned to fly “was too fast for him,” leading his instructor to state that he would “never make a successful pilot.”⁷² Furthermore, Lieutenant Burton Le Doux’s instructors believed that after two bad crashes in training the young man would never be able “to master the art of flying,” and packed him off to Blois before he could do further damage to himself or the Air Services’ limited supply of aircraft.⁷³

The unique nature and stresses of flying also led to a number of pilots being sent to Blois. In addition to failing in flying school, the greatest reason that pilots were reclassified was their “air nervousness” or a fear of flying. For all of the romance and allure of flying, its reality was one of discomfort and sudden terrifying death. Air men faced a greater proportional number of reclassifications due to “nervousness” than any other branch. This failure of nerve could strike at any point in the pilot’s flying career. For instance, after two crashes during his flight training, Second Lieutenant Roy Monahan “lost his nerve” and asked to be reclassified.⁷⁴ Other pilots, such Robert Cole and Fred Nicholson, were ordered to Blois after they had been flying operationally and found the constant stress of air combat too much for them. Cole’s commander believed that he had lost his “Air Nerve” and readily endorsed his request for reclassification.⁷⁵

Medical surgeons and physicians also seemed to fall to problems that were prevalent in their occupation. Despite the establishment of the American Medical Association and the long term drive for the professionalization of the medical field, a number of doctors ordered to Blois were for what today would be termed malpractice or gross violations of the profession’s ethical code. In one instance, Major Frank Neer, and First Lieutenants Harry Goff and Paul Lynch were recommended for court martial for a 30 June 1918 incident where their lack of attention to a

⁷² 1LT Powhatan H. Clarke, Blois Case Files, Box 2292.

⁷³ 2LT Burton Le Doux, Blois Case Files, Box 2304.

⁷⁴ 2LT Roy P. Monahan, Blois Case Files, Box 2307.

⁷⁵ Blois case files for 1LT Robert L. Cole, Box 2293., 1LT Fred W. Nicholuson, Box 2309. For other examples, also see Blois case files for 2LT Frank L. Coghill, Box 2292., and 1LT Rector C. Coffee, Box 2292.

wounded soldier led to his death.⁷⁶ In October 1918, the board found Captain Claude Wills' so grossly negligent in his diagnosis and treatment of sick soldiers that, in a case of poetic justice, it recommended that he be sent to the Army Candidate School to be trained as a replacement infantry officer.⁷⁷

A larger number of medical officers were sent to Blois because of poor administrative abilities or problems with drugs and alcohol. In addition to their medical duties, a number of the AEF's doctors found themselves in charge of hospitals, aid stations, or other facilities that required executive leadership abilities that they had not been adequately trained to fill. This fate befell the 82nd Division's Major Jackson Barnett when, as a regimental surgeon responsible for running a combat aid station, he was unable to keep his unit in the proper "state of efficiency."⁷⁸

The stress of their jobs and their position's ready access to drugs and intoxicants meant that medical officers often succumbed to the lure of "John Barleycorn." The impression one gets from the files is that doctors seemed to have had a proportionately greater problem with substance abuse than other branches of service. A typical case was that of First Lieutenant David S. Carey. The commander of Base Section 3 relieved Carey from duty "due to his habitual use of alcohol and drugs which made him inefficient in the performance of his duties."⁷⁹ Before the Blois board could discharge him for his poor performance, the doctor's affliction caught up with him. After a lengthy hospital stay, a disability board found him permanently unfit for duty on

⁷⁶ Major Frank Y. Neer, Blois Case Files, Box 2308. Although Goff and Lynch were part of the investigation, neither of their files appears among the Blois records. Neer's name is also not listed in *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*.

⁷⁷ CPT Claude L. Wills, Blois Case Files, Box 2318. 1LT Harry Robertson, a dental surgeon, was also cashiered for his indifferent execution of his duties and for a habit of turning "suffering men away several times to suit his own convenience." 1LT Harry H. Robertson, Blois Case Files, Box 2312.

⁷⁸ MAJ Jackson H. Barnett, Blois Case Files, Box 2288. Also see Blois case files for, CPT Edward Davis, Box 2294. and Major Robert Donald, Box 2295.

⁷⁹ 1LT David S. Carey, Blois Case Files, Box 2291.

physical grounds and returned him to the United States.⁸⁰

The largest group of officers sent to Blois, and the one with the most direct bearing on this study, was infantry majors, captains, and lieutenants. The 515 case files for these National Guard and National Army officers give us a deep insight into the tactical and leadership skills and abilities that Pershing and his commanders expected their junior combat leaders to wield.⁸¹ By examining which infantry officers were ordered to Blois, and the reasons given for their reclassification, one also gains a greater appreciation of the general shortcomings of the U. S. Army in the Great War.

The basic statistics of the infantry officers in the grades investigated give a portrait of who was sent to Blois. Of the 515 infantry officers in the grades under examination, only 44 (8.5%) were in non-combat positions or units. In 35 other cases, the officer's unit or duty position was unknown (accounting for 6.7% of the total).⁸² Thus, the vast majority of the infantry officers ordered to Blois occupied combat leadership positions prior to their relief. Table 10-3 illustrates that a disproportionate number of National Guard majors and captains were reclassified over other sources of commission. In fact, it is only when one gets to the second lieutenants that the OTC officers were represented in numbers approaching their overall density in the army. The direct commission officers were all former Regular Army NCOs promoted from the ranks. Although this number seems low, it must be remembered that most of the regular enlisted men who received commissions did so after attending officers' training camps,

⁸⁰ For examples of this problem also see the Blois case files for, 1LT Nathan Ferris, Box 2296., Orin L. Herring, Box 2300., MAJ Wilbur F. Crutchley, Box 2293.

⁸¹ Blois also handled the cases of at least 14 Regular Army infantry majors, 29 regular or provisional infantry captains, and eight provisional regular first lieutenants. The Blois cases files in NARA RG 120, Entry 541 only contain the records of National Guard and National Army officers. The regular officers are unfortunately not included in this analysis. *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F. (Blois)*, Table 1.

⁸² This analysis comes from the study of the case files infantry officers in the grade of major through second lieutenant in NARA RG 120, Entry 541, Reclassified Officers National Army and National Guard Blois, Boxes 2286-2319. Of the 35 officers whose duty position was unknown, some were still most likely assigned to combat units.

and are thus reflected in those numbers.

Table 10-3: Source of Commission for NG and NA Reclassified Infantry Officers by Rank⁸³

Rank Source of Commission	Major (Number and %)	Captain	First Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant
National Guard	56 (72.7%)	97 (58.4%)	64 (42.3%)	35 (29%)
OTC	19* (24.6%)	68 (41%)	85* (56.2%)	83 (68.5%)
Direct commiss.	1 (1.2%)	0	1 (.6%)	1 (.8%)
Unknown	1 (1.2%)	1 (.6%)	1 (.6%)	2 (1.6%)

The percentage is based on the total number of officers in the rank sent for reclassification. Thus, National Guard majors accounted for 72.7 percent of all majors sent to for reclassification

*Includes one National Guard officer who attended an OTC

What accounted for the over-representation of National Guard captains and majors at Blois? Firstly, there was the matter of age. The average age of the reclassified majors was slightly over 43 for National Guardsmen and nearly 40 for the National Army officers. These figures only tell part of the story for nearly 39 percent of the guard majors were over 45, with 11 percent over 50 years of age (as opposed to 21 percent over 45 and 3.5% over 50 for the OTC officers). The oldest major to be reclassified was a 59 year old National Guardsman. For the captains, the average age for guardsmen was nearly 38 while that of the OTC officers was 33. Over 40 percent of the guard captains were over 40 years of age (as opposed to 17 percent of the OTC officers). The National Guard majors and captains sent to Blois were on average older than the reclassified National Army officers, and also older than the general officer population for their grades as a whole.⁸⁴

The older guard and OTC officers accounted for the majority of officers reclassified due to being too unfit, slow, or hesitant for combat, or those whose leadership lacked force or aggressiveness (see Table 10-5 below). Pershing had a particular prejudice against officers who

⁸³ The information in this table came from the individual case reports for infantry officers in the grade of major through second lieutenant in NARA RG 120, Entry 541, Reclassified Officers National Army and National Guard Blois, Boxes 2286-2319.

⁸⁴ This conclusion is drawn from the statistics provided for the OTC and COTS graduates in Chapters 6 and 7. Although there are shortcomings with this comparison, it provides a starting position for further research.

were physically unfit or seemingly too old to accomplish their combat duties.⁸⁵ This belief permeated the AEF. The violence, confusion, noise, and the unrelenting pace of continuous operations that characterized modern war made greater physical and mental demands on leaders at all levels than had heretofore been the case. As Hunter Liggett, a man who Pershing first doubted had the stamina for command, noted,

There was a time in war when a company or platoon commander's age mattered little, within the limits of manhood and decrepitude, but such may comfort themselves now with the reflection that they are performing duties for which their seniors are no longer competent. Only youth and physical prime can meet the full impact of modern war.⁸⁶

The older officers not only experienced difficulty in maintaining the long-term energy and fitness required for frontline combat officers, they also tended to be more set in their ways.

One of the other factors that tended to cause the reclassification of National Guard officers at a disproportionate rate was the collision of their previous training and military experiences with those they faced in France. Their inability to understand and adapt to the technical and tactical realities of the Western Front caused a number of guard officers, especially majors, to be sent to Blois. Most of the National Guard majors, and a large number of guard captains, had ten or more years experience serving in the guard prior to World War I. Given the overall state and focus of their training prior to the war, many of these older men seemed to have had great difficulty in learning the “new tricks” of warfare. Major Edwin Markle, of the 32nd Division's 128th Infantry was a case in point. Markel, age 57, had spent four years as an enlisted man and thirty-four years as an officer in the National Guard. He readily admitted that the complexity and volume of “pamphlets and training orders” that had flooded his unit left him

⁸⁵ John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol. II (New York: Frederick Stokes Company, 1931), 115-116., James J. Cooke, *Pershing and His Generals* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 21-2, 107-8.

⁸⁶ Liggett, *A.E.F. Ten Years Ago in France*, 257.

befuddled and uncertain over how to proceed in the instruction of his unit.⁸⁷ The 29th Division's Captain Frank Burr offers another example. Although his commander admitted that Burr, a 34 year old officer with 17 years of service in the National Guard, was a "competent instructor in elementary military" subjects, he failed to understand "the wider field which is now required" of a company officer. He also noted that Burr was clearly out of his depths when he had to occupy a section of frontline trenches.⁸⁸

Lastly, the prejudicial attitude that some Regular Army officers held toward their National Guard subordinates must also be examined as a reason for the number of guardsmen ordered to Blois. A greater number of National Guard officers were singled out for failures of leadership relating to discipline and the ability to control their units than their National Army peers. While the anti-guard sentiments were never as overt as those stated by the Blois Personnel Adjutant, one hears in the relief records the criticism that the regulars frequently rained on the guardsmen. Major Albert Gray, a 20 year veteran of the Massachusetts National Guard, was accused of not only being slack in his own discipline for arguing with the orders of his superiors, but also of coddling his soldiers by "magnifying their troubles or fancied troubles."⁸⁹ In another example, the 36th Division's Captain John De Groot was removed from his company command for his inability to "enforce strict discipline and obedience" on the Texans that filled the ranks of his unit.⁹⁰ In an army where its Regular Army commander stated that the standard of discipline and obedience was to be that of West Point, his senior

⁸⁷ MAJ Edwin T. Markel, Blois Case Files, Box 2305. For another example, see the case of MAJ William T. Johnson of the 113th Infantry. Johnson, a 42 year old with 21 years of service in the Virginia National Guard, was relieved by his commander for being unable to grasp the intricacies of trench warfare and accomplish tasks such as writing and issuing coherent trench orders for his units. MAJ William T. Johnson, Blois Case Files, Box 2303.

⁸⁸ CPT C. Frank Burr, Blois Case Files, Box 2290. For another example, see the case of MAJ Walter Able, an 18 year guard veteran from the 26th Infantry's 103rd Infantry. He was found unable to understand the basic employment of his unit's Chauchats, V.B. grenades, and machine guns under his direction, or have the ability to plan a trench raid. MAJ Walter Abel, Blois Case Files, Box 2286.

⁸⁹ MAJ Albert Gray, Blois Case Files, Box 2299.

⁹⁰ CPT John L. De Groot, Blois Case Files, Box 2294.

subordinates were quick to stamp out any laxness in order and control or the over-familiarity between officers and soldiers that they believed characterized guard units.

In addition to age, when examining other factors that may have led National Guard and National Army officers to the reclassification depot, education was also one of the statistical factors that stands out. The available statistics on the men who attended the OTCs and COTSS in 1917 and 1918 show that, excluding the SATC students, the percentage of those with some college education averaged around 65 to 70 percent.⁹¹ On average, the number of officers with at least some degree of college education was at least ten to twenty percent lower for the reclassified officers than for the available statistics for National Army training officers (see Table 10-4). Even the OTC officers sent to Blois tended to have less education than the overall OTC average.

This is not to say that the better educated officers tended to be more competent leaders as the reclassified officers contained a number of graduates from Harvard, Yale, Princeton and other notable schools. In fact only approximately four percent of the officers studied were ordered to Blois primarily because of a lack of basic education or mentality. However, this factor many have been one of the areas that tipped the scales against the borderline officers. Furthermore, officers lacking the academic skills for quickly reading, reconciling, and digesting a lot of training and doctrinal material may have found themselves overwhelmed by the mass and density of army publications that deluged their units.

⁹¹ See Chapters 6 and 7.

Table 10-4: Education Levels of Reclassified Infantry Officers by Rank⁹²

Rank / Level of Education	Major (Number and %)	Captain	First Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant
College grad or some college *	43 (55.8%)	76 (45.7%)	82 (54.3%)	67 (55.3%)
Correspondence School	2 (2.5%)	2 (1.2%)	3 (1.9%)	1 (.8%)
High School grad or some High Sch.	13 (16.8%)	49 (29.5%)	28 (18.5%)	26 (21.4%)
Grammar or Common Sch.	6 (7.7%)	12 (7.2%)	18 (12%)	6 (4.9%)
Trade School**	6 (7.7%)	15 (9%)	7 (4.6%)	6 (4.9%)
Unknown	7 (9%)	12 (7.2%)	13 (8.6%)	15 (12.3%)

The percentage is based on the total number of officers in the rank sent for reclassification.

* Includes attendance at business or normal colleges.

** Includes business skills / technical training of a vocational nature.

The Blois boards shoehorned the officers appearing before them into four broad categories: “misfit,” “temperamental,” “inefficient,” or “physical.” These categories were subjective and rather ill-defined. In general, a “misfit” was an officer whose skills and abilities were ill-suited for the position, unit, or branch in which he served. McAdams added that these officers also included those who were in staff departments or branches “whose civilian vocational training did not fit them for such assignment.”⁹³ The boards classified over 68 percent of all officers into this category.⁹⁴

The officers in the next largest group were those that the boards classified as “temperamental.” These officers supposedly possessed personalities, quirks, or dispositions that made it difficult for them to work with others or otherwise hindered their effectiveness as leaders or soldiers. This group accounted for 16 percent of all reclassifications.⁹⁵

The “inefficient” category was the murkiest of an already nebulous system of

⁹² The information in this table came from the individual case reports for infantry officers in the grade of major through second lieutenant in NARA RG 120, Entry 541, Reclassified Officers National Army and National Guard Blois, Boxes 2286-2319.

⁹³ *The Reclassification System of the A.E.F.(Blois)*, 6.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Table 2.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

classification. It appears to have been a catch-all category for officers whose performance or general incompetence made them unfit to serve in their grade or position. They made up 10.5 percent of the Blois reclassifications.⁹⁶

Last, were those officers classified in the “physical” category. The boards considered these men as physically unfit for combat positions due to age, physical limitations, or their inability to take the mental strains of combat. This included a number of officers sent to Blois due to “shell shock.” This reclassification category should not be confused with the physical disability boards also held at Blois. The officers who received a “physical” designation from the reclassification board were those that field commanders (or the officers themselves) deemed were unable to accomplish their duties due to their psychological or bodily infirmities. Only 5.5 percent of all reclassifications were given due to physical inability.⁹⁷

As Blois’ four categories failed to adequately describe the detailed reasons for the officers being reclassified, I have further sorted the infantry officers into 14 more descriptive groupings. I freely admit that this system suffers from some of the same subjectivity that marred the original. In many cases, the officers were sent to Blois for a multitude of reasons that often cut across the categories listed in Table 10-5. In these cases, I attempted to place the officers in the category that seemed to be best indicative of their alleged failing or that which most directly led them to Blois. Despite the inherent shortcomings of this system, it does provide a much more nuanced view of the reasons that the officers were relieved of their positions than those given by the original boards.

The “reasons for classification” in Table 10-5 require some explanation. Officers who lacked force, energy, aggressiveness, initiative, or were too slow or hesitant for combat, reflect

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

characterizations used by the senior officers in their original reports. Thus, if the officer is classified as having lacked initiative, that was the pronouncement of his superior at the time. These characterizations also denoted those leaders who lacked the personal presence to inspire soldiers as well as those unable to act independently of direct orders. This category is closely linked to “lacks leadership.” “Lacks leadership” signifies those officers who demonstrated an inability to train, control, or direct their soldiers to accomplish their tasks or missions. The category “temperamental” retains the original meaning as used at Blois.

“Personal moral failings” were those officers whose conduct was at odds with the army’s expectations of gentility, morality, or standards of behavior. Reflecting the morays of the time, this category also includes those cases where intemperance led to the officer’s boarding. It should be pointed out that the reclassification system was not linked directly to the system of military justice. If, during the course of their investigation, the board members found that the officer in question violated any of the articles of war, it could merely recommend he be sent before a courts martial. While the AEF tried 1,093 officers from June 1917 to June 1919, most of those cases had nothing to do with the reclassification system.⁹⁸ Most of the officers in this category had a string of minor moral infractions that never quite added up to a level requiring courts martial. In some cases, once an officer was cleared by courts martial, his commander still sent him to Blois just to be rid of him.⁹⁹

The officers listed as “poor unit administrators” failed in the areas of battalion or company supply, personnel, and messing, or in the additional non-combat duties that were a part of regimental life. Officers classified under “poor combat performance” were those whose relief

⁹⁸ War Department, *Annual Report for 1919*, 676.

⁹⁹ For an example, of this see the Blois case file for CPT Thomas Sunny, Box 2315. Sunny’s commander charged him with negligence of duty, a tendency toward intemperance and “several misdemeanors he performed which were not sufficient to base formal charges for court martial.”

from command was directly tied to their, or their unit's, failure in action. Finally, "suspected disloyalty to the U.S.A." were those officers sent to Blois based on the accusation that by their deeds or words, they had exhibited pro-German or anti-American sympathies.

Table 10-5: Reasons for Reclassification of Infantry NG and NA Officers by Rank

Reason for Reclassification	Major (Number and %)	Captain	First Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant
Lacks, force, energy, initiative or aggressiveness	17 (22%)	34 (20.4%)	39 (25.8%)	33 (27.2%)
Lacks Leadership (ability to control, train, discipline troops)	12 (15.5%)	28 (16.8%)	27 (17.8%)	20 (16.5%)
Lacks tactical skills or professional knowledge	10 (13%)	11 (6.6%)	15 (10%)	13 (10.7%)
Too old or unfit for combat	14 (18%)	10 (6%)	16 (10.5%)	5 (4.1%)
Temperamental, argumentative or Insubordinate	5 (6.4%)	9 (5.4%)	7 (4.6%)	3 (2.4%)
Lacks basic education or mentality	3 (4%)	8 (4.8%)	8 (5.2%)	4 (3.3%)
Too nervous or lost nerve in combat	1 (1.2%)	14 (8.4%)	7 (4.6%)	3 (2.4%)
Personal moral failing	5 (6.4%)	8 (4.8%)	4 (2.6%)	10 (8.2%)
Poor unit administrator	1 (1.2%)	23 (13.8%)	15 (9.9%)	12 (9.9%)
Too slow or hesitant for combat	2 (2.5%)	4 (2.4%)	4 (2.6%)	1 (.8%)
Poor combat performance	7 (9%)	14 (8.4%)	7 (4.6%)	10 (8.2%)
Suspected disloyalty to USA	0	2 (1.2%)	1 (.6%)	0
Too immature for combat duty	0	1 (.6%)	0	3 (2.4%)
Unknown	0	0	1 (.6%)	4 (3.3%)

The reasons that the commanders gave for cashiering their Blois-bound officer offer a unique perspective into the major pitfalls that the AEF faced in combat leadership. It is significant that the largest percentage of officers, across all four ranks, were reclassified because they lacked force, initiative, and aggressiveness. These figures support the argument that the army as a whole had placed too much emphasis on strict obedience of orders and too little on training its junior officers on how to act when they were not directly under the supervision of their superior commanders. The case of Lieutenant Owen Nalle, a platoon leader with the 29th Division's 110th Machine Gun Battalion, illustrates this point. As the tactical employment of machine gun battalions required its platoons to be widely dispersed, Nalle's commander believed that he lacked the training, experience and leadership ability to handle a unit requiring such independence of action.¹⁰⁰ But the question is, where did the system fail? Did Nalle's inability to exercise initiative and independence result from the poor selection and training of officer candidates? Was it due to shortcomings in his unit's training in the United States or France? Did his failure result from the inability of his superiors to husband him along in his leadership development, or was Nalle just a dud?

Too often, the officers sent to Blois were casualties of senior officers who beat them for failing to use initiative while simultaneously giving them little space or latitude to develop a knack for independent action. Ten years after the war, Hunter Liggett remarked that "the failure of more than one unit," in the AEF "could be traced directly to the inability of the officer in command to delegate authority."¹⁰¹ He also noted the sad reality where senior commanders tried

¹⁰⁰ 2LT Owen Nalle, Blois Case Files, Box 2308. Nalle, a 22 year old OTC graduate, had been a student at the Virginia Military Institute for two years when he entered the service. The Blois Personnel Adjutant believed him to be "too young to handle men."

¹⁰¹ Liggett, *A.E.F Ten Years Ago in France.*, 261.

to “do a sergeant major’s, lieutenant’s, or an adjutant’s” job rather than focusing on their own.¹⁰² If Liggett’s observations are accurate, the AEF’s junior combat leaders frequently found themselves between the rock of the demands for initiative and the hard place of their superiors’ micromanagement.

Officers with the slightest degree of introspection quickly became cognizant of the limitations of their training, experience and abilities. These personal reservations, and the recognition that their failures may result in the death of their soldiers, certainly restrained some officers’ desire for aggressive action or a displays of initiative. The 30th Division’s Second Lieutenant Foster Marshall was a case in point. Marshall was a 23 year old college student in his third year at the University of South Carolina. He had enlisted in the National Guard in 1916 and attended the third OTC at Leon Springs, Texas in April 1918. Marshall served as an NCO in the 118th Infantry until his appointment came through in July 1918. Shortly after his first tour in the trenches as an officer, Marshall approached his regimental commander and requested that his commission be revoked and that he be allowed to serve the remainder of the war as a private. The reason he gave for the request was that he did not believe that he had the training or the skills to command men in combat.¹⁰³ In another case, Captain Everett Jewett, a company commander in the 106th Infantry, “was loath to order men under his command on any mission that might prove dangerous.” While Jewett’s commander believed that there was no question about the captain’s personal courage, and that he had previously been a solid leader and administrator, he would never make a good combat officer.¹⁰⁴ What degree of initiative could

¹⁰² Ibid., 259.

¹⁰³ 2LT Foster Marshall, Blois case files, Box 2305. The Blois board honored Marshall’s request and discharged him as an officer on 26 September 1918. True to his word he immediately reenlisted as a private.

¹⁰⁴ CPT Everett B. Jewett, Blois case files, Box 2302.

their superiors have expected from Marshall and Jewette? How many other AEF officers suffered from this same paralyzing doubt, and yet soldiered on, hoping for the best?

One of the greatest ironies of the reclassification system was that while officers were being sent to Blois because of their lack of aggressiveness and initiative, the fear that the depot inspired actually worked against encouraging these attributes within the AEF's junior officers. The fear of being "blooyed" motivated many commanders to keep their subordinates firmly "in line" by limiting any of their actions or activities that might reflect badly on their commands. This fear of removal, and their lack of confidence in the training and abilities of their junior leaders, encouraged the micromanagement by senior officers that Liggett described. As an officer in the Inspector General's office later noted, "Officers commenced to exhibit a degree of fear and apprehension lest some unavoidable event, something which they could not control, might operate to ruin their careers."¹⁰⁵ Some officers went as far as to prevent their more talented junior leaders from attending needed technical schools because of "the danger to themselves of being relieved of command for some error made by the less efficient officers."¹⁰⁶

In an effort to limit things "they could not control," senior officers resorted to even more proscriptive and detailed orders for their subordinates to follow to the letter. Lieutenant Colonel George Marshall, the operations officer for the 1st Division, spent much of March 1918 writing detailed plans for trench raids to be carried out by a handful of the division's platoons. To ensure the success of these small 20 man raids, the patrols were even accompanied by experienced staff officers and overseen by the division commander.¹⁰⁷ While senior AEF leaders

¹⁰⁵ Col. M.G. Spinks, "Major Problems of the Inspector General, AEF, and Their Solution," lecture given to the Army War College, 9 October 1933, USAMHI File AWC 401-A-5., 9.

¹⁰⁶ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 401.

¹⁰⁷ George C. Marshall, *Memories of My Service in the World War: 1917-1918* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), 70-73., George Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 1, *The Soldierly Spirit, December 1880-June 1939*, ed. by Larry Bland and Sharon Ritenour (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University

understandably wanted these early American operations to succeed, they set a pattern for centralized command and control that haunted and hindered the AEF's operations throughout the remainder of the war. With the specter of Blois never far from their minds, regimental and higher commanders seldom allowed their subordinates the latitude to make, and more importantly, to learn from their mistakes prior to going into combat.

The fact that failures in leadership was the second largest reason given by commanders for the relief of their subordinates points to another flaw in the AEF's combat leadership. As noted in previous chapters, the army itself realized that it had no method for training and developing leadership in its new officers. The "Old Army" system of having officers learn the leadership side of their trade during a long-term apprenticeship was unworkable in World War I. Major General David Shanks, who commanded the embarkation point at Hoboken, New Jersey, had warned in 1918 that "the weakest point in the training of our young officers is their lack of knowledge and experience in the handling and management of their men."¹⁰⁸ He sadly noted that the army still expected an officer to learn leadership "by intuition and observation...feeling his way along, profiting only by the mistakes he may make."¹⁰⁹

Despite the fact that the army had no coherent plan for teaching young officers how to be leaders, the records of Blois also show that it could be unforgiving to those who failed to acquire these skills on their own. Some failed because the job was simply too big for their training and abilities. When 250 men were placed under his command, Captain James Archer was found to

Press, 1981), 131-133., Forrest Pogue, *George Marshall: Education of a General 1880-1939* (New York: Viking, 1963), 163.

¹⁰⁸ Major General David C. Shanks, *Management of the American Soldier* (New York: Booklet published by Thomas F. Ryan, circa 1917-1918), 4. Shanks had the booklet published and given free to officers departing Camp Mills for France. It was an expansion on a series of articles entitled "Administration and the Management of Men" that he had published in *Infantry Journal* in late 1916 and early 1917. An original copy of the booklet is in the possession of the author.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

be unable to “handle a large company under the existing conditions.”¹¹⁰ In other instances, the officers seemed to be at a loss to know what to do as leaders. For example, there is no question that Captain Wilbur N. Farson, a company commander in the 135th Machine Gun Battalion, was a poor leader. He was relieved of command on 6 September 1918 because he failed to exercise even basic leadership while his unit was occupying trenches in a quiet sector. He never visited his platoon gun positions and “did not make platoon commander[s] properly instruct [their] men in their duties,” and as a result, “an inspection disclosed men in both platoons almost wholly ignorant of their duties.” Despite all these failings, his regimental commander still considered Farson to be a “hard, conscientious worker.”¹¹¹

Although personal limitations and character traits certainly played a large role in the removals of officers such as Farson and Archer, on the whole the army must also bear some of the blame for its failure to properly train its junior leaders. Given the command climate in the AEF, there were also few incentives for senior commanders to allow their officers to make mistakes. The commander of the 2nd Division’s 9th Infantry was one of the few commanders who gave his failing officers second chances to correct their deficiencies. He transferred Second Lieutenant Able W. King repeatedly from one of his battalions to another in an effort to give him a fresh start and the time to improve his leadership and efficiency. After King’s continued failure to improve, he was finally sent to Blois as a hopeless case.¹¹²

Those officers reclassified because they lacked the requisite tactical skills or professional knowledge were often ill-served by the army’s chaotic training system. Lieutenant Albert C. Pate was packed off to Blois after being in his battalion for less than a month and having been in

¹¹⁰ CPT James Archer, Blois case files, Box 2286., Also see MAJ Birdsall P. Briscoe, Box 2289., MAJ Walter A. Marden, Box 2305., CPT Charles H. Ingram, Box 2302. Ingram had served 21 years in the Regular Army before being commissioned in 1917.

¹¹¹ CPT Wilbur N. Farson, Blois case files, Box 2296.

¹¹² 2LT Able W. King, Blois case files, Box 2203.

command of his platoon for less than a week after he admitted in June 1918 that “he knew nothing about drill.” The board’s investigation showed that after arriving in France as a casual officer, his assignment as a town mayor and regimental billeting officer had hindered his tactical training. Pate noted that most of his training in France had consisted of “bayonet drill, close order drill and this new formation.” Despite these failings, Pate, a 14 year veteran of the Wisconsin National Guard, had still managed to be promoted to first lieutenant before running into trouble in his new unit.¹¹³

Closely tied to both leadership and initiative was the need for the officer to be a sound administrator. Part of the social contract that exists in all military organizations is the soldier’s expectations that his leaders will look out for his general welfare and provide the basics of life in return for his military service. Officers who failed to live up to their side of the bargain by failing to provide the basic food, clothing, shelter, medical, and personnel support to their men by being poor administrators were fatal to their unit’s cohesion and combat effectiveness. Officers who failed in these tasks were usually found at the company level, and comprised around ten percent of those sent to Blois. Good examples of the officers reclassified for their failures as administrators were Captains Mirandon and Copeland. The 113th Infantry’s Joseph E. Mirandon took so little interest in the “care and feeding of his men” that his regimental commander was forced to “devote his personal attention to the matter several times.”¹¹⁴

The commander of the 813th Pioneer Infantry noted that Captain Raymond E. Copeland had “tried to do everything himself” and as a consequence, “succeeded in doing almost nothing.” The colonel found that Copeland was hopelessly inept at accomplishing the routine administrative tasks of running a company and had reported two men as being AWOL for three

¹¹³ 1LT Albert C. Pate, Blois case files, Box 2310., Also see CPT Frank L. Irwin, Box 2302.

¹¹⁴ CPT Joseph E. Mirandon, Blois case files, Box 2307.

days when if fact they had been on a kitchen detail.¹¹⁵ Sadly, while Copeland and Mirandon represent the worst cases, their problems were tied to a larger issue within the AEF of junior leaders having only a sketchy grasp of logistics. Without a strong corps of NCOs to help in these matters, the AEF often found its tactical operations dogged by missteps in feeding, supplying, and providing medical care for its soldiers.

It is interesting that relatively few officers were sent to Blois for reasons that were directly related to their failures in combat. Part of this may have been that the Great War battlefield was so unforgiving, that those who made the greatest blunders never survived to be boarded. The fact that few of the officers sent to Blois had been wounded in action may also point to a reticence on the part of commanders to sully the reputations of men who had nobly sacrificed for the cause (and with luck, wouldn't return to their units). Another possibility was that the units had managed to weed out their least competent officers prior to combat. This is somewhat supported by examining when the divisions sent their infantry officers to Blois.

Nearly a third of the AEF divisions followed a pattern where the removal of their officers occurred in waves tied to key periods of their training and operations in France.¹¹⁶ Generally speaking, their first, and largest, wave of sending officers to Blois followed their periods of training with the Allies or after serving in a quiet sector, and a second smaller wave either occurred during or just after major combat operations (see Appendix A for a by-division graphic view of when officers were relieved). For example, the 29th Division sent a major and a lieutenant to Blois during their training with the French in July 1918, and relieved three majors, two captains, and eight lieutenants soon after leaving their first period in a quiet sector of the

¹¹⁵ CPT Raymond E. Copeland, Blois case files, Box 2293.

¹¹⁶ The divisions that fit this pattern were, the 29th, 30th, 33rd, 35th, 36th, 37th, 78th, and 81st. Since this data only includes National Guard and National Army officers, it is hard to draw conclusions for the Regular Army divisions, as they tended to contain higher numbers of regular or provisional officers.

Alsace front in August. The division commander removed an additional two majors, four captains, and four lieutenants from their units before the division entered its first real combat in the Meuse-Argonne on 8 October 1918. The division only sent one more major and two more infantry captains to Blois between the time it entered combat and the Armistice.¹¹⁷

A similar pattern was followed by the 37th Division. This division had the dubious distinction of sending the largest number of infantry officers for reclassification. During its time in France, the division commander, Major General Charles Farnsworth, ordered nine majors, 14 captains, and 31 lieutenants to Blois. As a point of comparison, the 82nd Division, which arrived in France over a month prior to, and also saw more combat than, the 37th sent only three officers to Blois during its deployment. This just shows that the reality in the AEF was that removal of an officer was guided more by the individual commander's idiosyncratic vision of "good and bad" officership more than any objective standard. Due to this fact, some divisions and regiments simply "ate their young" at a greater rate than others (see Appendix B for a by-division and infantry regiment break down of the number of officers sent to Blois). While the 37th Division was training behind the lines or occupying trenches in the Baccarat and Avocourt sector of the front in July, August, and September of 1918, it removed four majors, eight captains, and 20 lieutenants from its infantry and machine gun units. After the division was relieved from its bloody four days of operation in the Meuse-Argonne, but before it participated in the Ypres-Lys Offensive on 30 October, Farnsworth sent an additional six majors, four captains, and nine lieutenants to Blois.

While the remaining divisions followed no set pattern in their reliefs, they also sent a good percentage of their reclassified officers to Blois following their initial training and time in

¹¹⁷ This analysis is based on comparing the dates given for the officers' removals in their Blois case files with the times that the division was in training, occupying quiet sectors of the front, or engaged in combat operations as given in the *AEF Order of Battle*.

the trenches. This suggests that while much of the training with the Allies and in the quiet sectors may have been flawed, it at least allowed commanders to identify and remove some of their commissioned deadwood.

Those officers removed during or shortly after combat certainly highlight how many officers were not prepared for this crucible, but may also indicate the operation of the AEF's command climate of fear. Many, if not most, of the officers sent to Blois certainly deserved to be removed from combat units. Some however, certainly had their removals expedited by commanders wanting to place the blame for their unit's failures on others, or at least show that they were being proactive in correcting any of their unit's shortcomings. It is not surprising that the number of officers relieved from the 37th, 79th, and 92nd Divisions spiked after their lackluster performance in the Meuse-Argonne.

Some division or regimental commanders sought to show their toughness to their superiors while also dealing with "problem" officers in their ranks. The 36th Division appears to have had an overabundance of these cases. Shortly after the war, one of the division's officers recalled that soon after arriving in France, the division's staff was reorganized and a general resifting of the unit's senior officers occurred. He noted that the first act of the new staff was to go after those officers within the division that it deemed "unfit for service" with a vengeance. It made a great impression on him that in a matter of days, the commander of the 71st Infantry Brigade, Brigadier General Henry Hutchings, two colonels, two lieutenant colonels, five majors, and a number of captains, and lieutenants were relieved of duty and sent to the Officer Reclassification Center at Blois.¹¹⁸ As the division got settled in, more removals followed. One of the purged officers, Lieutenant Mancel Coghlan, claimed that he was sent to Blois as merely to fill his battalion's quota for reclassifications. He maintained that his division commander,

¹¹⁸ Ben Chastaine, *Story of the 36th* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1920), 47.

Major General William R. Smith, “made a statement he was going to have a board, and if it were necessary to have a man before the board, the officer would go back to the States whether or not he was inefficient.”¹¹⁹ Interestingly, five of the officers ordered to Blois from the 36th Division all claimed that they were eliminated because, being Oklahomans in regiments dominated by Texans, they were convenient scapegoats. All but one of the men came from the 142nd Infantry, a former Texas National Guard unit.¹²⁰

Officers from other divisions also claimed to have been scapegoats for the failing of superior officers who were later relieved themselves. The 140th Infantry’s Captain Henry E. Lewis noted that the colonel who sent him to Blois had since been relieved in the short time that it took him to report to the depot. While serving as a battalion commander in the 308th Infantry, Captain Charles H. Harrington refused to attack the Chateau du Diable on 6 September 1918 for he believed that the assault “could not be carried out because of the demoralized condition of the men” in his unit. Harrington noted that he opted to stop his scheduled attack when a promised artillery barrage failed to materialize. Two other officers in the battalion were also ordered to Blois, and the brigade commander was also subsequently demoted to regimental command. The board believed that Harrington had been wrongly blamed and removed for the incident and subsequently had him returned back to a combat assignment with the 77th Division.¹²¹

A study of some of the other reasons that officers were reclassified also tells us much about the army and the times it served in. The officers ordered to Blois for their personal moral failings also illustrate the code of conduct that the AEF expected of its officers and the taboos or

¹¹⁹ 2LT Mancel Coghlan, Blois case files, Box 2292.

¹²⁰ See the following case files, CPT John DeGroot, Box 2294., LTC Elta H. Jaune, Box 2302., 2LT Orgone K. Keller, Box 2303., CPT Harry A. Richards, Box 2312., 1LT Samuel J Foster, Box 2297. Their cases of regional prejudice were not unusual. MAJ Frank S. Hadley, Box 2300, claimed to have been eliminated because he was a South Dakotan in an Iowa unit and 2LT Barron W. Montefiore (Box 2307) stated his troubles resulted from being a Vermonter in an Ohio unit.

¹²¹ CPT Charles M. Harrington, Blois case files, Box 2299.

morays that it was unwilling to have transgressed. In some cases, the officer's transgressions attacked the social contract between the leaders and the led as well as the barrier between officers and their men. For example, Captain Augustine P. DeZavala was sacked for lending money to his soldiers while charging "usurious" interests rates.¹²² The board viewed Lieutenant Ewart G. Abner as unfit for holding a commission for buying 32 pounds of chewing tobacco from the Quartermaster Sales Commissary with the intent of reselling the item to his soldiers for profit.¹²³ The senior officers involved in these cases rightly saw the actions of these officers as detrimental to the discipline and morale of their units for allowing them to profit from, or prey upon, their soldiers.

Other moral failings dealt more with the morality-laced temptations of sex and demon rum. Despite the moral standards of Progressive Era America, the army was not quite as puritanical in its outlooks as the larger society. Drinking was fine, as long as it was not allowed to influence a soldier's performance or harm the image of the army or its officers. The officers who could not live within these limits quickly made themselves unwelcome in their units. Lieutenant Thomas Hazzard was sent to Blois after twice exhibiting conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman when he was involved in a drunken brawl with another officer after he "goosed" the lady that the other man was escorting.¹²⁴ Likewise, the commander of Lieutenant Joel Bonnie lost confidence in his ability to serve as an officer due to his "excessive use of intoxicating liquors."¹²⁵

The AEF's view of cases involving sexual misconduct generally reflected similar attitudes as with alcohol. The U. S. Army in the Great War instituted the first widespread efforts

¹²² CPT Augustine P. DeZavala, Blois case files, Box 2294. Fittingly, he was reassigned to the SOS Board of Contacts and Adjustments.

¹²³ 2LT Ewart G. Abner, Blois case files, Box 2286.

¹²⁴ 2LT Thomas Hazzard, Blois case files, Box 2300.

¹²⁵ 2LT Joel Bonnie, Blois Case Files, Box 2288., Also see, Major John J. Mahoney, Box 2305.

to provide sex education in the nation's history. While the army encouraged the YMCA representatives to pass out booklets pushing sexual abstinence, it also established a large system of prophylaxis stations across France.¹²⁶ However, despite these efforts, if a soldier still contracted VD, the AEF's judicial system showed him little compassion. As Lieutenant Earnest W. Chase found out, this was doubly true for officers. By contracting VD, Chase had basically "damaged government property" by rendering himself unable to carry out his duties. Upon ordering him to Blois, his commander moralistically announced that he hoped that Chase's replacement would be "an officer whose mind is on his work and whose determination is to render adequate service to his country without selfish concern for himself."¹²⁷

When it came to an officer needing to satisfy his sexual desires, the army tended to turn a blind eye unless the man's conduct interfered with his duty or brought the service's image and standing, or that of its officer corps, into question.¹²⁸ The case of Second Lieutenant Arthur Fortinberry was a case in point. Just before leaving the United States, Fortinberry met and married a woman who he had known only a short time. Shortly afterwards, some of the soldiers in his unit informed him that his new wife had been working as a prostitute when he met her. An investigation by Fortinberry's commander verified that the officer's wife was a woman of easy virtue, and the young officer became an object of ridicule within the unit. The board concluded that due to this fact, Fortinberry's "influence and usefulness as an officer is at an end."¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 80-1, 132-4.

¹²⁷ 2LT Earnest Chase, Blois Case files, Box 2292.

¹²⁸ While some commanders were shocked if their subordinates visited prostitutes, the Blois records suggest that the men in question were only relieved for these actions if they were carried out in the open, became a scandal among the soldiers, or were added to the officer's failings in other areas. For example, see 1LT Arthur Bettes, Blois case files, Box, 2288.

¹²⁹ This case was found in the "mystery list" in NARA RG 120, Entry 465, Reclassification System Combat Officers' Depot, Box 2254. In the file, along with the "proposed eliminations for inefficiency" sheet that detailed

The one sexual matter that the AEF had absolutely no tolerance for was instances of homosexuality. The Blois files contain at least two cases where officers were accused of homosexual conduct. Second Lieutenant John W. Royer, of the 29th Division's 111th Machine Gun Battalion, was sent before a general court martial in August 1918 for violations of the 96th Article of War. Royer was accused of making "advances and invitations of an unnatural and immoral nature" to three of his soldiers while on board the ship to France, and of committing sodomy upon one of his privates on numerous occasions in June and July. Although the court martial found him not guilty of the charges, his commander had no further use of his services and hurriedly sent him to Blois.¹³⁰

The board's treatment of officers sent for reclassification due to physical and mental breakdown, including those suffering from "shell shock" or combat fatigue, was much more sympathetic and liberal. Officers who reported to Blois for "nervousness" or "loss of nerves" were treated in a rather enlightened manner. Lieutenant Morris Oppenheim was a case in point. Oppenheim enlisted in the Pennsylvania National Guard in 1916 and had served on the Mexican border. His sterling record as an enlisted man, solid performance in combat during the Second Battle of the Marne in July 1918, and demonstrated skill with machine guns had led his previous commander to send him to the AEF's candidate school. When he was commissioned in September, the army assigned him as a machine gun platoon leader in the 30th Division. He seemed to have all of the best characteristics sought by the army in its junior leaders. In fact, for his hearing one of his squad leaders noted that "in the advance he had acted so bravely that I thought, well we have a Liut. that will stick to us no matter what happened." But despite this

Fortinberry's case, was a memorandum from the AEF Deputy Chief of Staff, LeRoy Eltinge, dated 2 January 1919, that discussed the case.

¹³⁰ 2LT John W. Royer, Blois case files, Box 2313. The other case involved MAJ L. H. English, a doctor assigned to the 60th Coast Artillery. The board gave English the option of resigning for the "good of the service" or face court martial. MAJ L. H. English, Blois case files, Box 2296.

bravery, he broke under the strain of shell fire during his unit's attack in the Argonne on 17 October 1918, straggled from the lines was apprehended in Paris seven days later. Although Oppenheim could easily have been charged with desertion or even misconduct in the face of the enemy, his commander and the board members appreciated the strain that combat had put on him and agreed that both he and the army would be best served by finding him a non-combat billet.¹³¹ The board's tendency towards leniency in these cases also supports historian Ben Shephard's contention in *A War of Nerves* that the U. S. Army held relatively progressive ideas of combat stress in World War I.¹³²

One last group of the officers sent to Blois is worth examining for what they tell us about American society during the Great War. At least three of the infantry officers were sent to the depot for their alleged pro-German or anti-American statements or actions. During the war the United States was wracked by a propaganda-driven wave of war hysteria. The xenophobic "100 percent Americanism," the belief in the existence of vast enemy spy rings, and a popular anti-German ground swell all contributed to a toxic domestic environment that encouraged the American people to support a massive curtailment of civil liberties and to willingly play the informant on any neighbor who seemed at odds with the spirit of the times.¹³³

The three cases of suspected disloyalty show that the domestic phobias and fantasies were also played out in the U. S. Army. For example, on the passage to France on the *S. S. Baltic*, Lieutenant Arthur T. Guston stated that German submarines would be "justifiable in

¹³¹ 2LT Morris Oppenheim, Blois case files, Box 2309. For other examples, see 1LT Clinton W. Perry, Box 2310., CPT Albert Friedlander, Box 2297. Friedlander, an OTC graduate with 17 years service in the Regular Army, was reclassified after he "in the excitement of battle broke down completely."

¹³² Shephard remains the best survey of how the treatment of combat fatigue evolved in the different armies between World War I and Vietnam. Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 46-59, 110-113, 128-132.

¹³³ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and America Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 45-93., Meirion and Susie Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War 1917-1918* (New York: Random House, 1997), 164-190.

sinking this ship.” His fellow officers believed that his comments failed to show “a proper spirit of loyalty” and promptly informed the AEF Intelligence Section of Guston’s pro-German sympathies.¹³⁴ In August 1918, Captain Louis J. Lampke was removed from a company command in the 80th Division because the AEF G2 had discovered that his brother had ties to German steamship companies and that the captain had been “very desirous of securing large scale maps displaying the trench system” and seeking to have certain men with “distinct German names” detailed to his unit.¹³⁵ In the last case, the 28th Division’s Captain Felix Campuzano, whose mother was German, was cashiered after admitting to his battalion commander that during a recent attack “it was very hard for him mentally to...fight against a people whom he had been taught to love and revere.”¹³⁶

These three officers were not the only American leaders to come under suspicion of disloyalty during the war. The files of the AEF Military Intelligence Section reveal that it investigated at least 65 other officers for various allegations or suspicions of holding pro-German sympathies or other opinions that were un-American. Reflecting the tenor of the times, most of these investigations started with a letter or anonymous tip that expressed some doubts about the officer’s heritage, attitudes or actions. Some of the innuendos merely stated that since the officer’s parents, or the officer himself, had been born in Germany, he needed to be checked.¹³⁷ A number of officers were charged with having held pro-German sympathies prior to the war, or had family members known for their German sympathies. The fact that Lieutenant Samuel Scherk’s father was a naturalized citizen of German birth, did not want to see

¹³⁴ 1LT Arthur T. Guston, Blois case files, Box 2298.

¹³⁵ CPT Louis J. Lampke, Blois case files, Box 2304. Also see Memorandum from Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, 80th Division to 2nd Section General Staff, G2, GHQ, subject: Captain Louis J. Lampke, 314th Machine Gun Battalion, dated 28 July 1918 in NARA RG 120, Entry 186, Box 6218, “Correspondence Relating to American Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.” (Hereafter “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies”)

¹³⁶ CPT Felix R. Campuzano, Blois case files, Box 2291.

¹³⁷ For example see Memorandum from The Ordnance Office to Army Adjutant General, subject: Pla[c]e of birth of Lieut. Anthony Thomas, dated 31 October 1918 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.”

his son drafted, and refused to buy Liberty Bonds, was enough to have the young officer placed under surveillance in May 1918.¹³⁸

In some cases merely having a German name and “looking” German was enough to cast suspicions on an officer. The 311th Infantry’s Captain Breen was investigated not only due to the fact he spoke German and had once lived in Germany, but also because “the attention of his fellow officers was called to Capt. Breen by reason of his appearance, carriage, and manners, which suggest those of a German officer.”¹³⁹ Sometimes, the accusations against the officer would have been laughable if the stakes involved were not so high. Lieutenant Walter Cohrs turned informant against a Chaplain Lohr for the latter’s observation that “the peoples in Germany kept their homes and grounds in cleaner condition than those in France.”¹⁴⁰ Ironically a number of American soldiers in the Army of Occupation frequently made the same observation.

One of the more interesting cases of officers being investigated for their German sympathies involved Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) Walter Krueger. In June 1918 the Military Intelligence Branch informed the chief of the AEF’s Intelligence Section, Colonel Dennis Nolan, that it had received a letter from an officer who was attending the AEF’s staff college with Krueger casting doubts upon the latter’s loyalty. The letter stated that Krueger was born in Germany, had two brothers and several other close relatives serving in the German Army, and expressed the opinion that “I hardly think it fair to our Army to have such a man,

¹³⁸ Memorandum from Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, AEF GHQ to Commanding Officer, Mechanical Repair Shop 302, subject: First Lieutenant Samuel G. Scherk, dated 9 May 1918 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.” For an example of an officer investigated due to pre-war pro-German sympathies, see Memorandum from Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, AEF GHQ to Commanding Officer, 408th Telegraph Battalion, subject: 1st. Lieut John H. Matter, dated 14 March 1918 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.”

¹³⁹ Memorandum from Chief, Military Intelligence Branch to Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, AEF GHQ, subject: Captain Breen, 311th Infantry, 87th Division, dated 21 June 1918 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.”

¹⁴⁰ “Statement of 1st Lieut. Walter M. Cohrs, Supply Co. 131st Infantry,” dated 5 March 1919 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.”

even if he is loyal.”¹⁴¹ Nolan reported the findings of his investigation to the AEF Chief of Staff six days later. He noted that while Krueger was “a very efficient and well trained officer,” and his recommendation was “no reflection upon the loyalty or patriotism of this officer,” he would render better service to the army by being reassigned to duty in the United States after his graduation from the staff college.¹⁴²

His return to the United States proved only a minor setback in Krueger’s career. He remained in the army after the war and continued to build a reputation as solid performer. In World War II, he rose to command the 6th Army and led it through some of the bitterest fighting in the Pacific Theater. In many ways, Krueger was fortunate in that his investigation did no lasting damage to him; many of the other officers sent to Blois or investigated for disloyalty were not so lucky. They, and their reputations, fell victim to a period of American history where unthinking passions and virulent propaganda created a perfect storm of slander and innuendo that was neatly wrapped and concealed in the patriotic folds of the American flag.

In the final analysis, the operations of the AEF’s reclassification centers illuminate much about its corps of junior officers and the command climate set by its senior leaders. Pershing was not one to suffer fools of any rank lightly. Given the frenetic pace under which the U. S. Army was cobbled together, and the numerous shortcuts that characterized the American mobilization, it was incumbent upon him to identify and weed out those leaders whose training and abilities made them unfit to perform their combat roles. Most of the officers sent to Blois probably deserved their fate, but they were merely the worst, or the most unlucky, of an overall

¹⁴¹ Memorandum from Chief, Military Intelligence Branch to Colonel Dennis E. Nolan, I.O. subject: Captain J. W. Krueger, dated 10 May 1918 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.”

¹⁴² Memorandum from D. E. Nolan to AEF Chief of Staff, subject: Return of Major Walter Krueger, N.A. to the United States, dated 16 May 1918 in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.” A subsequent letter from Nolan to LeRoy Eltinge dated 8 June 1918 noted that some of the problem with Krueger arose from some of the French instructors at the staff college being “being somewhat stirred up” by the major being in the course.

corps of junior leaders whose training and experience had not adequately prepared them for the tactical, technical, and leadership crucible into which they were thrown. However, in seeking perfection in the leadership of the AEF, Pershing had also encouraged the creation of a command climate based on the fear of being relieved of command. This climate permeated units from their very arrival under his command. One artillery officer reported that a steady winnowing of new officers began soon after his unit landed in France in June 1918. In a very short amount of time he witnessed, “two Lieutenants now paymasters. One Captain [now a] mess officer for life. One Major simply relieved from duty. Lots of others will see Front only via movies.” He noted that officers were being subjected to “efficiency exams daily” that were resulting in “heads falling.”¹⁴³ While the climate that this officer observed pushed commanders to accomplish their missions and demand results from their subordinates, it also encouraged them to micromanage their units, reduce the initiative of their subordinates, stifle the development of their junior leaders, and heedlessly push attacks after it was clear that such efforts were not worth the cost of the gain.

¹⁴³ Anonymous, *Wine, Women and War: A Diary of Disillusionment* (New York: J.H. Sears and Company, 1926), 108.

Chapter 11
Noncoms, Doughboys and the Sam Brownes:
The Relations between the Leader and the Led in the U. S. Army

On 20 August 1917, General Pershing issued General Order 23 establishing the standards for the wearing of uniforms in the AEF. The order stipulated that “when in uniform outside of their own quarters all officers will wear the Sam Browne belt except when actually serving in the trenches.”¹ In one fell swoop, Pershing established a physical manifestation of the differences between the officers and enlisted men in France, and also created a badge by which officers serving in the United States could be differentiated from those serving overseas. The belt was merely another brick in the regulatory and customary wall that created and maintained the gulf between the leader and the led in the U. S. Army. The fact that the term “Sam Brownes” became an enlisted man’s slang for the officers in the AEF shows that the common doughboys and their NCOs were well aware of the importance of symbolism and the realities that governed their interaction with the commissioned leaders appointed over them.

This chapter will examine the personal relations between the leaders and the led in the U. S. Army of the Great War. This discussion will cover not only the relationship between officers and enlisted men, but also, the interaction of the enlisted men and their NCOs, and the relations between junior officers and their field and flag grade superiors. While previous chapters have studied the Regular Army and its senior leaders’ expectation of their junior officers and NCOs, this chapter will look at the issue from the bottom up to uncover what the soldiers required of their leaders, and how well the bosses met the expectations of those they led. This examination will offer insight into the cohesiveness of the AEF’s small units as they approached the trials of combat.

¹ AEF General Order 23, 20 August 1917.

When examining the relationship between the leader and the led in the AEF, it is important to note that much of the evidence from memoirs, surveys, and other sources written after the war tends to suggest that officers, NCOs, and soldiers generally got along well. Between 1975 and 1983, the U. S. Army Military History Institute received approximately 5300 responses to a survey it sent to veterans of World War I.² Two of the questions on the survey related directly to the subject of leadership and asked the veteran to comment on the quality of leadership in the military as well as any examples they had of particularly good or bad leadership they had encountered. A random review of the surveys indicates that a majority of the veterans believed that their leadership was good. For example, a 28th Division infantryman, Corporal Alonzo LaVenture, stated that on the whole, “our officers and noncoms were capable of doing [their] duties,” but also noted, “once in a great time we would get a dud.”³ Another veteran, Sergeant Major Mervyn F. Burke maintained that “Leadership was uniformly good, particularly in the 1st Div, as the majority (at least in 1917) had had good training.”⁴

The doughboys’ generally positive view of their leaders was also shown in the reports of base censors soon after the war. In December 1918 and January 1919, the AEF censors office opened and read the homeward bound mail of troops in the 78th, 79th, 80th, and 81st Divisions to gauge the soldiers’ morale and concerns. In all of the units except the 81st Division, the soldiers were usually satisfied with the leaders and mostly concerned with their return to the United States. The examination of the 81st Division’s mail revealed that there was “a decided dissatisfaction over the officers at present assigned to them,” especially in the unit’s infantry

² Hermine Scholz, *Special Bibliography 20*, Vol. 1, *World War I Manuscripts: The World War I Survey* (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1986), iii-vi.

³ CPL Alonzo M. LaVenture, 111 IN, 28th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

⁴ SMG Mervyn F. Burke, Headquarters Troops, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

regiments.⁵ The revelation about the morale in the division led the AEF GHQ to launch a more thorough investigation of the doughboys' complaints. A further examination of 8,485 letters, and interviews of 150 of the 81st Division's soldiers and officers, discovered that "the feeling of the enlisted men toward their officers is very satisfactory and all are working in harmony."⁶

Other veterans were less complimentary of their leaders and made it clear that the space of 57 to 65 years after the war had not diminished their resentment over the treatment they had received in the service. Howard Supple, an infantryman in the 35th Division, praised senior Regular Army officers, but noted that "in the lower grades, with a few outstanding exceptions, [there was a] rather mediocre level of leadership."⁷ In a similar vein, the 1st Division's Private Elmer Stovall believed that the "ninety day wonders" that came to his unit "lacked the leadership ability needed to inspire the respect of the men, especially the older career men."⁸ Private Harry King, of the 2nd Division's 23rd Infantry, acridly observed that some of his officers were so bad that he wondered why they were leaders as opposed to members of a garbage detail.⁹

Even if the veterans who believed that their wartime leadership was good represented the majority view, the ones who presented a more jaundiced view of their leaders point to tensions in the relationship between the leaders and the led in the AEF. Many of the criticisms given by the later group were also reflected in wartime records and the memoirs and diaries published by soldiers after the war. These other sources show that tensions often sprang up in AEF units due to the failure of leaders to live up to their soldiers' expectations, the inequality of privileges

⁵ Memorandum from CPT B. A. Adams, Base Censor to G-2D, G.H. Am/ E. F., Subject: Examination of mail of 78th, 79th, 80th, and 81st Divisions, dated 28 January 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 129.

⁶ Report of MAJ Albert T. Rich, Assistant Inspector General to The Inspector General, 1st Army, Subject: Report of Investigation Concerning Morale in the 81st Division, dated 1 March 1919, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 129.

⁷ Howard Supple, 137th IN, 35th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

⁸ PFC Elmer Stovall, 1st Ammunition Train, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

⁹ PFC Henry P. King, 23rd IN, 2nd Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

between the ranks, the unequal treatment of regulars, guardsmen and reservists, and the belief that superior officers did not understand the physical realities and hardships endured by junior leaders and their soldiers. Part of these problems could also be traced to the fact that the hierarchical nature of military service and the reality that “rank hath its privileges” was at odds with the larger society’s political and social conceptions of egalitarianism. Even though the nation’s traditional concept of egalitarianism was under siege by the ongoing consolidation of wealth and power into the hands of fewer and fewer people, the notion of social equality remained strong within the ranks of the white native doughboys.

Upon enlistment or conscription, the soldier became a ward of the state. In return for the man’s military service, the army, as the state’s agent, became almost totally responsible for his health and welfare. This meant that the society and the soldier expected the army to fully provide for the individual’s food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. The company level and below was the crucible where this exchange transpired. A unit’s NCOs and junior officers were the leaders that the army held responsible for administering or providing the vital goods and services their soldiers needed.

From the company commander to the squad leaders, there existed a social contract between the leaders and the led. The soldiers expected their leaders to provide for their comfort, welfare, and health, and in return the men more or less willingly agreed to follow the orders of their leaders and place their lives and labors at the disposal of their commanders. As an institution, the army understood this social contract and had long made paternalism, rather than iron fisted coercion, its preferred method for regulating the relationship between officers, NCOs, and soldiers.

As has been shown in previous chapters, in its official publications and regulations, as well as the semi-official writings of Regular Army officers, the concept of paternalism was stressed to the officers commissioned during the war. It is clear that many, if not most, of these officers understood and internalized the paternalistic social contract that governed their relations with their soldiers. Captain Carroll Swan recalled that in his unit he treated his men like “a son or brother,” and viewed his company as a “family.” He maintained,

To my mind the company commander has the best job in the service today, and all the Captains I’ve talked to feel that way, and have that strongly developed feeling for their men. The Captain’s responsibility is a great one. Every one of those two hundred and fifty boys look to him for everything. Their morals, there disciplined, their training, their joys and sorrows, their health, their very life and death are in his hands.¹⁰

Less prosaically, Hervey Allen, an infantry officer in the 28th Division, simply declared,

The men expected to be fed, and they looked to the officers to feed them. To feed, clothe, equip, and pay the men- that is about all a line officer can do anyway,- pictures of sword flourishers in battle notwithstanding. Excuses make cold fare...¹¹

This belief that it was the duty of one’s superior to “take care” of you, also extended to the ranks of the army’s junior officers. In a letter home, Captain Earnest McKeignan informed his wife that his regiment had received a new colonel and that, “We are glad to have him as our commanding officer, as he will know how to take care of us.”¹²

One of the basics of combat leadership is the ability of junior officers and NCOs to competently “do routine things, routinely.” To the soldiers of the AEF, the “routine things” they expected of their leaders were the officers’ and NCOs’ abilities to live up to their end of the

¹⁰ Captain Carroll J. Swan, *My Company* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918), 32-3.

¹¹ Hervey Allen, *Towards the Flame* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1926), 7.

¹² Letter from Captain Earnest F. McKeignan to “Dearest Sweetheart,” dated 6 September 1917, in Captain Earnest F. McKeignan Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri.

social contract by consistently providing the basic goods and services the doughboys required.¹³ As George Marshall accurately noted, “War and training here is mud and rain and cold. The officer, platoon chief, who can keep his men’s socks and shoes greased and dry and his horses groomed and the picket line above the flood of water and mud- he is the greatest contributor to our success in this war.”¹⁴ The leaders who could “deliver the goods” not only tended to build cohesive units, but also were able to draw upon a reservoir of good will with their soldiers when combat situations demanded hardships and privations. For example, the 165th Infantry’s Sergeant Tom FitzSimmons was characterized by Private Albert Ettinger as “one of those natural leaders who men would follow anywhere.”¹⁵ Ettinger claimed that the men respected and followed the sergeant because “they knew that he would never let them down” and because “he always made certain that his men had dry quarters, plenty to eat, and that their boots and uniforms were in good condition.”¹⁶ When the 165th Infantry became mired in a brutal two day attack to take Landres-St George on 14 and 15 October 1918, FitzSimmon’s Stakes Mortar crews stuck by their guns and their sergeant despite frightful casualties.¹⁷

Unfortunately, not all of the AEF’s leaders were up to the challenge of “doing routine things, routinely.” On 30 June 1918, the II Corps inspector, Lieutenant Colonel K. T. Riggs, found that in the 30th Division, the officers were not adequately caring for the welfare of their subordinates.¹⁸ An inspection of the 27th Division in July 1918 revealed that junior infantry

¹³ The concept of “doing routine things, routinely,” resulted from conversations held between Dr. Dennis Showalter and the author while the former was a visiting professor at the Department of History, United States Military Academy in 1998.

¹⁴ George Marshall, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. I, *The Soldierly Spirit December 1880-June 1939*, edited by Larry I. Bland and Sharon Ritenour (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 127.

¹⁵ Albert Ettinger, *A Doughboy With the Fighting 69th* (Shippensburg: White Mane Publishing Company, 1992), 147.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 160-5.

¹⁸ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *The U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, *Training* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 221-2.

officers were not “sufficiently instructed and zealous in providing for the health and comfort of [their] men, especially in matters of rations, bathing, and clothing.”¹⁹

The inspections illustrated one of the great cracks in the army’s system of paternalistic leadership. There was a great difference between leaders understanding the importance of caring for their soldiers and actually knowing how to accomplish the “routine things” that ensured the delivery of the required goods and services. Very little of the training that officers received in the OTCs and COTSS was related to the arcane arts of feeding, supplying, and administering small units. The army’s attempts to correct these shortfalls by expanding instruction in these areas in the winter of 1918 were overtaken by the dire shortage of officers in the spring and summer of 1918. This problem was slightly less acute for National Guard officers. Whatever the flaws of the tactical training they received on the Mexican border in 1916, the deployment at least provided guard officers with much hands-on experience in feeding, sheltering, and supplying soldiers in both garrison and field environments.²⁰

On the whole, however, most junior officers still had to rely on hard-earned experience to learn how to live up to their end of the social contract. Unfortunately, the experiences of soldiers in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign revealed that far too many AEF leaders had difficulties in “doing the routine things” of supply and messing that their units needed in combat. As will be seen, the soldiers who believed that their leaders had not lived up to their end of the bargain, in turn, failed to provide the obedience and sacrifices demanded of their end of the social contract.

Building upon the groundbreaking work of Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, Darryl Henderson argues that sound leadership is one of the most important precursors to the creation of cohesive and successful combat units. In *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat*, Henderson

¹⁹ Ibid., 208-9.

²⁰ U.S. National Guard Bureau, *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States 1916* (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 145.

maintains that the most effective leaders were those officers and NCOs who were competent in the military skills required of their positions, and who also had the ability to create “personal, empathetic, and continuing face-to-face contact with all soldiers in the unit.”²¹ The junior officers and NCOs played the vital role of establishing the norms of behavior that governed the unit’s day-to-day operations. These unit norms set the performance expectations of all of its members, and this was a “yard stick” for measuring the performance of the individuals within the organization. Henderson argues that the key role of the leader is to create and use the norms within the small group to achieve the goals of the higher military organization.

Henderson maintains that the leader derives the authority and influence to establish the unit’s norms and achieve the goals of the higher military organization in his unit by drawing upon and wielding the four sources of power available to him. These sources are reward and coerce power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Reward and coercive power gives the leader the ability to build and direct group norms by giving the individual positive and negative incentives to conform to the unit’s expected behavior. Rewards and punishment target the individual’s self-esteem, sense of security, and acceptance within the framework of the unit as a whole, thus giving the leader a great source of authority while also reinforcing the unity and loyalty of the group. Legitimate power is derived from the culture, laws, and values of the larger society. It gives the leader the “official” and legal right to exercise the authority of their position. Referent power is the leader’s ability to control others based on the respect and affection that he receives from his soldiers. The referent leader has built within his unit an

²¹ William D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 108., Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer, 1948), 280-315. Henderson was particularly influenced by Shils and Janowitz’s emphasis on the importance of the small unit primary group in maintaining group cohesion, and in the importance of junior officers and NCOs in establishing “face to face” relations with their men and in regulating the group’s interaction with the rest of the army.

“intense identification” between himself and his soldiers based on his intimate knowledge of his subordinates, his proven ability to deal with difficult situations, and his willingness to share the hardships of his men. Expert power is given to the leader when he is “perceived as having superior knowledge and ability important to the soldier and his unit” that improves the group’s effectiveness or survival.²² Although Henderson argues that units led by officers using referent power tended to be the most cohesive, all of the sources of influence were critical to linking the goals of the unit to those of the larger organization. Henderson’s thesis and leadership model was borne out in the experiences of the AEF.

Time and time again, American soldiers praised those officers and NCOs who truly lived the paternalistic ethos and demonstrated by their actions a concern for their men that transcended that required by regulation and custom. Those officers able to draw upon this “referent power” through their personality and actions established deep bonds of mutual respect and affection that provided a tough psychological armor for their units and its individual members that aided them in coping with the strains of campaigning. This “referent power” required leaders to sacrifice some of the distance and privileges of rank to build the face-to-face relationships. Charles Minder noted that during a particularly arduous march, “The Captain did other wonderful things for the fellows. I saw him give a couple of fellows some water from his own canteen. He walked his horse instead of riding him, and that is something that few officers would do.” He also noted that the Captain even carried a soldier’s pack for him when the man seemed to be overtaken by heat and fatigue.²³ In another example, Private Ray Johnson remembered that after the 145th Infantry’s machine gun company was marched to a desolate village behind the lines after being pulled from the Argonne drive, the company commander discovered that his higher

²² Ibid., 112-115.

²³ Charles Minder, *This Man’s War* (New York: Pevensey Press, 1931), 108.

headquarters had failed to coordinate for billeting and other accommodations. The captain and his remaining lieutenant knew that they had “a bunch of men on their hands who were foot-sore, underfed, in low spirits, and on the verge of serious illness” and acted accordingly. After finding shelter for their soldiers, the two officers “took turn standing guard...so that every man could snatch some sleep. Their self-imposed duty lasted until the next morning.”²⁴

Regrettably, there was also a downside to leadership based upon referent power. The death of a respected and beloved leader, an event that happened quite frequently during the war, could cause a great slump in unit morale and effectiveness and create a great obstacle for the officer or NCO who replaced the lost man. For example, Private L. V. Jacks recalled that a “deep gloom settled down” upon his battalion during the Meuse-Argonne fighting after the death of their battalion commander, Major Thompson. The private later wrote that the major, “was the only officer who was universally liked and admired by the enlisted men, and his demise produced an instant and serious depression.”²⁵

Soldiers also expected their leaders to share the privations, hardships, and dangers that they lived with on a daily basis, and those officers and NCOs that did so, strengthened their referent power within their units. Corporal Chester Baker was please to note that during his unit’s first stint to the trenches “I noticed that the dugout assigned to Lieutenant Thompson remained empty. During the entire engagement that was to come, I never saw him take advantage of its greater safety; he stayed in the trenches with his men.”²⁶ The 26th Division’s Lieutenant Walter O’Donohue also won the affections of his men by not standing on rank and

²⁴ Ray N. Johnson, *Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken* (Cleveland: O. S. Hubbell Printing Company, 1919), 114-5.

²⁵ L. V. Jacks, *Service Record by an Artilleryman* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1928), 211-212.

²⁶ Chester Baker, *Doughboy’s Diary* (Shippensburg, Pa: Burd Street Press, 1998), 59. For another example see, Evan A. Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun: The Official History of the 140th Infantry* (Lawrence: The World Company, 1920), 83. One of the regiment’s officers was so popular that one soldier recalled, “When Murray Davis got his, the third battalion lost heart.

always sharing the discomforts and hazards of the long marches and battles with his men. This affection and loyalty later paid the officer a great dividend when the dugout he was in collapsed during a heavy enemy bombardment. One of his soldiers saved O'Donohue's life by braving the German shelling to dig the officer out of the collapsed shelter.²⁷

This expectation of shared hardship was also applied by junior officers to their superiors. For example, after a cold and wet bivouac during an forced march to the front lines, Captain B. A. Colonna stated that the thing that most buoyed his and his company's morale was when they woke up to find their battalion commander "sitting up with his back against a tree, wrapped in a trench coat- no better off than we were."²⁸ During the St. Mihiel Offensive, Colonna was also surprised and pleased to see "someone higher up than myself dodging shells" when his regimental commander and a major from the division staff visited his troops in the reserve trenches. Of his commander, he noted, "it might have been wrong in theory for him to be up there, but I surely appreciated it."²⁹ These incidents built morale and cohesion by physically proving to the soldiers that their leaders had a concrete understanding of the conditions under which they labored and had a solid conception of the abilities and limitations of their men. The presence of leaders during times of stress and danger also linked them to their soldiers through common experiences and demonstrated to the men that their leaders could completely perform their duties under the worst of conditions.

Conversely, those leaders who failed to share the privations of their soldiers or to build the close face-to-face relationships touted by Henderson, often faced a rocky road when they tried to command their units. One of Thomas Barber's fellow pioneer infantry officers

²⁷ Stanley J. Herzog, *Helmets* (Stamford, CT.: The Bell Press, 1930), 57-70, 220-224.

²⁸ B. A. Colonna, ed. *The History of Company B, 311th Infantry in the World War* (Freehold, NJ: Transcript Printing House, 1922), 44.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

undermined the discipline of his company by never allowing his men to stop their road repair work when they came under enemy shellfire, while the officers always took shelter themselves.³⁰ The 42nd Division's Charles MacArthur was incensed when his officers ordered him and his comrades to work through the night while they went off to sleep in a comfortable dugout.³¹

When faced with their leaders' failure to abide by the unspoken code of shared hardship, the soldiers often refused to be bound by the leaders' orders, worked to undermine their authority, or rejoiced in (and sometimes abetted) the leaders' downfall. In the case of the pioneer infantry company mentioned above, the soldiers in the unit simply waited for their officers to disappear into their bomb shelters before they stopped working and sought cover themselves.³² In another instance, in February 1918 a company commander in the 26th Division became angry that some of his men had fallen out of a cold and dreary march and were riding in the unit's wagons. The captain, who was riding a horse, ordered his first sergeant to use a pistol if necessary to keep the men out of the wagons and moving forward. When the top sergeant tried to tell the officer that the men in the wagons were too sick and weary to march, the officer abruptly cut him off and informed the NCO that he would hold him personally responsible for seeing that his orders were carried out. The first sergeant believed that the captain was acting irrationally and, after the officer passed, told the sick men to stay in the wagons. When the company reached its destination, the captain found that the first sergeant and most of the company's NCOs had left the formation and headed for the town of Toul in protest of what they saw as the officer's high-handed actions.³³ Similarly, Sergeant Elmer Straub noted that some men grew so tired of the attitudes and actions of their officers that they staged mini-mutinies

³⁰ Thomas H. Barber, *Along the Road* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), 102-3.

³¹ Charles MacArthur, *War Bugs* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929), 216.

³² Barber, 103.

³³ Herzog, 23-29.

against their leaders. After repeatedly being berated by his horse-mounted lieutenant for moving too slowly on a march, one soldier in Straub's unit threw his equipment into the mud, refused to move forward, and informed the imperious officer that "he wasn't a pack horse."³⁴

The AEF's enlisted men enjoyed seeing a hated officer or NCO brought low for their transgressions against the social contract or the code of shared hardships. William Clarke recalled that his company commander "looked and acted the aristocrat," and "was aloof and not easily approachable." He was taken aback by the officer's unwillingness to either mix with his soldiers or to get his hands dirty while training in the United States. The captain's actions led Clarke to conclude, "How or why he was ever cast in the role of a commanding officer of a company of combat troops, I don't know." The officer got his comeuppance during his unit's passage to France. When word reached the captain of a possible submarine attack on the troopship, the officer rushed on deck in a panic wearing an inflatable lifesaving suit that was not available for the soldiers. After being met with "a great woop and holler of scorn and derision" by his unforgiving troops for his ridiculous and frightened appearance, Clarke noted that the officer's "usefulness to his men had ended on the deck" of the ship, and from then on he remained a "Captain in name only."³⁵ All of these incidents illustrate that despite Pershing's efforts to instill the unquestioning discipline of West Point into the AEF, at the lowest levels, the concepts of obedience and discipline were governed by ongoing negotiations between the leader and the led based on concepts of reciprocity and expectations of shared hardships.

Although army regulations and military and civil law gave all officers and NCOs the ability to use what Darryl Henderson termed "legitimate" and "reward and cohesive" powers, in

³⁴ Elmer F. Straub, *A Sergeant's Diary*, Vol. X, *Indiana Historical Collections* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1923), 178.

³⁵ William F. Clarke, *Over There with O'Ryan's Roughnecks* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 31.

the AEF, these were both rather thin and brittle reeds on which its leaders could base their authority. On paper, military law, especially for offenses conducted in wartime, was very draconian and allowed for the use of imprisonment with hard labor or the death penalty for a vast array of offenses. Yet, while the raw number of general and summary courts martial increased between 1915 and 1918, this increase was not proportional to the massive expansion of the army. The actual percentage of soldiers being brought before the courts actually plummeted during the war. In 1916, for example, over 4.7 percent of the army's enlisted men were tried by a general court martial. In 1918, the percentage of soldiers tried by general military courts dropped to .87 percent.³⁶ Also, during the war, the AEF only executed ten soldiers. All of the men executed were for the rape or murder of civilians rather than offenses directly related to military service such as desertion or misconduct in the face of the enemy.³⁷

There were a number of factors that tended to limit the coercive power that leaders could wield over their soldiers. As the pace of events grew more rapid in 1918, the AEF GHQ tried to limit the numbers of military trials and avoid removing soldiers from the ranks for lengthy trials or discharges. AEF General Order 56, issued on 13 April 1918, curbed sentences that removed soldiers from France due to dishonorable discharges or imprisonment at the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth. It also urged commanders to use a court martial only as a last resort.³⁸ The following month, the AEF GHQ issued General Order 78, allowing division commanders to establish "provisional disciplinary detachments" within their battalions as a

³⁶ War Department, *Annual Report for 1919*, Vol. 1, 692.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 674-5.

³⁸ AEF General Order 56, 13 April 1918. This order seems to have had its intended effect. Major Charles DuPuy, recorded that most officers simply used whatever punishment they could use locally rather than resort military courts. Charles M. DuPuy, *A Machine Gunner's Notebook* (Pittsburgh: Reed & Witting, 1920), 131-2.

means for maintaining order without losing time and combat power to trials or other punishments.³⁹

The guidance from higher headquarters was clear; Pershing and his senior staff did not want time and effort wasted on a lot of military trials. However, by doing so, the GHQ also severely restricted the punishments its subordinate commanders could use to discipline reprobates or set examples that might warn-off potential misconduct. Although the sentences of summary courts and non-judicial commanders' boards could be onerous to the soldiers, few seemed to be worried by the threat of these punishments. The "easy come-easy go" nature of promoting NCOs, and the lack of privileges associated with those ranks, meant that the threat of demotion was also hollow. Even worse, some officers found that they had to quickly reappoint busted NCOs because no other men in the unit were qualified to hold the positions.⁴⁰

Another factor limiting the effectiveness of punitive measures as a tool to reinforce authority was the general lack of knowledge of military law by many of the new officers. When the army moved to the COTS system for commissioning officers, the War Department specified that the candidates would receive 13 hours of instruction on military law and the *Manual for Courts Martial*.⁴¹ Although this move doubled the amount of instruction given on these subjects in the previous OTCs, when the COTS classes were condensed to make up for officer shortages, military law was one of the classes that was curtailed. Thus, new platoon, company, and

³⁹ AEF General Order 78, 25 May 1918. The author has found no evidence that such detachments were ever formed.

⁴⁰ For an example, see Wendell Westover, *Suicide Battalions* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), 182-7.

⁴¹ "Memorandum of Information, from Adjutant General's Office, Subject: Central Officers' Training Schools for Candidates for Commission in the Infantry, Field Artillery, and Machine Gun Units," undated, but staffed the War Plans Division on 16 June 1918 and Draft Special Regulations titled, "Central Officers' Training Schools for Candidates for Commission in the Infantry, Field Artillery, and Machine Gun Units" in NARA RG 165 Army General Staff, War College Historical Branch, G-5 Schools, 7-52.8- 52.9, Box 201, Entry 310, "Training Schools for Officers."

battalion commanders often had only a most basic and sketchy concept of the coercive powers at their disposal.

The new officers' lack of knowledge of military law also led to several occasions where the leaders exceeded the punishments allowed by army regulations and the *Manual for Courts Martial*. Captain Edward Tanner, an infantry company commander in the 90th Division, was sent before a reclassification board at Blois in August 1918 for ordering his NCOs to beat or whip five men he believed were drunk, ill-disciplined, and insubordinate. At his hearing, the captain maintained that he was not "going to hand these cases over to a summary court" and had "wanted [the NCOs] to tend to these things themselves" to build a spirit of responsibility in his subordinate leaders.⁴² It was clear that Tanner did not believe that his actions were either wrong or out of his purview as a company commander.

In another case where leaders exceeded their authority, the ending was much more tragic. After Private Julius VanCamp was found guilty of insubordination and sentenced to extra duty by his company commander, he refused to work or obey the orders of the sentry placed over him. When informed of VanCamp's refusal, the company commander and first sergeant assigned a corporal to watch over him and "make the man work." The corporal interpreted his orders literally, and when VanCamp again refused to obey, he began prodding him with a bayonet. When VanCamp turned on the corporal in anger, the startled NCO mortally wounded him with a stab to the groin. The regimental commander ultimately preferred charges against the corporal and NCO and ordered an investigation of the company commander.⁴³ In both the Tanner and the VanCamp cases, the junior leaders believed that they were well within their rights to impose

⁴² CPT Edward L. Tanner, Blois Case Files, Box 2315.

⁴³ Memorandum from Intelligence Officer, 38th Division, Camp Shelby, Mississippi to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, Subject: Report, dated 4 March 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 13, Camp Shelby file.

physical punishments on soldier-reprobates for the good order and discipline of their units, and in both cases, the leaders' superiors had to step in to correct their grave mistakes. In an army where senior leaders were fearful of relief, and subordinate leaders were poorly instructed on the powers and limitations of military law, it was natural for senior officers to restrain their subordinates' punishments and use of military courts.

The soldiers were quick to pick up on the limits of their superior's coercive power and sometimes were more than willing to call the leader's bluff. Corporal Paul Maxwell was disgusted when his popular company commander was promoted and replaced by "a martinet with a sadistic complex." He recalled that from the new officer's first appearance, the officer undermined the morale of the unit. Maxwell later wrote,

Introducing himself to the Battery he denounced us as a bunch of spoiled sissys and said he hated our guts but he would convert us into a tough fighting outfit or kill us in the attempt...His favorite maneuver was Summary Court Martial, he managed at least one each week. To some unfortunate individual who made a trivial mistake that meant three days in the Guard House with suspension of pay. My mistake was, at inspection of quarters he spied a small piece of lint between my bunk and Corporal Jones'. He held us both responsible, and gave us the choice of Company Punishment or Courts Martial. Jones went down first and chose Company Punishment. When I got the same proposition I chose Courts Martial. The Captain jumped to his feet, shook his fist in my face and called me a damned lousy soldier, who would voluntarily besmirch his record with a Courts Martial.⁴⁴

As the general court martial that Maxwell accepted would have besmirched the record of the company and brought the commander's actions under the scrutiny of his superiors, the flustered captain angrily dismissed the charges against Maxwell.

The longer that soldiers served, especially among combat veterans, the less willing they became to accept leadership based on what Henderson termed coercive or legitimate power. The 3rd Division's Private John Barkley noted that it was tough to be a replacement officer assigned

⁴⁴ Unpublished manuscript in CPL Paul E. Maxwell, Camp Lee, 314th Field Artillery and Veterinary Training School, File WWI-6694, MHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. 25-6.

to a veteran unit. The officers themselves sometime exacerbated this problem by their words and actions. He recalled that during the Argonne drive,

The new officers began making themselves unpopular as soon as they arrived. They were replacements. Not a front-line officer in the lot. The men were all too desperate to be bothered with forms and they weren't very respectful.⁴⁵

After one of the new arrivals yelled, "What's a matter with this goddam hard-boiled outfit?" and accused the men of acting like babies, the veterans informed him in no uncertain terms that they weren't "in the mood for parade ground stuff." Although the officer threatened to have the men arrested, the soldiers' hoots of derision drove the man to realize the weakness of his hand and beat a hasty retreat. The term "I'll put you under arrest" became a running joke among the veterans.⁴⁶

Charles MacArthur recounted a similar event in his unit. Soon after being pulled from the Meuse-Argonne attack for some rest and refitting, a new and unpopular officer demanded that the men make an extra effort to clean up their surroundings in a badly damaged French village. MacArthur jokingly recalled,

All this was woman's work, and we told the lieutenant so. We told him to go away and not do that any more. At first we were very polite, and it wasn't until Lieutenant Wegner got cross and bad-tempered that we were the least bit severe with him. Lieutenants are like children that way. They begin by talking back. The next thing you know they are out of hand and have to be sent to military school.⁴⁷

Likewise, during the St. Mihiel Offensive, Leslie Langille and his comrades grew so tired that they preferred to be left alone to sleep through German barrages rather than being roused out of their slumber by their officers and forced to take shelter. When the men refused to move, Langille recalled, "the officers threatened to court-martial the whole outfit, but a court-martial

⁴⁵ John L. Barkley, *No Hard Feelings!* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1930), 232.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 232-3.

⁴⁷ MacArthur, 119.

would be a welcome relief to the mud and rain and shells, so nobody pays any attention to their threats and goes on sleeping.” The men’s insubordinate attitudes were not helped by the fact that their company first sergeant had taken up residence in a large dugout and even insisted that his meals be brought to him there.⁴⁸

The experiences of Maxwell, Barkley, MacArthur, and Langille all point to the fact that the relationship between the leader and the led in the U. S. Army was far from being a one way street. Leadership was based on a system of ongoing negotiations between officers, NCOs, and their soldiers where the character, ability, and willingness of the leader to share his men’s hardship counted much more than army regulations or the president’s signature on a commission.

The ability of AEF junior leaders to base their authority on “expert power” was also limited. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the degree of training and experience between junior leaders and their soldiers was rather slim. Shortly after the war, Raymond B. Fosdick, the director of the Commission on Training Camp Activities and the War Department’s special consultant on troop morale, conducted an inspection tour of the AEF to gage the overall morale of the army in France. Fosdick reported to the Secretary of War that,

In our army both officers and men are drawn from a common economic and social reservoir. There are plenty of men of superior education and high mental and moral qualities in the ranks of the A.E.F. Conversely, there are plenty of commissioned and non-commissioned officers who have none of these attributes. I do not believe that an army was ever recruited in which the common soldier possessed such a high average and social experience as in the American Army of 1917 and 1919. By the same reasoning it must be admitted that in no army have the officers been superior to their men by so small a margin.⁴⁹

Fosdick’s rather stinging indictment of leadership was also shared by some of the AEF’s own officers. Major Robert G. Calder wrote, "In this war our men in the ranks have been superior to

⁴⁸ Leslie Langille, *Men of the Rainbow* (Hamond, In.: W. B. Coakley Company, 1933), 134-5.

⁴⁹ Report of Raymond B. Fosdick to Secretary of War Newton Baker, Subject: Report to the Secretary of War on the Relation of Officers and Men in the A.E.F., dated 17 April 1919, in NARA RG 165, Entry 376, Box 18.

our officers, that is as soldiers they were better than the officers were as leaders."⁵⁰ An artillery lieutenant noted, "The United States Army is the best that I have had the chance to observe, but this is because of the high grade of its enlisted personnel, and not so much because of its officers."⁵¹ The AEF's soldiers were clearly "thinking bayonets" that quickly came to realize the personal cost of their officers' lack of tactical knowledge or skill. As one captain confessed, "It is useless to try to fool the American enlisted man: he soon loses respect for his officers when he observes their lack of experience, gained through the school of hard knocks."⁵²

The enlisted men also expected that their leaders display coolness and courage in combat. This expectation was grounded in long-standing American concepts of manliness as well the more recent ideas of war and "the strenuous life" being the ultimate test of character and moral fiber. If an officer or NCO proved himself brave and unflappable under fire, the American soldiers seemed willing to overlook many of the man's minor shortcomings. One 27th Division machine gunner praised his company officers because, "they were with the men at times, and their quick decisions, involving as they did all our lives, were such as to steady the men and give them confidence in the success of the operations."⁵³ Albert Ettinger's faith in Sergeant Tom FitzSimmons was based on the fact that the NCO was also cool under fire, led men in combat

⁵⁰ General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No.98, GHQ AEF 09 April 1919*, 9-10. (Here after cited as the Lewis Board) in USAMHI Library , Annex S., 9.

⁵¹ "Replies to Officers' Questionnaires" from Morale Branch of the War College and War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, dated 5 November 1919, in NARA, RG165, NM84, Entry 378, Box 6 (here after cited as Morale Branch Officers' Survey), 31. There were a number of responses from officers in this survey that candidly admitted their own shortcomings in leadership and professional knowledge or made unfavorable comparisons between themselves and their soldiers. See pages 30-3 of the report.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵³ Leslie Baker, *The Company History: The Story of Company B, 106th Machine Gun Battalion* (New York: Privately printed, 1920), 58, 60, 63. The men of Company E, 107th Infantry similarly expressed full confidence in their company commander and admired the fact that he exhibited "daring and fearlessness." War Veteran's Association, *History of Company "E," 107th Infantry* (New York: Privately Published, 1920), 101. An infantryman in the 89th Division stated that he greatly respected his company commander because he was "calm under fire and quieted the troops by his example." PFC Hugh L. Hook, 353rd IN, 89th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

from the front, and “was courageous, intelligent, considerate of his men, and lucky- an unbeatable combination.”⁵⁴

Leaders who failed the test of courage quickly lost the respect and obedience of their soldiers and became the objects of scorn and ridicule. After all his officers had been wounded and evacuated in the Argonne fight, Horace Baker’s battalion commander sent his company a new lieutenant to take command. Unfortunately, Baker recalled, “this worthy stayed in the dugout the two days he was with us...and I never saw him.”⁵⁵ By hiding out in the bunker, the hapless officer lost all moral suasion with the soldiers. The men simply acted as if he did not exist and went to their remaining NCOs for orders and guidance. A soldier in the 42nd Division recalled that two of the soldiers in his company got back at an unpopular and somewhat nervous lieutenant during the Meuse-Argonne Campaign by firing their .45 pistols over the dugout where the officer had hidden himself and yelling loudly in “bum German” to increase the man’s “distress.”⁵⁶

Of course there was a downside to the soldiers’ expectations of steadfast bravery in their leaders. Keeping up the outward appearance of daring and courageousness was a great psychological burden to many officers. During his first patrol into no man’s land, Lieutenant W. A. Sirmon admitted that he was “badly frightened.” He later wrote, “I was shaking badly, but swearing to myself I would not run.”⁵⁷ Others were pushed to recklessly expose themselves to danger in order to “prove” their merit to their soldiers and peers. As his company was entering its first stint in the trenches, a fellow officer noted that Lieutenant Wendell Westover did not look well. Although the regiment’s doctor had diagnosed the officer as unfit for duty due to a

⁵⁴ Eittinger, 147.

⁵⁵ Horace Baker, *Argonne Days in World War I* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 73, 78.

⁵⁶ MacArthur, 203-4.

⁵⁷ W.A. Sirmon, *That's War* (Atlanta: The Linmon Company, 1929), 166.

high fever and possible tonsillitis, the officer refused to be hospitalized. Westover replied that his refusal was based on the fact that “If I fail to go in [to the trenches] the first night the platoon will think I’m yellow.”⁵⁸ The desire for officers to “prove” themselves in combat led Captain John Stringfellow’s regimental commander to issue an exasperated directive to the unit’s officers stating,

I have had a number of requests from you for permission to lead squads in raids upon the enemy’s trench. It is properly the duty of a corporal. If you still desire to do this, I will remove your shoulder bars and place corporal’s chevrons upon your sleeves and put your bars on the corporal.⁵⁹

These expectations of bravery and the need to “prove” oneself, later contributed to the AEF’s high officer losses in combat.

One of the other expectations that AEF soldiers had of their officers was their ability to balance the needs of the mission with the needs of their men. The army and its senior commanders desired that their subordinates achieve their missions and contribute to the success of the overall operation. The individual soldier’s desire, however, is to survive the mission while achieving the greatest possible physical comfort in terms of safety, food, clothing, and shelter. While the former’s view is shaped by calculations of strategy and tactics, the latter’s view is governed by Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs.” The junior leader was the one who is caught between these two, often diametrically opposed, realities and forced to reconcile the needs of the individual with the demands of the larger organization. This balancing act requires the leader to understand the ever changing limitations on military actions imposed by the physical and mental needs of their soldiers and also his unit’s role within the missions of the higher organization.

⁵⁸ Westover, 60.

⁵⁹ Captain John S. Stringfellow, *Hell! No!* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1936), 143-4.

Henderson maintains that in cohesive and effective units, the small unit leaders establish the norms of behavior that regulate the group's actions and relations with higher authority. The leaders' personal relations with his soldiers furthers the accomplishment of the mission by giving them a means of collectively coping with fear and privation, while also providing the individual soldier a sense that he has some control over his destiny.⁶⁰

A number of the AEF's junior leaders seemed to have understood this need to balance "mission and men." Some also recognized the fact that this effort to establish a workable equilibrium was often a thankless job that pleased neither party. Lieutenant Wendell Westover, of the 2nd Division, recalled that lieutenants held the key position in the army between the individual soldier and the impersonal calculations of the rest of the chain of command. He neatly summarized the psychological strain that this balancing act placed on these key officers when he wrote,

Lightly trained to think in higher terms, understanding comes with much meager information as shifts down to him; he interprets it for his men. His, the direct and all important task of leadership, of understanding, of living the human and inhuman days with the Men who occupy the ground and gain the decision in battle... To him first comes responsibility- responsibility for other men's lives. His the closest contact; his the greatest grief. The Lieutenant is taught that it is necessary to sacrifice men in the attainment of a battlefield objective- then asked to lead those men into battle.⁶¹

These strains were also felt at the lowest levels of leadership. Corporal Charles Minder, of the 306th Machine Gun Battalion, mused in a letter home that "ever since I was drafted into the army, I never had any use whatsoever for Sergeants," but as soon as he became an NCO he had come to understand the pressure they were under. Still, he resolved "to be a different kind of sergeant than the dirty punks I ran into" when he first got into the army.⁶² He also lamented that

⁶⁰ Ibid., 13-21. 111.

⁶¹ Westover, v.

⁶² Minder, 190.

“the disadvantage of being a Corporal,” was that “you’ve always got to act as if you side with the officers, otherwise you would have no control over the men at all.”⁶³

The pressures and stresses felt by leaders such as Minder and Westover were increased when orders by superior officers or staff members seemed detached from the realities of life in small units. Lieutenant Hervey Allen perceptively noted “one of the hardest things for an officer to do is to enforce a stupid order when the men are intelligent enough to know better. This is where ‘discipline’ generally and fortunately breaks down in the American army.”⁶⁴ In his farewell address to his company, Captain B. A. Colonna recalled,

Now no one knows better than I how many orders you men received, and how it was often beyond human power to obey all of them...The Co. Cmdr. is the one man who can’t pass the buck on responsibility. We had to take the bushels of orders we received, eliminate those utterly impossible, select those remaining what seemed essential and what we thought the Major and Colonel seemed essential, and then get those things done by the company...And then one usually amasses a balling out for something or other that he has left out.⁶⁵

These officers all realized that when units went from being colored flags on a map to thinking, flesh and blood soldiers, executing orders and missions became a much more complicated undertaking than senior officers could calculate.

Those officers who were able to find the proper equilibrium between “mission and men” were able to reap the rewards of “referent power” among their soldiers, while avoiding the ire of their superiors. Chester Baker recalled that his company commander, Lieutenant Thompson, had gained the respect of his men by constantly sharing their privations and issuing his orders more as “polite requests” than barking directives. However, it was the officer’s behavior in a single incident that won Baker’s undying affection and loyalty. During a stint in the trenches, Thompson ordered Baker to deliver a message to the battalion command post through heavy

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Allen, 90.

⁶⁵ Colonna, 12-13.

shellfire. Upon arriving at the battalion headquarters, the major ordered Baker to deliver a reply to Thompson and then to return back through heavy shellfire to the battalion command post. After returning to Thompson and informing the lieutenant of the major's directive to return to headquarters, Thompson told Baker, "forget it, Corporal...If he wants another report on conditions here, he can come for it himself." Baker later recalled, "I thanked God that Lieutenant Thompson had his men's welfare more at heart than the Major did."⁶⁶ In this case, Thompson believed that the needs of Baker simply outweighed the somewhat lesser needs of his battalion commander.

By establishing a close personal relationship with their soldiers, some officers also gained the insight to know when they should crack down on discipline and when they were best served by allowing certain transgressions by their men to go unpunished. Lieutenant Jeremiah Evarts discovered that sometimes good leadership entailed serving as a "heat shield" to protect their subordinates from the wrath of their higher commanders. While his company was occupying trenches near Cantigny in May 1918, one of Evarts' soldiers had a dud artillery shell land between his legs and the man "only missed being castrated by about ten inches." After this close call, the soldier went AWOL and was found the next evening holed up in cave, drunk off a looted case of cognac, and threatening to shoot anyone who tried to roust him. Evarts managed to convince the man to drop his weapon and talked him out of his hole. When Evarts' company commander wanted to have the man brought up on serious charges, the lieutenant convinced the captain that the man "was too good a soldier to lose or to break his spirit," and gave the wayward soldier only company punishment for his transgressions. In the end, Evarts' ability to shield the soldier paid off and the man later did well in combat.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Baker, *Doughboy Diary*, 61.

⁶⁷ Jeremiah M. Evarts, *Cantigny: A Corner of the War* (Privately published, 1938), 46-9.

Despite the efforts of many officers to live the paternalistic ethos of leadership and establish strong bonds with their soldiers through face-to-face relationships and shared danger and hardships, a number of sources point to the fact that junior leaders often fell short of these lofty goals. In his report to the Secretary of War on the morale of soldiers in the AEF, Raymond Fosdick noted that far too many officers tended to act in a manner considered “galling to the democratic spirit of the troops.” Although the paternalistic ethos demanded that officers place the welfare and comfort of their soldiers above their own, he discovered that...

the possession of a Sam Browne belt in the A.E.F. has carried with it advantages out of all proportion to disciplinary requirements or the needs of the occasion, and officers have been allowed and encouraged to claim and even monopolize such advantages in ways that have shown a total lack of the spirit of fair play.⁶⁸

Fosdick noted that while it was easy for officers to wrangle passes to local towns or to see the sights, it was nearly impossible for enlisted men to gain the same privilege. He even observed incidents where officers had ordered enlisted men to give up their seats at the Y.M.C.A. or other morale building performances. He argued that to the average American soldier, “these privileges suggest a caste system which has no sanction in America and against which they instinctively rebel.”⁶⁹

Fosdick’s accusations were echoed by a number of doughboys. The 1st Division’s Sergeant Charles Strikell pointed out,

One thing not understood by the enlisted man was the great gulf that existed between a commissioned officer and an enlisted man...The enlisted man could never understand why an officer should have better food, more leave, better quarters than he did. He could not understand why the officer was always the boss when often he did not know what he was talking about.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Report of Raymond B. Fosdick to Secretary of War Newton Baker, Subject: Report to the Secretary of War on the Relation of Officers and Men in the A.E.F., dated 17 April 1919, in NARA RG 165, Entry 376, Box 18.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ SGT Charles Strikell, 5th FA, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey. For another example of enlisted men seeing their officers as the undeserving recipients of undue privileges, see MacArthur, 216.

Even some officers shared Strikell's critique. In a survey of officers awaiting demobilization, a number of them expressed regret at their own, or their peers', failure to better safeguard the welfare and just treatment of their soldiers.⁷¹ An infantry officer shamefully admitted and condemned the "tendency of officers to always consider their own comforts and pleasure rather than that of their men."⁷² Another denounced the practice where "officers being able to pull stuff...that the same officers would court martial an enlisted man for."⁷³

From their first step onto a troopship going to France to their last step off of the ship coming home, the actions of the AEF's officers drove home to the enlisted men the great gulf that existed between the ranks. Onboard ship, the officers enjoyed sleeping in cabins and eating at their own well-supplied mess. On 10 April 1918, Lieutenant Harris wrote to his parent, "the trip over was wonderful.... no trip could be more enjoyable. The scotch was plentiful and the food excellent.... the damnedest pleasure trip I ever took!"⁷⁴ Things weren't quite so nice in the soldier's berths below deck. One 42nd Division doughboy recalled that soldiers were "crowded like horses into narrow bunks, with the plainest of food, in total darkness at night, denied even the solace of a cigarette except by daylight."⁷⁵ Food lines were long, washing impossible, and restrictions often prevented men from getting any fresh air topside. Although there was little that most officers on board could do about conditions on the troopships, that was scant consolation to the soldiers who saw how "the other half lived." One officer sadly recorded that "the officers

⁷¹ Morale Branch Officers' Survey, 24-28.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 34. Another officer admitted that officers "have no fair sense of justice and treat their enlisted men like slaves," 26.

⁷⁴ Harvey L. Harris, *The War as I Saw It: 1918 Letters of a Tank Corps Lieutenant* (Saint Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 7.

⁷⁵ Raymond S. Tompkins, *The Story of the Rainbow Division* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1919), 18.

were well fed and in a civilized fashion in the cabin, which didn't help matters much for the men."⁷⁶

The inequalities of enlisted life were far from over when the soldiers reached France. To maintain the social distance between officers and their men, the AEF followed the European practice of messing and billeting officers separately from the troops while in training camps or garrisons. When occupying a new town, an officer from the regiment or battalion preceded their units to arrange with the local French authorities for quartering the unit's officers and men. This officer also ensured that the lodging for his peers and superiors was the best that the town could offer. While officers were quartered in inns or local residences, the soldiers were billeted in schools, churches, or more often, the haylofts of local barns. Hervey Allen rather shamefacedly admitted that while his soldiers made the best of sharing shelter with the locals' farm animals, he and his fellow officers slept in a "real bed, a deep feather bed, in an old peasant's house."⁷⁷ The officers' quartering arrangements frequently included meals with the host family, while the men subsisted on the pedestrian bounty of the company kitchen or whatever delicacies they could buy from the townspeople. These arrangements were often so good for officers that one lieutenant was moved to write home, "Our life here is damn nice.... I believe [William T.] Sherman was too pessimistic" in his view that war was hell."⁷⁸ However, one second lieutenant acknowledged that given these enforced distinctions, "officers do not live close enough to their men and therefore do not learn the personality of each."⁷⁹

As the American enlisted men came into contact with soldiers in the other Allied armies, some became painfully aware of the AEF's class system. This especially applied to NCOs.

⁷⁶ Colonna, 14.

⁷⁷ Allen, 14.

⁷⁸ Harris, 28.

⁷⁹ Morale Branch Officers' Survey, 25.

While observing a British unit in the trenches, Corporal Joseph Lawrence noted the higher degree of respect and authority that British NCOs were given in comparison to American sergeants. He saw that a British Company Sergeant Major was not only granted more authority and privileges than an American first sergeant, but also “as a rule he has more influence with the men than do their immediate officers.”⁸⁰ Lawrence was also surprised that the differences of respect, privilege, and authority between the British NCOs and the American peers, extended all the way to the rank of corporal. Likewise, the 82nd Division’s Sergeant Richard McBride observed that “The British sergeant is a highly respected individual and of course is accorded privileges beyond those of the soldiers in the ranks.”⁸¹ He noted that unlike in the American Army, British NCOs were assigned quarters in billets rather than barns when in the rear area.

Given the strength of the “separate and unequal” status between the ranks of the U. S. Army, it is not surprising that some officers continued to assert their privileges even while at the front. Charles MacArthur recalled that one new officer “suffered from acute sensibilities and a perpetual desire to assert his rank,” and that it “was rumored that he had caused himself to be tattooed with gold bars” in case he was ever found by his soldiers bare-chested.⁸² Private Jonas E. Warrell noted that soon after he found a relatively comfortable place to spend the night after a hard day of fighting in the Vesle Sector in August 1918, “the colonel casually remarked that he could use my quarters, so as he outranked me by at least a few points, I vacated.”⁸³ During the Meuse-Argonne battle, Captain Thomas Barber saw nothing wrong with making a “snug little home” in a safe and dry German dugout while his troops slept out in the open in pup tents. He

⁸⁰ Joseph D. Lawrence, *Fighting Soldier* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 20-1, 31.

⁸¹ Sergeant Richard McBride, 325th IN, 82nd Div, Unpublished manuscript in File WWI 2178, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁸² MacArthur, 22.

⁸³ Unpublished memoir in PFC Jonas E. Warrell, 103rd Ammunition Train, 28th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey, 41.

justified his actions by noting that while the men all had shelter tents, he only had a blanket and poncho.⁸⁴

Despite all these transgressions against the paternalistic code, an officer really had to step out of line before he was brought to heel by his peers or superiors. Captain John Stringfellow wrote that after one of his fellow officers received a slight wound he appeared at the forward dressing station and demanded that the crowd of wounded enlisted men awaiting treatment “make way” for him due to his rank. Luckily, the medical officer in charge of the station would have none of the man’s assertion of privilege and promptly ordered the captain to wait his turn.⁸⁵ It is hard to say how great the gulf was in the relationship between the AEF’s officers and men, but, these incidents all point to the existence of a vast gap between the rhetoric of paternalism and the realities lived by the army’s enlisted men.

There were other indications that the American officer corps, especially among the ranks of the wartime OTC and COTS graduates, had failed to internalize the Regular Army’s pre-war precepts of paternalism. Wartime reports and post-war memoirs and diaries contain incidents where junior leaders had abused their power or had used physical force when dealing with their enlisted men. In January 1919, the Morale Branch of the General Staff directed the morale officers at stateside posts to conduct surveys of enlisted men awaiting demobilization. The surveys were to gage the soldiers’ attitudes about their military experiences and lasting impressions of the service.

The soldiers interviewed at Camp Grant, Illinois stated that the things that most galled them in their service were the attitudes and unfair actions of their officers and NCOs. They stated, “the man who feels himself humiliated by swearing, punished for an unknown offense, or

⁸⁴ Barber, 78-80.

⁸⁵ Stringfellow, 161.

under the control of ‘hard-boiled’ non-commissioned officers is so engrossed with these ideas and resentful of them that it is almost impossible for him to go into training with enough spirit and attention for him to learn either well or rapidly.” As with Fosdick’s report to the Secretary of War, the soldiers in the stateside survey indicated that they chafed under their leaders’ demands for absolute authority without any apparent military necessity, and the tendency of officers and NCOs to use harsh and abusive language toward them.⁸⁶

The soldiers surveyed at Camp Devens, Massachusetts held similar attitudes to those at Camp Grant, but tended to be slightly more detailed in their responses. When asked of their opinions of the relationship between officers and men, most stated that the dictates of military discipline required that there be a strict separation between the ranks. They also acknowledged that discipline that might have been viewed by civilians as harsh and undemocratic was still necessary to keep the army from turning into a mob. However, a large number of respondents qualified their statements by noting that OTC officers tended to abuse their authority and take an unnecessarily strict and unbending approach to discipline. One soldier noted, “We must have discipline in the Army, but not like some of these 90-day lieutenants think.” Another stated, “there is such a thing as carrying [discipline] to extremes, which I have noticed most of the National Army officers, who never had a man under them before in their lives, practiced.”⁸⁷

Some soldiers maintained that they had not given up their rights as citizens when they entered the service and were quick to denounce leaders who they believed had contravened army regulations. The records of the Morale Branch of the General Staff contain a number of letters written by doughboys to political, civic, and military leaders complaining of their treatment at

⁸⁶ “The five questions interpreted,” undated report, NARA, RG 165 Records of the General Staff, Entry 377, Correspondence Related to Morale at Army Installations, Box 6, Camp Grant file.

⁸⁷ Editorial staff, “Our Military System as It Appeared to America’s Citizen Soldiers,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV, No. 10 (April 1919), 772, 782-3.

the hands of officers and NCOs. For example, on 27 August 1918, a soldier assigned to the 153rd Depot Brigade at Camp Dix, New Jersey sent an anonymous letter to the national headquarters of the American Red Cross complaining of the treatment that he and his comrades were receiving in the camp. The man claimed that the unit's leaders "talk to us like dogs," and when a group of the recruits spoke to the major about their concerns, they found that "he is just as bad as any one else here he curse us out bout coming to him complaining about food."⁸⁸ The groups who tended to be on the receiving end of much of the abuse by officers and NCOs were non-English speaking immigrants and African Americans. Although historian Nancy Gentile Ford has noted that the army, as an institution, made great leaps during the war to accommodate the needs of the immigrant soldiers, and that the soldiers themselves were active agents in carving out their own space in the military, these efforts had done nothing to eliminate the prejudice and xenophobia of the average Anglo-Saxon native-born officer and NCO.⁸⁹ The Morale Branch and its agents received a number of complaints against native-born junior leaders from immigrant soldiers. A group of immigrant recruits informed the Camp Devens Morale Officer that they were glad that,

We have escaped the clutches of some non-commissioned officers who continually humiliated us, put us to work at hard labor and often assaulted and kicked us. The hardest and dirties work was performed by details of us non-English-speaking soldiers. We are a laboring party, instead of soldiers.⁹⁰

On 20 July 1918, Camp Devens Intelligence and Morale Officer, Captain Earnest Wood, reported to his superior on the General Staff on the problems between the camp's officers and NCOs and its large number of foreign soldiers. He believed that NCOs were not "treating all those of foreign birth with consideration," and that constantly calling them "foreigners" and

⁸⁸ Memorandum from Chief, Military Morale Section to Intelligence Officer, Camp Dix, New Jersey, Subject: Anonymous Letter of Complaint, dated 6 September 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 3, Camp Lee file. The memorandum also contained a copy of the original complaint.

⁸⁹ Nancy Gentile Ford, *Americans All: Foreign Born Soldiers in World War I* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2001), 3-15.

⁹⁰ Report from Ascanio Di Rago, Camp Devens, MA. to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, Subject: "Report and Suggestions," dated 10 August 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 3, Camp Devens file.

“guineas” was turning a “patriotic and loyal soldier” into a disciplinary problem.⁹¹ His pleas had little effect, for nearly two month later he was still reporting that the camp’s officers held negative attitudes toward “non-English-speaking selectives,” and often referred to these soldiers as “‘Guineas,’ ‘wops,’ ‘squareheads’, etc.” He also noticed a tendency for officers to “use personal violence” to get the immigrant-soldiers “to perform promptly commands which they do not understand.”⁹²

The verbal and physical abuse of foreign soldiers was not limited to Camp Devens. The morale officer at Camp Gordon, Georgia noted that several of his sources on the post reported that “trouble and ill feelings” were being created by the propensity of the post’s native-born leaders calling foreign-born soldiers “various epithets such as ‘wops,’ ‘dagoes,’ etc.” He recommended that the use of such terms should be prohibited.⁹³

The relationship between white officers and NCOs and African American soldiers was a bit more complex. On one hand, there were white officers such as Colonel William Hayward, the commander of the 369th Infantry, and arch manual-writer Colonel James Moss, commander of the 367th Infantry, who consistently displayed a concern for the welfare and success of their black soldiers that reflected the patriarchal ethos. In a May 1918 article in *Outlook* magazine, Moss wrote that when dealing with black soldiers,

Make the colored man feel that you have faith in him, and then, by sympathetic and conscientious training and instruction, help him fit himself in a military way to vindicate that faith, to “make good.” Be strict with him, but treat him fairly and justly, making him realize that in your dealings with him he will always be given a square deal.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Report from Intelligence Officer, Camp Devens, MA. to Chief, Military Morale Section, Subject: “Questions regarding morale,” dated 20 July 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 3, Camp Devens file.

⁹² Report from Intelligence Officer, Camp Devens, MA. to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, Subject: “Military Morale,” dated 9 September 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 3, Camp Devens file.

⁹³ Memorandum for Captain Perkins from Foreign-Speaking Soldier Sub-Section, dated 10 September 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 5, Camp Gordon file.

⁹⁴ Quoted in O. E. McKaine, “The Buffaloes: A First-Class Colored Fighting Unit,” in *Outlook*, 119 (22 May 1918), 412. For similar views of commanding black troops see, Warner A. Ross, *My Colored Battalion*

Although their paternalism had a twinge of condescension, both Moss and Hayward seemed to believe that they were contributing to the “uplift of the race.”⁹⁵ On the other hand were the officers who came to their assignments fully expecting their black soldiers to fail or believed that, given their soldiers’ innate racial flaws, they had to be “driven” instead of led and controlled by draconian discipline rather than shaped through training and patience. Major General Robert Bullard stated that much of the problem of the 92nd Division stemmed from the prevalence of the later group among its white senior staff officers and commanders. Bullard noted that, with exception of its commander, Charles Ballou, “not one of them believed that the 92nd Division would ever be worth anything as soldiers,” and that the white regulars “would have given anything to be transferred to any other duty.”⁹⁶

The AEF’s African American soldiers had many of the same expectations of their leaders as did white doughboys. Black soldiers expected the junior leaders, of whatever race, to demonstrate courage in battle and to care for their health, comfort, and welfare. However, the black doughboys also seem to have expected their leaders to work on their behalf to eliminate or minimize the inequalities that they faced due to their race in the utilization of their units, their access to recreation facilities, and their access to justice. When one of their soldiers was kicked by a white NCO for “talking back” while the 371st Infantry was assigned to stevedore duty at St. Nazaire, the unit’s black officers confronted the post commander and demanded that their men be treated with the respect due all American soldiers. With this accomplished, “the men went back to work overjoyed to know at last that officers of their own color had intervened in their

(Chicago: Self Published, 1920). It appears that the intent of Ross’ work was mostly to glorify himself and his leadership.

⁹⁵ Emmett J. Scott, *Scott’s Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (New York: No publisher, 1919), 194-6, 204-7.

⁹⁶ Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925), 294.

behalf.”⁹⁷ On a similar occasion, Major Arthur Little, a white battalion commander in the 369th Infantry, expressed the outrage of his men when he insisted that an MP officer discipline one of his white policemen for beating one of Little’s black soldiers. The MP officer explained that the “niggers were feeling their oats a bit” and that he had been given instructions to “take it out of them as quickly, just as soon as they arrived, so as not to have any trouble later on.”⁹⁸ Little’s refusal to accept this explanation, and his efforts to have the policy overturned, helped him to gain the respect and support of his soldiers.

As with other American soldiers, the black doughboys were quick to criticize their leaders when they felt that the officers and NCOs had acted unfairly, violated army regulations, or failed to live up to their end of the social contract. In October 1918, a group of African American soldiers training at Camp Gordon wrote letters directly to Secretary of War Baker complaining of the treatment they received at the Georgia post. One soldier wrote that not only did they not get enough food, but also, “we are in tents [with] no flooring in winter clothing just thin blankets no wood to burn.” He also noted that black soldiers were worked seven days a week and were never given passes to Atlanta. Another complained of inadequate food and medical care and the fact that the men had to perform hard labor while sick.⁹⁹ On 3 November 1918, a black soldier training at Camp Grant, Illinois reported similar abuse in a letter to his hometown pastor. The pastor in turn, sent it to Emmett J. Scott, the War Department’s Special Assistant to the Secretary of War. The soldier echoed many of the same complaints as the men at Camp Gordon and noted the propensity of white southern “cracker officers” to punctuate their

⁹⁷ Monroe Mason and Arthur Furr, *The American Negro Soldier with the Red Hand in France* (Boston: The Cornhill Company, 1920), 41-2.

⁹⁸ Arthur W. Little, *From Harlem to the Rhine* (New York: Covici Friede, 1936), 351-2.

⁹⁹ Memorandum from Chief, Morale Branch, General Staff to Morale Officer, Camp Gordon, Georgia, Subject: Letters of complaint from colored soldiers, Camp Gordon, dated 27 November 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 3, Camp Gordon file. The file contained the original letters dated between 17 and 25 October.

commands with curses at the troops. The man noted, “they treat us as though we are dogs. We are cursed and dogged around just as though we are not human.”¹⁰⁰

The Camp Gordon soldier’s complaint against white southern “cracker officers” highlights one of the greatest problems in the relationship between black soldiers and white officers and NCOs. Many senior War Department officials and officers generally accepted the assumption that white southerners made the best possible leaders for African American units because they had more experience in “bossing Negroes,” and supposedly had a better understanding of the psychology of black people.¹⁰¹ Concern over the treatment of African American soldiers in a number of stateside camps led the Morale Branch to have its post representatives survey and question white leaders of “colored troops” about the state of race relations in their units and their attitudes toward, and condition of, their soldiers. The survey also addressed the question of the effectiveness of white southerners as the leaders of African American units.

The morale officer at Camp Pike, Arkansas reported on 6 November 1918 that, contrary to some beliefs, white officers and NCOs did not need to have prior experience in “handling negroes” to be successful leaders. However, he warned that white leaders who felt themselves “especially capable of handling negroes because of previous experience among them in labor work, and who feels they can only be led by driving,” should not be placed with black troops. Unfortunately, the morale officer’s warning seldom seems to have been heeded.¹⁰² The African American journalist Monroe Mason described the white commander of the 371st Infantry,

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum from Emmett J. Scott to General E. L. Munson, Chief, Military Morale Branch, dated 13 December 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 3, Camp Grant file. The file also contains the soldier’s letter.

¹⁰¹ Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 65-6, 78-80., Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 70-2.

¹⁰² Memorandum from Intelligence Officer, Camp Pike, Ark. to Director of Military Intelligence, Washington, D. C., Subject: Questionnaire Concerning Colored Troops, dated 6 November 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 12, Camp Pike file.

Colonel Perry Miles, as “a southern gentleman with the well-known proclivities of the ‘South-in-the-Saddle’ in his veins,” and the colonel of the 372nd Infantry as an officer with “a leaning toward southern prejudices.”¹⁰³ Mason argued that the leadership of white southern officers was irreparably tainted with prejudice and racial assumption of the unsuitability of black men to serve as officers or soldiers.

Statements made by white southern officers tend to back Mason’s assertion that they had little faith in their soldiers and consciously or unconsciously undermined the morale and effectiveness of their units. One white battalion commander noted that “the general attitude of white officers over negro troops is one of desire to educate and help the negro- an attitude almost of pity for his ignorance and hopelessness.”¹⁰⁴ One wonders why any officer would want to lead “hopeless” soldiers into combat? These attitudes even reached the highest levels of command in the AEF. Major General Robert Bullard, an Alabaman with experience leading a black regiment, wrote, “having passed a pleasant boyhood with the Negroes and had this satisfactory experience with them in my early military life, I found myself with most kindly feelings towards them...”¹⁰⁵ Yet, for all of his “kindly feelings,” Bullard admitted in his diary of the 92nd Division, “They are really inferior soldiers,” and “Poor Negroes! They are hopelessly inferior.”¹⁰⁶

It seems that the actions and attitudes of white officers had to be particularly harsh against their black soldiers before the army took any action against them. In one instance, Captain Timothy Mahoney was investigated by the AEF’s Intelligence Section in May 1918 for comments he had made about his black soldiers. Mahoney was alleged to have stated before

¹⁰³ Mason and Furr, 19-20.

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum from Intelligence Officer, Camp Pike, Ark. to Director of Military Intelligence, Washington, D. C., Subject: Questionnaire Concerning Colored Troops, dated 6 November 1918, in Morale at Army Installations, Box 12, Camp Pike file.

¹⁰⁵ Bullard, 291.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 295.

leaving the United States, “All I hope is that when they send me across I can line up this bunch of niggers of mine into some formation and that a German shell will get them and me.”¹⁰⁷ At least two white officers were sent for reclassification at Blois due to their “unsuitability to command colored troops. Captain William Caldwell was relieved of command in the 92nd Division because he lacked the patience and “sympathy for colored troops” required of his assignment.”¹⁰⁸ The other officer, First Lieutenant Julius Rogovin was sent to Blois because of his “natural dislike for colored troops.” Rogovin believed that his relief stemmed from the fact that he was a “Southerner with [a] negro regiment [where the] other officers[,] Northern [,] didn’t agree with his mode of handling them.” He stated “my personal conviction after years of intermittent observations in various parts of [the] south” was that one had to “rule a negro with a firm hand.”¹⁰⁹ Between the overtly crude racism of Mahoney and Rogovin and the paternalistically-clad and more subtle racism of Bullard, it was no wonder that African American officers and soldiers often had little faith in the social contract that supposedly linked the white leaders to the black led. However, this is a subject that requires much more study and analysis than can be provided for in this paper.

Although immigrants and African American soldiers had special cause to doubt the commitment of their white native-born officers and NCOs to the army’s high-minded concepts of leadership, why was this also a problem across the army? Fosdick blamed the failure of the AEF’s leaders to live up to its paternalistic ideas on the inability of Regular Army officers to understand that citizen-soldiers required different handling from the hardened men who filled the army’s pre-war ranks. He also maintained that the Regulars had done too well at teaching the

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum from Intelligence Officer, Camp Merit N. J. to Intelligence Officer, American Expeditionary Forces, Subject: Captain Timothy Mahoney, dated 15 May 1918, in “Officers Suspected of Pro-German Sympathies.”

¹⁰⁸ CPT William H. Caldwell, 351 FA, 92nd Div, Blois Case Files, Box 2291.

¹⁰⁹ 1LT Julius Rogovin, 350 FA, 92nd Div, Blois Case Files, Box 2312.

army's new officers that "rank hath its privileges" and the need to guard against over-familiarity between the ranks, and had done too poorly at instructing them on their duties and obligations to their soldiers. Of the OTCs, Fosdick complained,

. . . These schools with their hasty training too often turned out officers with no well-developed sense of responsibility, officers to whom the Sam Browne belt and the epaulets were merely the badge of a superior social class, the symbols of rights and privileges jealously to be guarded even at the expense of the welfare and morale of the men of their commands.¹¹⁰

Given the actions of some of the AEF's officers, Fosdick's assessment seems to have had merit.

The regulars' disdain for the National Guard, and their efforts to imbue the graduates of the OTCs and COTS with their own Uptonian visions of "a proper military policy" for the nation, gave the new officers a skewed vision of the proper relationship between officers and their men. A number of OTC graduates recalled that they left officers' training believing that the National Guard's concepts of leadership were fundamentally flawed. After graduating from OTC, Lieutenant Maury Maverick was assigned to the 157th Infantry, formerly the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Colorado National Guard. He recalled, "Many of us arrived with big ideas- that we would reform this 'militia regiment,' with our superior training."¹¹¹ Colonel Robert Morehead of the 139th Field Artillery noted that soon after his unit began training, he received 16 new officers fresh from the first OTCs. He was also taken aback by the fact that,

. . .in the training camp they had been led to have an unfavorable impression of the National Guard and for a long time many of them were dissatisfied with their assignment to a National Guard regiment. This feeling on the part of Reserve Officers, I subsequently learned was very general throughout the army at the time...¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Report of Raymond B. Fosdick to Secretary of War Newton Baker, Subject: Report to the Secretary of War on the Relation of Officers and Men in the A.E.F., dated 17 April 1919, in NARA RG 165, Entry 376, Box 18.

¹¹¹ Maury Maverick, *A Maverick American* (New York: Covici Friede Publishers, 1937), 109.

¹¹² Colonel Robert Morehead, *The Story of the 139th Field Artillery, American Expeditionary Forces* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1920), 33.

An infantry captain reported that “Regular Army officers as a general thing, openly belittle the National Guard,” and worked to “hold back” guard units and officers.¹¹³ The success of regular officers in molding the graduates of the OTCs in their own image exacerbated or created tensions between the leaders and the led in AEF units.

The history of conflict between regulars and guardsmen, and the various routes to a commission, led to a factional strife within many units that undermined morale and cohesion. In October 1917, Will Judy recorded that

I had not been in Camp Logan longer than forty-eight hours when I was knocked down by army caste. The regulars speak slightly of the national guard and the guard calls the national army conscripts. Even within the regular army is a caste of castes, the West Point group; these conspire against their fellows who have come up from the ranks.¹¹⁴

At times, National Guard officers returned the alleged contempt of the OTC graduates with disdain of their own. When Lieutenant Huge Thompson reported to the Rainbow Division’s 168th Infantry, the unit’s National Guard officers gave him and his fellow reservists a very chilly reception. His new commander told in no uncertain terms that his unit was formerly of the Iowa National Guard and it had traditions which the new officer was expected to uphold.¹¹⁵ One of the guard officers loudly proclaimed that the new officers were so ill-trained that they “couldn’t turn a platoon around in a ten-acre field,” and his first impression of the battalion commander was that he seemed to only like two things: “cognac and cursing the helpless reservists.”¹¹⁶

One of the greatest sources of factionalism in the AEF’s officer corps was the differing views of discipline and the proper relationship between officers and their men held by

¹¹³ Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 63.

¹¹⁴ Will Judy, *A Soldier’s Diary* (Chicago: Judy Publishing Company, 1930), 25. Ironically, two weeks later Judy wrote, “Five hundred drafted men from Camp Dodge, Iowa, arrived after dark... We curled our lips when they marched by for we are volunteers and they are not.” 34.

¹¹⁵ Huge Thompson, *Trench Knives and Mustard Gas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2004), 16.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

guardsmen and regulars. Regulars often criticized National Guard officers for failing to understand that discipline required the maintenance of a sharp line of separation between officers and their soldiers. A Regular Army corps inspector informed officers of the 35th Division that they were “too familiar with their men,” and sniffed, “This divisions bears all the ear marks of a National Guard Division.”¹¹⁷ In a 6 November 1918 report on the conditions within the 26th Division, Colonel J. A. Baer stated,

...this division has babied its men heretofore and as a result there has been continued complaining that the soldiers are tired and overworked. This does not come from the soldiers but from a few officers who have brought with them from the National Guard a paternal attitude toward the men, and the feeling that their men should be rested and spared further hard work.¹¹⁸

The regular officers often believed that what they saw as lax discipline in the National Guard units stemmed from too much fraternization between the ranks. One regular officer warned training camp students that,

One of the rules is expressed in the regulation that familiarity between yourself and enlisted men is inadmissible. This seems like a harsh rule in democratic America, but it is one which you will find necessary to apply, but with sound judgment and discretion.¹¹⁹

The regulars’ view that “familiarity builds contempt” was a cornerstone of the leadership principles propagated in the semi-official publications of its officers and in the official publications of the War Department.¹²⁰ It was a concept that was drilled into the heads of students at OTCs and COTSS.

To drive home their version of proper officer-man relations, Regular officers were also quick to discipline officers who appeared to cross the boundary between paternalism and shared

¹¹⁷ Edward, *From Doniphan to Verdun*, 115.

¹¹⁸ Memorandum from COL. J. A. Bauer, Advance Section, Inspector General to Chief of Staff, 1st Army, dated 7 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 2.

¹¹⁹ Colonel C. H. Hitchcock, “A Letter to a Training Camp Student,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (July 1917), 49-52.

¹²⁰ James A. Moss, *Officer’s Manual* (Menasha: George Banta Publishing Co, 1917), 50-51., *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry*, 10-12., *Army Regulations Corrected to 15 April 1917*, 11.

privations and fraternization. Second Lieutenant Homer Davis' commander sent him to Blois for reclassification because he was "lax in discipline" and "mixed" with his soldiers. Davis also drew his commander's ire for wishing to be billeted with his men rather than occupying separate quarters.¹²¹ The 135th Machine Gun Battalion's Lieutenant Harold Reed was also boarded because he was "not strict enough with his enlisted men" and "lacked conception of the relations between officers and men."¹²² Another officer, Arthur Campbell, was reclassified because he "had a distinctive and bad effect on the discipline of enlisted men, not only for failing to maintain discipline but [also] for permitting and encouraging them to familiarity."¹²³ The message of these actions was clear; "proper officers" built and maintained a strong wall of separation between themselves and their men.

The regular officers' efforts to shape the opinions and leadership of OTC graduates seem to have borne fruit. Some of the new officers often commented on the negative effect of hometown ties and politics on the efficient operation of National Guard units. One newly commissioned officer noted that when he was assigned to his unit, there was "subtle antagonism between N[ational] G[uard] and us of the Reserve." After his National Guard superior recommended that he "go easy with the boys," he wrote,

He's a druggist back home [...and was always] thinking of post-war business. That's the weakness of the National Guard. Too many personal relations."¹²⁴

He later bewailed "rotten Nat'l Guard discipline," which he believed was inevitable, "with men and officers so chummy."¹²⁵ On 22 February 1918, the 31st Division's Intelligence Officer reported that the unit's officers were angered at the replacement of senior National Guard

¹²¹ 2LT Homer A. Davis, 26th Div, Blois Case Files, Box 2294.

¹²² 2LT Harold J. Reed, 135th MGB, 37th Div, Blois Case Files, Box 2311.

¹²³ 1LT Arthur R. Campbell, 26th Div, Blois case files, Box 2291.

¹²⁴ Anonymous, *Wine, Women and War: A Diary of Disillusionment* (New York: J.H. Sears and Company, 1926), 44.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

officers with regulars. The staff officer downplayed the problem and stated that the guardsmen would be more useful if not assigned to units with men under their command's "with whom they had been 'buddies' in civil life."¹²⁶

Unfortunately, the regular officers failed to see that the guardsmen's approach to leadership and discipline was often much more effective in building cohesive units than those they advocated to their OTC protégés. Much of the available evidence points to the fact that the willingness of guard officers to mix with their soldiers, share in their hardships, and overlook minor lapses in discipline, led to a degree of harmony and understanding between officers and men that was sometimes muted in Regular and National Army divisions. Captain Colby McIntyre argued that Colonel Frank Hume, the commander of the 103rd Infantry, possessed an understanding of the citizen soldier that was often lacking in Regular Army and OTC officers. He recalled that when Hume discovered a sergeant of his unit sneaking liquor into camp on Christmas Eve 1917, with a wink and a nudge, the colonel told the NCO, "Well go ahead and enjoy yourselves. And tell the boys I wish th' hell I could be with 'em, but I can't."¹²⁷ Hume tried to drum into his officers that "a soldier was better all around" when he was given a bit of freedom and understanding. The National Guard colonel's personal ties to his men created a tight unit able to withstand the battering the unit received at Soissons and the Meuse-Argonne.

Other National Guard officers also saw the benefit of building what Darryl Henderson termed "referent power" with their soldiers. Captain Ben Chastaine noted that there was much anger in the 36th Division when regulars or wartime reserve officers supplanted guard officers. He believed that the National Guard system helped to reinforce unit cohesion and combat

¹²⁶ Report from Intelligence Officer, 31st Division to Chief, Military Intelligence Section, 22 February 1918, Morale at Army Installations, Box 17, Camp Wheeler file.

¹²⁷ Colby L. McIntyre, *The Old Man of the 103rd: The Biography of Frank M. Hume* (Houlton, ME: Aroostock Print Shop, 1940), 57.

effectiveness because the men and officers respected each other. Despite the regulars' fears, he argued that "discipline was not marred" by the fact that the guard's officers and men had known each other socially at home before the war.¹²⁸ Another doughboy wrote that in his National Guard unit, "Instead of the recruit being frightened or timid in the presence of the officer and proverbial 'hard-boiled sergeants,' they were made to know that their troubles, questions, or what- not would be considered thoroughly by both noncoms and officers." The unit's company commander saw as his mission to "make the Company one big family."¹²⁹

Some National Guard officers maintained that what the regulars saw as the guard's greatest weakness, the unit's attachments to their home communities and pre-war social ties between officers and men, was actually the guardsmen's greatest strength. Major Emerson Taylor noted of National Guard units,

In a peculiar sense the regimental commanders were looked upon by the thousands of good men and women whose boys were with the troops as the guardians and friends of those lads as well as their leaders in battle. In every case they were daily subjected to a very heavy and continual pressure, in the form of direct personal appeals, from their own intimate friends, from men of high position and influence, as well as from pathetic hundreds of anxious, proud fathers and mothers, "to look out for my boy," "to bring Joe home safe," "to see that he behaves himself," "to give Bill a chance," and so on.¹³⁰

National Guard enlisted men understood that when the war was over, they would have to return to small towns or neighborhoods where their civilian standing would be influenced by their reputations as soldiers.

However, Emerson Taylor also noted that the benefit of close unit cohesion based on a regiment's special bond with the local community also placed a great strain on the guard

¹²⁸ Ben Chastaine, *Story of the 36th* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1920), 15, 55. McIntyre, 56-8.

¹²⁹ *The Story of "E" Company 101st Engineers 26th Division* (Boston: Privately Published, 1919), 13.

¹³⁰ Emerson G. Taylor, *New England in France 1917-1919: A History of the Twenty-Sixth Division* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 23.

commanders. He recalled that his regimental commander had to “assume a position of responsibility to the community which was the home of their respective regiments,” and “he was expected to bring glory and renown to his home town.”¹³¹ That these “community leader-officers” were expected by the folks at home to “bring Joe home safe” added another source of anxiety for guard commanders. Several men in Colonel Frank Hume’s 103rd Infantry stated that they were moved by the fact that when their commander “read each day’s casualties report he would stand there and cry” because he realized that he now had to write letters home to his friends and neighbors informing them of the loss of their sons, fathers and husbands.¹³²

While many American soldiers appreciated the technical and tactical expertise of Regular Army officers, a number of National Guard and National Army soldiers criticized their leadership and standoffish behavior. The junior leaders were also critical of their Regular Army superiors’ abilities to motivate and lead citizen soldiers. Corporal Edmund Grossman, for instance, believed that his National Guard commanders were much better than the West Pointers who replaced them. Unlike the guardsmen, he found regulars officers “snobbish and distant” and unable to inspire soldiers by their personality.¹³³ One officer stated that “Regular officers [were] too slow to realize that they were dealing with a citizen army.”¹³⁴ Company officers accused their regular superiors of “Prussianism:” a haughty and arrogant disregard for American soldiers and democratic ideas caused by the assumed superiority of the senior officer’s worth, prestige, and position. One officer complained that, “Regular officers failed in many cases to get the best work out of the new men, because they treated them like niggers. No man keeps his self-respect when bullied, ragged and brow-beaten.”¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² McIntyre, 66-7.

¹³³ Edmund A. Grossman, 139th IN, 35th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

¹³⁴ Morale Branch Officer’s Survey, 19-b.

There were several repercussions for this divergence of opinion on “proper discipline” between National Guard and Regular Army officers. First of all, the efforts by regular officers to replace “inefficient” guard commanders was often a blow to the morale of their units. National Guard officers justly believed that the regulars launched witch hunts to remove senior guardsmen. One 35th Division soldier recalled, “It seemed that all National Guard officers who occupied positions of prominence soon disclosed traits that made them unsatisfactory to the acting commander of the division.”¹³⁵ The division’s Clair Kenamore lambasted his Regular Army commander, General Lucien Berry, for failing to understand citizen soldiers. He noted,

His knowledge of men, such as knowledge is understood in civilian life, was necessarily limited. He viewed everything with a military eye. He believed implicitly in his unerring ability to estimate a man at first glance, and he felt that once he made that estimate, he must abide by it... The strict life of the army does not qualify a man to judge his fellows who have followed civilian pursuits.¹³⁷

Kenamore maintained that the replacement of a number of National Guard commanders with regular officers caused a decline in the morale of the 35th Division that contributed to its poor showing in the opening days of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.¹³⁸ Morale in the 26th Division was also shaken by the removal of the ever-popular Major General Clarence Edwards by Pershing on 20 October 1918. Years after the war the 26th Division’s were still smarting over Edwards’ relief. One veteran recalled, “Oh my, but the boys were absolutely furious. We all

¹³⁵ Ibid., 61, 19-b.

¹³⁶ Clair Kenamore, *From Vauquois Hill to Exermont* (St Louis: Guard Publishing, 1919), 21.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 21-2., Charles B. Holt, *Heroes of the Argonne* (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Company, 1919), 66.

¹³⁸ The historian Robert H. Ferrell has argued that the 35th Division’s failure in the Meuse-Argonne was directly related to the last minute replacement of its senior guard leaders with regular officers who were an unknown quantity to their men. This was the last straw to a division already hampered by poor training and frequent levies of personnel. While there is something to both Kenamore and Ferrell’s argument, it must be noted that many of the AEF’s divisions suffered from similar, if not worse, problems, and yet did not break. Robert H. Ferrell, *Collapse in the Meuse-Argonne: The Failure of the Missouri-Kansas Division* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).

loved General Edwards; you always felt he was concerned with the division and everyone in it.”¹³⁹

Another fallout from the regulars’ approach to discipline and officer-man relations was the unintentional attitudes and skewed perceptions of leadership that it often inculcated within its corps of junior OTC and COTS officers. There was no monopoly on poor leadership in the AEF. The ranks of National Guard, Regular Army, and National Army officers all had their share of martinets or incompetents. However, the OTCs appear to have produced more than their share of officers with a strict conception of discipline and obedience and inflated senses of their positions and prerogatives. As the curriculum, tone, and leadership of the OTCs were provided by the Regular Army, then regular officers must accept much of the blame for this problem. After pumping the candidates up with Uptonian denouements of lax National Guard discipline (as previously noted), and releasing them to lead units with only the sketchiest concepts of leadership, it is no wonder that the new officers sometimes failed to grasp the responsibilities of their positions or the customary and regulatory limits on their powers. Despite the regular’s precepts of paternalism, one OTC graduate went so far as to claim, “The officer in charge of the training company I was in at Plattsburg, said that soldiers should be treated more as dogs than men.”¹⁴⁰ Although the candidate may have misunderstood what his Regular Army instructor was teaching, the fact that the statement stuck with the new officer is an indication that the camps’ training of leadership was problematic and contradictory.

A number of training camp officers believed that the army’s system of training and acculturation of junior commissioned leaders was flawed and failed to prepare new officers for

¹³⁹ Quoted in Henry Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 181. For other accounts of the soldiers’ dissatisfaction with Edwards’ removal, see, Frank Sibley, *With the Yankee Division in France* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1919), 7-9., Taylor, 19-20.

¹⁴⁰ Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 19-b.

their role as combat leaders. These critics were often enlisted men who had been commissioned during the war. Their ability to view the army's leadership from "both sides of the fence" gave them unique insights into the problems of officer-man relations. An infantry lieutenant observed,

[There is] too large a gulf between officers and enlisted men. I've been both and know it is not necessary. It is feudal in tendency and undemocratic. It does not make for better discipline in most cases. Familiarity breeds contempt, but the chasm is too great at present. It should not be possible for an officer to deal in personalities of a belittling and inhuman kind.¹⁴¹

In the Morale Branch Officers' Survey, several officers commented that the army could overcome its leadership problems if it required officers to spend time in the ranks before being commissioned. One officer noted that "this experience is necessary to teach a young officer to understand his men." Another stated that this practice would be beneficial because "the great source of friction was ignorance of the men's conditions and attitudes" by their junior officers.¹⁴²

The infantry lieutenant's condemnation of an officer with "a belittling and inhuman kind" of personality, points to one of the major shortcomings of the new officers. The historian and World War II veteran, Paul Fussell, complained that one of the most irritating, soul-crushing, and morale-sapping elements in the relationship between the leader and the led during the Second World War was the overweening presence of what he termed "chickenshit." In defining and describing "chickenshit," Fussell notes,

It does not imply complaint about the inevitable inconveniences of military life: overcrowding and lack of privacy, tedious institutional cookery, depravation of personality, general boredom. Nothing much can be done about these things. Chickenshit refers rather to behavior that makes military life worse than it needs to be: petty harassment of the weak by the strong; open scrimmage for power and authority and prestige; sadism thinly disguised as necessary discipline; a constant "paying off of old scores"; insistence on the letter rather than the spirit of ordinances. Chickenshit is so called- instead of horse- or bull- or elephant shit-

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴² Ibid., 31.

because it is small-minded and ignoble and takes the trivial seriously. Chickenshit can be recognized instantly because it never has anything to do with winning the war.¹⁴³

“Chickenshit” was a concept that would have been instantly recognizable to the American veterans of the Great War. For the fathers and older brothers of the “G. I. Generation,” the source of “chickenshit” was those young officers of “a belittling and inhuman kind” produced by the officers’ training camps and schools.

The “waging of chickenshit” was the source of frequent comment by the war’s doughboys and revealed the deep current of resentment that some of the new officers intentionally or inadvertently built-up in their units. The following examples provide an indication of the scope and impact of “chickenshit” in the AEF. Private Albert Ettinger recalled that his company of the 165th Infantry was unlucky enough to have assigned to it an OTC graduate who was “meaner than hell and disliked by most of the men.” This second lieutenant “thought himself a combination of Caesar, Napoleon, and Hannibal,” and refused to listen to the experienced NCOs of the unit. Soon after arriving in the unit, the officer kicked Ettinger when he found him sleeping after drill and humiliated him in front of the company. The unit’s enlisted men grew so tired of the lieutenant’s behavior that they constantly sought ways to bring him down, and enjoyed playing him off against the company’s other officers who equally loathed the martinet.¹⁴⁴

While billeted in a shell torn French town close to the front, Corporal Frank Faulkner of the 23rd Infantry used a lull in the fighting to wash and dry his mud-covered leggings. Leaving the leggings to dry, he went to the nearby company kitchen to get grease to oil his boots. The officer of the day spotted Faulkner near the kitchen and placed him under arrest for appearing in

¹⁴³ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 80.

¹⁴⁴ Ettinger, 13-14, 39-42, 44.

the cratered streets out of proper uniform.¹⁴⁵ In Archibald Hart's company, one lieutenant developed a reputation for both meanness and pettiness. In front of one of soldier's visiting parents and girlfriend, the lieutenant ordered the man to give him his rifle for inspection. Since the man was on guard duty, he was not permitted to relinquish the arm to anyone. After the officer repeated the order and the soldier gave him the rifle, the lieutenant placed the man under arrest and marched him to the brig- thus eliminating the possibility of the soldier receiving a pass to spend time with his family.¹⁴⁶

The attitudes and posturing of young officers quickly alienated Private Paul Maxwell from his first moments in the army. As his train arrived at Petersburg, Virginia, "Before anyone could move, a Second Lieutenant, fresh out of training school, entered each end of the coach barking orders a la Black Jack Pershing."¹⁴⁷ Upon reaching the Camp Lee, the group of recruits were met by a long-service regular NCO who, Maxwell noted, was much more courteous and professional and "not at all like the strutting, newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenants who were literally bursting at the seams with self importance."¹⁴⁸

It did not take Maxwell long to become familiar with the inanity of army life and the advantages enjoyed by his officers. Along with 20 other recruits that arrived with him in camp, his first duty was to move a pile of lumber from one location to another location a few hundred yards away. It was pouring rain at the time and they had yet to be issued any raincoats or

¹⁴⁵ Corporal Frank LaPierre Faulkner, 23rd IN, 2nd Div, unpublished manuscript in USAMHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Another soldier noted that young officers had a fixation on keeping men in proper uniform. He recalled "LT. Smith stop[ed] me this afternoon, and asked what I thought the buttons on my coat were for. I asked him what the joke was. Guess there was no joke about it or if there was he couldn't see it, because he got pretty mad and said, "You'll have to get wise to yourself. Keep those buttons buttoned and take some of that junk out of your pockets... when I get away from home I decided that if having one button unbuttoned caused all that trouble, I had better be more careful." Quoted in James H. Hallas, *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War I* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 18.

¹⁴⁶ Archibald Hart, *Company K of Yesterday* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969), 31-2.

¹⁴⁷ Unpublished manuscript in, CPL Paul E. Maxwell, Camp Lee, 314th Field Artillery and Veterinary Training School, File WWI-6694, MHI World War I Veterans' Survey, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania., 7.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

ponchos, and were thus, “soon soaked to the skin.” Maxwell could not fail to notice that the lieutenant supervising his rather wet detachment was, “wearing a rubberized hat cover, long rain coat and rubber boots” and gave no thought to the men’s discomfort.¹⁴⁹ The young soldier generally praised the long-service Regular Army senior officers and NCOs he encountered. He stated that those notables, “far outweighed the disdain I feel for the small minority of junior officers whose conceit and lack of ability should disqualify them for positions of Leadership.”¹⁵⁰

Soldiers resented the petty indignities that poor, or thoughtless, junior leaders could heap upon them. In one unit, the company commander would curtly remind a soldier that “You’re at attention” if the man eased his body after saluting and reporting to him. Furthermore,

When the captain entered the lower hall and “*Attention!*” was not called, or was called in a weak voice, the man who failed in his duty was made to repeat “*Attention!*” until he could call it out and call it out loudly. For him who failed to leap to his feet at the same warning, there were a few jumping lessons until he acquired the agility of a jack-in-the-box. If a new recruit, after a week or two in the battery, was asked by the captain for his name, and answered, “Brown,” all the officials from the lowest ranking corporal to the ranking lieutenant were brought to account for that man not knowing enough to affix his title “Private.”¹⁵¹

The other extreme of such pettifoggery was the tendency of officers to see their soldiers not as individuals but rather as an anonymous mass. Charles MacArthur chaffed at the practice where “Hey you” became the universal nickname given to soldiers by officers.¹⁵² Captain Will Judy, of the 33rd Division, shrewdly observed that the soldier preferred “to be called by his name rather than private,” because his name was “his last hold on individuality.”¹⁵³

Officers who stood on their dignity, demanded undue privileges, or enforced petty and trifling regulations left a lasting and negative impression on the soldiers they encountered. The

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵¹ *The Battery Book: A History of Battery “A”, 306th F.A.* (New York: The DeVinne Press, 1921), 28.

¹⁵² MacArthur, 66.

¹⁵³ Judy, 19.

actions and attitudes that Lucian Truscott witnessed in junior officers in World War I influenced his leadership even after he became a general in World War II. Shortly after being commissioned from the ranks in 1917, Truscott noted,

Young officers were impressed with the concept that it was the responsibility of every officer to enforce all orders and to maintain the customs and traditions of the service. Some young officers seemed to regard this as almost a recreational activity... Woe betide the hapless recruit who passed one of these “ninety day wonders” without rendering the appropriate honors or with blouse unbuttoned or uniform otherwise awry. “Well soldier, where do you think you are going?” “Down town.” “Don’t you know you’re supposed to say ‘Sir’ to an officer?” “Yessir.” “Well, let’s see you salute properly.” Then repeated salutes and corrections until the officer was satisfied... and then the soldier would go on his way, his evening ruined. Then the young officer would seek another diversion. No doubt such incidents were repeated in every town adjacent to military camps. It is not surprising that so many men ended the war with a hatred of things military, for which they blamed the Regular Army.¹⁵⁴

Luckily, a bit more experience with troops seems to have weaned most of the new officers from their attachment to the “chickenshit” that Truscott and the other soldiers listed above had witnessed or endured.

It is impossible to know how prevalent the abuse of power and status was in the AEF’s officer corps. The number of references made to it in the Morale Branch Officers’ Survey and other accounts by participants indicate that it certainly happened more frequently than it needed to. The fact that a number of junior officers recognized and condemned the practice points to a probability that it was common enough to merit their comments. For example, one officer remorsefully noted that “there is considerable ‘bullying’ and ‘lording it over’” enlisted men by officers “that accomplishes no useful purpose.”¹⁵⁵ Hopefully, Corporal Maxwell was right in his estimation that it was only a “small minority of junior officers whose conceit and lack of

¹⁵⁴ Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *The Twilight of the Cavalry: Life in the Old Army 1917-1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 15-16.

¹⁵⁵ Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 19-f.

ability...disqualify them for positions of Leadership.”¹⁵⁶ However, that minority of leaders who continued to revel in the assumed power and glory of their august positions remained a drain on small unit leadership throughout the war and contributed to the litany of other problems faced by the AEF.

Sadly, the Regular Army’s efforts to instill a great social distance between the ranks, and insistence upon absolute discipline and obedience by soldiers to officers, was so pervasive that even those officers who rejected the notions often found it difficult to challenge those institutional norms and expectations. The shared danger and conditions of combat tended to bring officers and men together. Unfortunately, the institutional expectations sometimes meant that this meeting of the minds was short lived. Captain W. A. Sirmon recalled with sorrow that soon after his unit was pulled out of the Argonne fighting, his commanders returned to “tinsoldering.” He noted, “officers so lately snuggling by the most humble privates in shell holes, were once again bedecked in their Camp Gordon dignity.”¹⁵⁷

Aside from the issues of officer-man relations, the AEF also faced friction between its company, field, and flag-grade officers. One of the major criticisms of the senior officers by their captains and lieutenants was that the majors, colonels and generals were out of touch with the new realities of war. Captain Mark Clark, who later commanded the 5th Army in World War II, noted that a number of old Regular Army officers were out of their depths when confronted with the realities of modern warfare. He recalled that one old major’s professional horizons seemed to be limited solely to inspecting his soldiers feet during marches and training to make sure that they were following proper procedures for podiatry care. He ruefully noted, “So many

¹⁵⁶ Maxwell, 18.

¹⁵⁷ Sirmon, 270.

of these old-timers were just out of it when it came to the tactics of the type of war we had in France.”¹⁵⁸

Likewise, Second Lieutenant Herman Dacus recalled that shortly before the St. Mihiel offensive, his regiment received a new colonel who had spent most of the war in the Philippines. The colonel tried to convince his veteran junior officers that “the best way to wipe out a machine gun was to crawl up on it a half mile across an open field.” At the end of the first day’s fighting at St. Mihiel, the same officer ordered Dacus’ company commander to have his company dig complete trench lines instead of foxholes for its overnight stay, even though the unit was in reserve and not near the front lines. After the colonel left, the captain and the lieutenant “forgot” to issue the order.¹⁵⁹ The commander of the 80th Division’s 160th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier General Lloyd Brett, told one of his dumbfounded officers, “we have attacked the Germans twice, and all that instruction in America, telling us about the new methods of warfare was so much foolishness. It’s the same old Indian warfare. There is nothing new about it.”¹⁶⁰

Junior officers were even more critical of staff officers. One soldier denounced the fact that “the staffs in the rear had no experience at the front,” and “were bothersome in their ideas.”¹⁶¹ An infantry officer in the 82nd Division was equally irritated at the interference of the staff officers of his higher headquarters. On 6 September 1918, he noted,

Worse than a German offensive is the drive of staff officers launched against us by someone higher up. I spent several hours listening to staff officers who have never had even an ambush patrol beyond our own wire, tell how an enemy machine gun nest should be cleared out.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in, Berry, *Make the Kaiser Dance*, 164.

¹⁵⁹ Herman Dacus, 28th IN, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

¹⁶⁰ Stringfellow, 271-2. Officers who responded to the Morale Branch Survey were very critical of their superiors’ lack of technical and tactical understanding of modern war. See Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 20-22.

¹⁶¹ *The Battery Book: A History of Battery “A”, 306th F.A.*, 174.

¹⁶² Sirmon, 193-4.

In a similar vein, Lieutenant Hugh Thompson wrote that while his unit was serving its tour in the front line trenches of a French sector, a senior inspector from GHQ ordered another officer to fire the flare signaling the artillery to fire a protective barrage. The colonel wanted to “test” the artillery to see if they were on their toes and ready to fire. Although the young officer tried to explain to his superior that such tests were ordered via telephone, and that the flares were only for real emergencies, the colonel gave the officer a pointed lecture on insubordination and ordered the man to fire the flare. Thompson recalled that “the colonel had then demanded, during the resulting volcano” of fire that the junior officer “have the barrage stopped and had been dumbfounded to learn that no one could halt the whiz-bangs once the signal for the barrage had been given.” The colonel’s rather silly actions unmasked the supporting artillery’s gun positions and fire plans and forced much reorganization and movement the next day.¹⁶³

Captains and lieutenants were also angered by discourteous or high-handed treatment at the hands of their superiors. The junior officers, who were in many cases well-educated business or professional men, were not used to being treated in a patronizing or brash manner.

Dissatisfied with his brigade commander's lack of tact and leadership, one captain indignantly noted,

The General has ridden us so constantly and consistently about picayunish details that he has his entire staff demoralized. I appreciate the difference between disciplinary reprimand and a cursing out. The General isn't careful [about] which he uses these days.¹⁶⁴

As his company passed his car-borne regimental commander during the march up to the line for the St. Mihiel Offensive, Captain B. A. Colonna was greeted by the colonel’s impatient exhortations for his unit to “Step out.” Since the soldiers had been marching for hours on roads that were little more than patches of deep and glutinous mud while weighed down by full packs

¹⁶³ Hugh Thompson, 75-6.

¹⁶⁴ Sirmon, 145.

and ammunition loads, Colonna recalled that his men “showed our military discipline and Christian forbearance by not saying what we thought of this request.”¹⁶⁵ One officer decried that “the majority of work in the army is obtained by nagging at subordinate officers and by threats of various kinds,” while another noted that “General officers [were] usually childish and autocratic in minor details.”¹⁶⁶ As will be seen in the next chapter, field and flag-grade officers were just as quick to criticize their subordinates for lack of initiative, clumsy tactics, and poor leadership.

For all of the problems with this methodology and, sometimes, conclusions, S. L. A. Marshall was correct when he noted, “The battlefield is cold. It is the loneliest place which men may share together.”¹⁶⁷ The ability of soldiers to overcome the isolation and inertia that this unique human environment creates is unit cohesion that is built, nurtured, and maintained by the organization’s junior leaders. Darryl Henderson argues that the leaders that are most effective in building this small unit solidarity are those who are consistently competent in their positions and are able to build a relationship with their soldiers based on the close bonds of mutual understanding and respect.

When examining combat leadership in the AEF, there were many obstacles that hindered the creation of this type of leadership. Many, if not most, of the army’s officers, especially from the National Guard, were able to overcome these pitfalls to lead their units with grace, competence, and skill. Unfortunately, a number of other officers fell victim to the egotism of power and privilege, and the Regular Army’s strict vision of discipline, obedience, and the separation of the ranks. These officers proved themselves to be burdens to their soldiers and detriments to the effectiveness of their units. Furthermore, backbiting and mistrust between Regular Army, National Guard, and National Army officers, and also between the leaders and

¹⁶⁵ Colonna, 44.

¹⁶⁶ Morale Branch Officers’ Survey, 19-a, 19-b.

¹⁶⁷ S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publishing, 1978), 44.

the led of all ranks, undermined cohesion and further damaged the fighting power and morale of the AEF by spreading discontentment and uncertainty within the army's units. When these leadership issues were added to the AEF's other problems in training, doctrine, and personnel policy, the army faced a rough and bloody road as it entered major combat operations in 1918.

The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the AEF

The French Marshall Ferdinand Foch is credited to have remarked that “It takes 15,000 casualties to train a major general.” Although this assertion sounds rather cold blooded to modern ears, the Marshall was offering an honest assessment of the grim internal logic of combat in the Great War. None of the major combatants was truly prepared for the bleak realities of the mass attritional warfare they encountered on the Western Front. Sadly, senior officers had to pass through the bitter schooling of experience, a schooling whose matriculation was paid for in time and the consumption of human life, before they could understand even the vaguest outlines of the battlefield challenges that they faced. If Foch was right about the number of casualties required to train a general in World War I, one wonders how many casualties did it take to train the war’s company commanders, and the platoon and squad leaders?

Marshal Foch also made one other incisive observation. He once advised young officers, “There is no studying on the battlefield. It is simply a case of doing what is possible, to make use of what one knows and, in order to make a little possible, one must know much.”¹ Many of the problems faced by the war’s senior leaders were the same as those faced by junior leaders; they differed only in scope and scale. Both had to find the enemy and divine their strength and intentions, employ fires to suppress or neutralize the enemy, coordinate fire with maneuver, match tactics and movement to the given terrain and enemy, plan and execute resupply efforts, and maintain command and control to keep their subordinates directed toward achieving the mission of the higher headquarters. In other words, this was the “much” that Foch believed the leaders had to know “in order to make a little possible.” As the captains, lieutenants, and NCOs learned how to accomplish these vital tasks, what was the acceptable “wastage” of soldiers in the

¹ Quoted in U.S. Army Infantry School, *Infantry in Battle* (Washington D.C.: Infantry Journal, 1939), 137.

school of hard knocks? As the AEF entered major combat in the summer and fall of 1918, this unforgiving school was open, and the answer to this disconcerting question was unknown.

Before examining the combat performance of the AEF's junior leaders and the challenges they faced in the second half of 1918, it is important to discuss the nature of combat on the Western Front. This will focus mainly on the problems of the attacker, for the AEF was on the tactical and operational offense through most of the period of its active campaigning. First of all, the confluence of a number of factors created a "perfect storm" of attritional realities that tended to favor the war's defender over its attackers. Attacking infantry faced grave challenges in bringing forward enough firepower to suppress the enemy defenders long enough for the assault to cross "the fire swept ground." Tactical communications, especially those used for controlling artillery fires, also favored the defenders. The attacker's often cumbersome means for communicating with his superiors or supporting artillery had to be carried forward with him during the assault. Any failure in communications might delay needed reserve forces and precious supporting fires or prevent senior officers from exploiting success or avoiding disaster.

The war was above all an artillery war. Few attacks on the Western Front gained any degree of headway without a thorough and concentrated use of artillery fires. Unfortunately, artillery presented the attacker with a great dilemma. The attacker had to use large amounts of artillery to enable the infantry to "break in" to the defender's lines. However, the use of that artillery so cratered and scared the landscape that it made it exceptionally difficult for the attacker to move forward the reinforcements, supplies, and cannon that enabled him to turn the "break in" into a rapid and winning "break out."

With the attacker lacking the mobile communications, logistics, and fire support to turn tactical success into an operational victory, combat became a grinding attritional contest. This

contest pitted the staying power of the defender against the will and ability of the attacker to accept the cost of coming to grips with the enemy. The 2nd Division's Lieutenant Wendell Westover offered a vivid example of these sad attritional realities in his description of an infantry platoon's efforts to reduce a German machine gun position during the attack on Blanc Mount Ridge in early October 1918. He observed,

The section attacking a Boche machine gun, deployed in a long thin line; first a few men on one flank would rush forward a short distance, then, as the fire was directed at their attack, those on the other end would make a quick advance. The flanks were creeping outward and the line developing into an arc which would eventually envelop the gun position- that is if a sufficient number of survivors was left to reach it. This was no parade ground demonstration, even though it was nicely executed. Already five men lay still on the ground over which they had come. The right squad sprang up and forward. One, two, four men dropped; staggering, slumping forward to the ground. The rest threw themselves into shell holes and paused. They were close now, but where there had been thirty men a few moments before, only nine were still able to move. Of these, two more fell in the final assault. There was a pause at the gun, and they spread out and continued to advance- carrying on the attack under a newly appointed leader.²

Despite the efforts of all the major combatants to change the tactical equation illustrated in Westover's passage by fielding new technologies (such as poison gas and tanks), developing new tactics (such as the techniques of infiltration), or adjusting the weight, mix or method of artillery fires, none was able to break the attritional realities that bound them during the war. The odds remained stacked against the attacker, and his successes, like that of the 2nd Division's platoon, were generally pyrrhic in nature.

None of the war's leaders was able to change the Great War's ugly and fixed attritional core. Tactical, operational, and strategic victory only came when the enemy reached the point of exhaustion. As no one could change this core reality, the attacker could only adjust the variables of combat on the margins of this type of war in an attempt to tip the attritional balance ever-so-slightly in his favor. It was on these margins of attritional warfare where combat leadership

² Wendell Westover, *Suicide Battalions* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), 209.

came into play. On these margins, a small unit leader could try to wring every possible advantage out of a given combat situation by adapting his tactics, employing his firepower, and using his manpower to inflict relatively more damage on the enemy than was absorbed by his unit. In other words, the battalion, company, and platoons were still going to bleed men, but the question was, in that bleeding, could the leader compel the enemy to hemorrhage his human and materiel resources at an unsustainable rate?

The “margins of combat” in attritional warfare were related to both the materiel and the moral. The material aspects dealt with numbers: numbers of men, numbers and quality of weapons, amount and quality of food, and amount of ammunition. The moral aspects were tied to the training and confidence of the soldiers and leaders, the willingness of soldiers to sacrifice for their comrades and cause, the ability of the leader to match tactics, formations, and weapons to variations in the terrain and enemy, and the ability of the leader to inspire, over awe or cajole his troops to follow him. This examination into the effectiveness of the AEF’s junior combat leaders will focus on their ability to manipulate the variables of manpower, weapons, tactics, and the power of leadership to achieve their missions within the bounds of “acceptable losses.”

Defining “acceptable losses” is problematic because it shall always reside in the eye of the beholder, especially when it relates to an attritional war. One could argue, with some validity, that the Allied armies’ ability to grind the German forces down in 1918 meant that regardless of any “wastage” at the tactical level, the means of attrition ultimately achieved the strategic end. While accurate, this thought was far from comforting to the American soldiers of the war. During the Great War, American units remained in combat well after enduring casualties that would render modern U. S. Army companies and battalions combat ineffective. However, the participant accounts suggest that the AEF GHQ and the American soldiers

understood the definition of “acceptable losses.” For example, the GHQ was shocked by the losses of the Aisne-Marne Campaign and took steps to prevent such future bloodletting. As there was, and is, no universal standard for “acceptable losses” or the point at which a unit becomes combat ineffective, the author will leave it to the reader to draw their own conclusions based on the evidence and statements made from the participants themselves.

In examining small unit combat leadership in the AEF, we must start with an understanding of the tactical world in which the junior leaders lived, and the “physics” that governed their combat. “Combat physics” is about matter and energy: those physical realities that circumscribed the junior leader’s range of options in combat. An example of this would be the weight and ammunition consumption of a machine gun. The “combat physics” of an M1914 Hotchkiss machine gun informs the leader that regardless of any desire to have this weapon with the forward assault elements, its 109 pound mass will generally mean that its overburdened crew will fall behind as the less encumbered riflemen push forward, or that its struggling and easily identifiable crew will draw the attention of the enemy long before the gun could be brought into action. Unlike scientific physics, the “laws” of combat physics are not fixed. Thus, while the weight of the machine gun did not change, the ability of the crew to bring the gun into action could be governed by intangibles such as the physical and mental state of the crew after days in combat, their morale, the inspiration (or lack there of) of leadership, or the skill or luck of the crew in finding a safe route to the objective. Understanding the tactical world of the junior leaders and combat physics provides an opportunity to recognize more clearly the range of the possible when it came to their actions and leadership in battle.

The first thing to note of the junior leaders’ tactical world was its chaotic nature. This was not just the typical and all important fog and friction of combat, but also the overarching

chaotic atmosphere that characterized life in the U. S. Army during the war. As has been noted in previous chapters, junior leaders were constantly buffeted by change- change in weapons, change in doctrine, and change in personnel. Each of these changes brought with it technical, tactical, and leadership realities that increased the complexity of leading small units. Not long after the war, Colonel John Parker noted that with the wartime ballooning of support weapons, “the infantry organization has now reached such a complexity that the infantry regiment in combat is difficult to manage; from the unit command of a platoon leader up to include the regiment as a whole.” He pointed out that “the platoon leader has at least seven different weapons, four of which are organized in teams that lose their efficiency with the loss of a single expert. The company commander has the same problem, and the battalion commander has it in a still greater degree.”³ When the Americans entered major combat in the fourth year of the war, it was an army of 1914 thrust with bewildering rapidity into 1918. As Parker alluded to, in very short order the Americans had to adopt new organizational schemes, weapons, tactics, and concepts of waging war that were alien to their previous ways of thinking and acting. Leaders at every level were confronted with new realities for which nothing in their previous education, training, or experience had prepared them to meet. It was into this maelstrom of change that the junior leaders of the AEF were thrust.

When examining the tactical world of the AEF’s infantry captains, lieutenants and NCOs, it is wise to start with the role that artillery played in the lives of their units. Unquestionably, artillery was the king of the tactical world faced by the AEF’s junior leaders. It was the greatest casualty producer during the war. It voraciously gobbled men during large scale battles and

³ COL. John Parker, “Simplifying the Organization and Tactics of Infantry,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 7 (January 1920), 567.

constantly nibbled away at them in the line during periods of relative quiet.⁴ For the attacker, artillery offered four great hopes: first, that its preparatory fires would destroy enemy troop concentrations, strong points, and barbed wire; second, that its counter-battery fires would stave off the fury of the enemy's artillery; third, that its rolling barrages would suppress the enemy's defense fires and force them underground, thus allowing the infantry an easy crossing of the deadly ground; lastly, that the shelling of the enemy's rear areas would impede the flow of reinforcements and supplies to the front line long enough for the attackers to consolidate their gains. Without the powerful support of artillery, the attacking infantry seldom had any chance to achieve their objectives unless they were willing to undergo a dreadful bloodletting.

Historian Mark Grotelueschen notes that some of the AEF's senior leaders, such as Major General Charles Summerall, recognized the attritional nature of the Great War and embraced a doctrine based on the of seizing limited objectives by attacks using a liberal amount of artillery. Furthermore, as American divisions came to appreciate the firepower realities of modern war and woke to the fact that the GHQ's "open warfare" was not a viable solution to the tactical challenges confronting them, they devised their own firepower and maneuver solutions to minimize casualties while still destroying the enemy.⁵ Allowing for detailed planning, logistical preparation, and good liaison between the infantry and the artillery, the American cannoners were a lethal bunch.

There can be no question that the American artillery grew to be a fearsome weapon in the last six months of the war. Time and time again in the fall of 1918, German officers commented

⁴ Beaumont Buck recorded that in the weeks leading up to the Cantigny battle his brigade lost an average of 50 men per day, the vast majority to artillery. Unpublished diary of Major General Beaumont Buck, Beaumont Buck Papers, U.S. Army Cavalry Museum Archives, Ft. Riley, KS.

⁵ Mark E. Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Fire: American Artillery Employment in World War I* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 141-152., Mark E. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 36-8, 343-352.

on the effectiveness of the doughboy artillery. The Germans facing an attack by the American 2nd Division at Blanc Mont in early October 1918 noted that the American preparatory fires knocked out 50 percent of the machine guns of one of the machine gun companies of the 74th Reserve Infantry Regiment and caused 25 percent casualties in another.⁶ An officer of the German 102nd Infantry regiment reported,

Only when there is an incomparably strong artillery preparation, as on 23 October 1918, when our forward garrisons lacked sufficient shelter, can an [American] attack gain ground. The artillery preparation was effective because a monstrous amount of artillery was expended.⁷

Although this German officer was dismissive of American infantry and disdainful of the AEF's prodigious use of shells, his comments also betrayed an element of fear and foreboding.

It was not just the Germans who were impressed by the power of the American artillery. A number of doughboys also praised the work of the guns. Captain Clarence Minick, a company commander in the 361st Infantry, was impressed with the effectiveness of the American artillery on the first day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. On 26 September 1918, he wrote in his diary, "our barrage of the night before had been wonderful for 'she' had done the dirty" for there was nothing left of the German front lines.⁸ In a board convened in April 1919 to study the "lessons learned" of the war and recommended changes to infantry organization, Major R. C. Birmingham, of the 11th Infantry, flatly declared "it is always necessary to have artillery preparation in order to make a successful advance without ruinous losses." In the heresies of heresies, he even went so far as to state, "rifle fire in the late war has not proved to be the

⁶ Ernst Otto, *The Battle at Blanc Mont* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1930), 31-3.

⁷ Report from the 102nd Regt. to the 63rd Inf. Bde, NARA RG 165, Box 200, German Miscellaneous File. I thank Dr. D. Scott Stephenson, Department of History, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College for bringing this report to my attention.

⁸ Entry for 26 September 1918 in the diary of CPT Clarence J. Minick, Clarence J. Minick Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri. This sentiment was shared by soldiers of the 47th Infantry, who noted that the power of the American artillery only grew over time in the Argonne. James E. Pollard, *The Forty-Seventh Infantry, A History 1917-1918-1919* (Saginaw: Press of Seeman & Peters, 1919), 66., Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Fire*, 120-5.

important factor it was thought to be.”⁹

Although the artillery was inextricably linked to the American infantry’s chance of success, it was far from being a tactical panacea. The effectiveness of artillery in World War I was tied to a number of factors governed by combat physics and the Clausewitzian fog and friction of war. The greatest problem of the artillery was responsiveness: the ability for the guns to provide immediate fires for the attacking infantry to destroy or suppress the enemy defenders wherever they were encountered. American artillery was most effective when it had the time to identify confirmed and probable enemy locations, had amassed enough shells to destroy these targets, and had seamlessly coordinated its fire plan with the infantry’s scheme of maneuver. It was generally in the initial bombardments of an offensive, or the preliminary bombardments supporting planned attacks, that the gunners, commanders, and staff planners had the time needed to bring these requirements into alignment.

It was after the initial planned bombardments that the infantry and artillery began to run into problems. The major obstacle to responsive fires and good liaison (to use the period term) between the infantry and artillery was communications. Shortly after the Armistice, the AEF GHQ convened a board of senior officers to examine the overall changes that should be made to American organizations, tactics, and doctrine based on the AEF’s combat experience. The Superior Board reported that during offensive operations, the artillery’s greatest problem was the lack of “a fully organized system of observation and quick communication adapted to the new conditions” of the attack. The board’s officers wrote that “the position of the enemy guns and of his infantry were not known as had been the case in trench warfare, and the machinery for

⁹ General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No. 98, GHQ AEF, 09 April 1919*, Appendix R, 1. (Hereafter cited as the Lewis Board) in USAMHI Library, Carlisle Barracks, PA.

getting this information, for quickly transmitting it, and for promptly securing adjusted fire were not adequate.”¹⁰

The need for “securing adjusted fire” was predicated on the changing nature of the enemy’s defense. On 5 September 1918, the AEF GHQ published *Combat Instructions* in the hope of preventing American commanders from repeating some of the costly mistakes that AEF units had made during the summer battles of 1918. *Combat Instructions* bluntly informed the American commanders that “the German machine gun constitute the principle weapon to be encountered by our infantry.”¹¹ The heavy losses of their infantry increasingly led the Germans to substitute machine gun firepower for its diminishing manpower. From the Aisne-Marne to the Meuse-Argonne, the American infantry faced enemy defenses that consisted largely of well sighted, protected, and concealed machine gun positions. These positions were generally tied in with flanking units with mutually supported interlocking fields of fire. As the Germans went to great lengths to conceal these positions, the attacking American infantry generally did not find them until the Germans opened fire. The cheapest (in terms of casualties) and most effective means for countering these positions was for the American infantry to use artillery. However, this required that someone at the point of the attack had to be able to contact the artillery and then accurately adjust its fires onto the enemy machine guns. This is where the system broke down.

At the battalion, company, and platoon level, at the point of impact between the American infantry and the German defenses, tactical communications were limited to wire,

¹⁰ AEF GHQ, *Report of Superior Board on Organization and Tactics* (Chaumont, France: AEF GHQ, 1919). (hereafter Superior Board) The Superior Board was convened under Paragraph IX, AEF GO 68, dated 19 April 1919, 41. For an example of this problem also see the 5th Division’s attack near Cunel on 11 October 1918, The Society of the Fifth Division, *The Official History of the Fifth Division* (Washington D.C.: Privately published, 1919), 143-5.

¹¹ AEF GHQ, *Combat Instructions* (Chaumont, France: AEF GHQ, 5 September 1918), 8.

runners, visual signals such as flares, or carrier pigeons. Each of these means of combat communications had built-in flaws that circumscribed the ability for the unit to call for and adjust artillery fires. Wire communications, the linking of telephone cables between field phones and switchboards, were the quickest and most responsive means that forward commanders had at their disposal for staying in contact with their higher headquarters and artillery units.

Unfortunately, this wire had to be spooled out by signal parties who moved with the infantry as they pushed forward. This was a laborious and dangerous task. One signalman recalled that,

The St. Mihiel affair was a veritable nightmare for the telephone men in the artillery. After the first jump-off we were advancing so rapidly that it was nearly impossible to maintain communications; and at no time was it more important. We would advance to a new position, and just about the time we had communication we would advance again. It kept up this way for five days and nights. We would lose men and equipment so fast that I wonder we did anything at all. For example, we were always out of wire. We would use German wire, or any old wire we could we could lay our hands on.¹²

Although the pace of the advance slowed during the Meuse-Argonne Campaign, the problems described in this passage continued to plague wire communications to the end of the war.

Wire communications were also vulnerable to shell fire and accidental disruption. In the offense the line was laid on top of the ground or hastily strung from trees or other accessible locations. Of course this meant that any random shell, passing vehicle or clumsy doughboy could sever the connection with ease. A lineman later wrote that the “universal lament” of signalers was that “artillery, with their heavy gun carriages and cumbersome equipment, were everlastingly ripping up their field wire and imposing upon the already overburdened signal troops a never-ending task of maintenance.”¹³ If the line was broken between the infantry and the guns, someone had the time consuming task of following the wire back and repairing the break. This task was often done under enemy fire.

¹² A. Lincoln Lavine, *Circuits of Victory* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1921), 507-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 511.

The infantry could also use visual signals or carrier pigeons to contact the artillery. Visual signals could be sent via rockets, very gun flares or flashing electric lights. The use of visual signals required that both parties see and understand the meaning of the signals. While this sounds to be quite simple, it was not always so in practice. A battalion commander in the 353rd Infantry noted that during the St. Mihiel operation the division and regiment's system of communications was so convoluted that just minutes prior to the unit going over the top, he and four of his company commanders were "earnestly engaged in trying to get an understanding of the signals to be used and the meaning of them."¹⁴ Another trouble with visual signals was that it was difficult to convey anything more than a simple message. Although a signal flare or rocket easily indicated that the artillery should lift its fires or fire on a pre-determined target, it was quite another to use them for the involved process of calling for and adjusting fire on unplanned targets or targets of opportunity.

The use of carrier pigeons was also problematic. The Signal Corps trained over 15,000 birds during the war and claimed that "they delivered more than 95 per cent of the messages intrusted (sic) to them."¹⁵ However, the birds were susceptible to gas and could be difficult to manage. As with so many things in the AEF, units seemed to get them just as they were going into the line. As his battalion was moving forward for an attack in the Argonne, one infantry officer recalled that a regimental signal officer gave him a number of pigeon cages to carry forward as well as "a lengthy discussion as to the care and keeping of that particular species of

¹⁴ Captain Charles Dienst, et al., *They're From Kansas: History of the 353rd Infantry Regiment, 89th Division, National Army* (Wichita: The Eagle Press, 1921), 261. Hervey Allen recalled that just as his unit was going into its attack on Fismes in August 1918, each platoon was issued with rockets to signal for an artillery barrage. He noted that the problem was, "for the most part, none of us had the slightest idea how to use" the rockets, and they had come with no instructions. Hervey Allen, *Towards the Flame* (New York: Farrar & Rienhart, 1926), 220-1.

¹⁵ War Department, *America's Munitions 1917-1918: Report of Benedict Crowell the Assistant Secretary of War Director of Munitions* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 581.

bird and the method of sending messages and the like.” He was dismissive of the bird’s capabilities and pushed them off on a signal sergeant rather than taking them to the front.¹⁶

Limits in the number of available birds, and to the number of cages that the infantry could carry in the front line, restricted the number of messages that could be sent by carrier pigeons by any combat unit. The units of the “Lost Battalion,” for example, only carried forward seven birds during its attack into the Argonne Forrest.¹⁷

Lastly, the leaders at the battalion level and below could use runners to keep in touch with their higher headquarters and artillery. Runners were the slowest and most vulnerable means of communications. As a result of the 1st Division’s experiences during the Aisne-Marne Campaign, Major General Charles Summerall made a futile attempt to prohibit the use of runners for tactical communications, because they were “slow and uncertain and the casualties among them are out of proportion to the service that they render.”¹⁸ Runners were also susceptible to a wide range of human frailties. In the midst of the Argonne fighting Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence sent his two runners back to warn his superiors of a possible enemy counterattack, only to have the pair disappear. A search for the missing men later found the two sleeping in an abandoned German dugout. When questioned, they confessed to having failed to deliver the message and

¹⁶ Ashby Williams, *Experiences of the Great War* (Roanoke: Stone Printing, 1919), 126-7. Williams noted that in some units soldiers ate the pigeons as their rations ran low.

¹⁷ Robert H. Ferrell, *Five Days in October: The Lost Battalion of World War I* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 25-7, 36. Ferrell attempts to debunk the legend of Cher Ami, the pigeon credited with carrying a message that stopped the fratricidal fire of American artillery on the Lost Battalion on 4 October 1918. However, the “Lost Battalion’s” pigeons did ensure that the battalion was never truly lost, as a bird released on 3 October informed the 77th Division of its location. Also see, Thomas M. Johnson and Fletcher Pratt, *The Lost Battalion* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1936), 73-76, 135-7. It must be noted that the “Lost Battalion’s” first pigeon message from the pocket did request American artillery support to silence a German battery shelling their position.” However, it only gave a general direction from which the shells were coming, and thus the American gunners still had to locate and adjust fire on the guns.

¹⁸ Memorandum from Major General C. P. Summerall, Commander 1st Division, dated 25 August 1918 in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *Field Orders, First Division June 1, 1918, to Sept. 18, 1918* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

“protested that they were not yellow- they were worn out, dead tired.”¹⁹ Also, sending runners back and forth to report required adjustments to artillery fire was inefficient and ineffective. In its *Notes on Recent Operations Number 3*, published to capture the lessons learned from the St. Mihiel Offensive and the first week of fighting in the Meuse-Argonne, the AEF GHQ denounced the “general tendency...to place entirely too much dependence on the telephone, and, when the telephone fails, to resort immediately to messengers without attempting to use any other instrument over the lines already installed.”²⁰ Sadly, the infantry units closest to the front often had little recourse but to turn to runners to deliver its messages.

All of these issues exacerbated problems of fire support and command and control. Clare Kenamore argued that at least some of the confusion that characterized the 35th Division’s performance in the opening days of the Argonne Offensive was due to its chaotic signals and communications system. Wire forward was broken by fire; runners were killed and wounded; troops were uncertain of the meaning of signal flares and rockets, and some of the flare cartridges issued did not fit the flare guns of the division’s officers. When asked the location of one of the infantry regiments, one senior division staff officer could only say, “I wish I knew...and I wish I knew even where the brigade headquarters are.”²¹ Kenamore was not alone in pointing to the inadequate means for combat communications. An officer in the 140th Infantry recalled of his unit’s experiences in the Argonne and its baleful influence on fire support,

¹⁹ Joseph D. Lawrence, *Fighting Soldier* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 121.

²⁰ AEF GHQ, *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 3*, dated 12 October 1918, 20.

²¹ Clair Kenamore, *From Vauquois Hill to Exermont* (St Louis: Guard Publishing, 1919), 136-8. For other examples showing the problem with wire and other communication equipment see Ben Chastaine, *Story of the 36th* (Oklahoma City: Harlow Publishing Company, 1920), 171., Joseph Sanborn, *The 131st Infantry in the World War* (Chicago: Privately printed, 1919), 226., Evan A. Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun: The Official History of the 140th Infantry* (Lawrence: The World Company, 1920), 112., Kerr Rainsford, *From Upton to the Meuse with the Three Hundred and Seventh Infantry* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920), 161-2., Major General Charles M. Clement, ed., *Pennsylvania in the World War: An Illustrated History of the Twenty-Eighth Division*, Vol. I (Pittsburgh: States Publication Society, 1921), 348.

Another real difficulty lay in the lack of signal equipment. The artillery had been furnished with excellent wireless equipment- but none was given to the infantry, therefore it was useless. The telephone equipment was lacking, and the rocket-signals were of such a character as to be useless. The artillery- our own artillery- was ready to do its duty...But it was hampered by lack of information, as it was compelled to depend entirely on liaison through runners, and the information provided was not always correct. The runners displayed the greatest heroism ...and many of them gave their lives on the field.²²

Although American divisions made heroic efforts to correct the immediacy and responsiveness of artillery support by establishing intricate systems of liaison between infantry and artillery units, the AEF was never truly able to overcome the technical barriers this prevented rapid communications from the front line to the guns.²³

To offset the artillery's lack of responsiveness, the fire plans of the American divisions focused on providing heavy pre-planned preparatory fires and rolling barrages. The preparatory fires were intended to destroy identified and suspected enemy locations. The rolling barrage was based on the assumption that the preparatory fires were never going to kill all of the defenders, but by having a curtain of fire land just to the front of the advancing infantry, the enemy would be forced to seek shelter from the shells and thus be unable to fire on the attacking Americans. A rolling barrage required that the infantry and artillery adhere to a centralized and strictly regulated plan that was difficult to change after the fires began. As the rolling barrage proceeded at a fixed rate, the onus was on the infantry to stay as close to the falling shells as possible. When all went well, the effect of the rolling barrage was decisive to the success of the infantry. An infantry officer in the 36th Division remembered that during a 27 October 1918 attack on the Forest Ferme, his soldiers "followed the barrage so closely that they were almost 'leaning against it.'" The tactic worked so well that they caught the Germans while they were still in their

²² Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun*, 54-5.

²³ Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Fire*, 128. Grotelueschen notes that the 2nd Division made the best progress in synchronizing the firepower of the artillery with the maneuver of its infantry. However he notes that the division experienced trouble in providing fires after the first day on an attack in other than a "set piece" battle.

shelters and took their objective with light casualties.²⁴

Regrettably, the rigidity and complexity of the fire plan frequently often left the infantry without the vital support of suppressive fires at the very moment they needed them most. The divisions that arrived in the summer of 1918 faced a very steep learning curve when it came to planning and coordinating artillery fires. In his official report of his unit's action in the St. Mihiel Offensive, the commander of the 89th Division's 353rd Infantry, Colonel James Reeves, was critical of the artillery fire plan. Not only was it late in arriving, it was also so complex that it was impossible to be understood by "even the company commanders, much less the platoon commanders."²⁵ More importantly, unless there were very close liaison between the infantry and the artillery (to include intact communications links), anything that delayed the infantry advance, even momentarily, soon left the doughboys without protection as the barrage move forward on its set timelines. Delays in orders to attack, unexpected enemy contact, uncut barbed wire, or merely the difficulty that combat-worn and heavily-laden soldiers had in crossing muddy and shell-torn ground could all result in the dreaded "loss of the barrage." This sad fate even struck seasoned units with much experience in infantry-artillery cooperation. On 15 October 1918, officers of the veteran 3rd Division's 38th Infantry complained "that there was no way of holding the barrage on an objective when the infantry front line has been held up."²⁶

Other factors also limited the effectiveness of the artillery support given the American infantry. The IX Corps commander, Major General Henry Allen argued that when American units took the time to plan their operations with a view of synchronizing the firepower of all the arms with the maneuver of the infantry they did usually accomplished their missions, "with

²⁴ Chastaine, 229-233.

²⁵ Dienst, 257-9.

²⁶ Quoted in Memorandum from LTC James McIlroy, Forward Office, 1st Army Inspector General, Subject: Report of Inspection of 3rd Division 15 Oct. 18., dated 15 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

relatively small losses.” However, “when orders were given to exploit the ground to the front...the losses were often greater.” He maintained, “the cause of this was the continuation of the advance without proper preparation due to want of time to study the new front and to bring up the artillery to where it could be used.”²⁷ Artillery was not an asset that a division or brigade commander could turn on like a tap. It took time to move the guns into position, to plan targets, and to build stockpiles of shells for prolonged bombardments. As early as August 1918, the AEF GHQ reported in its study of the Aisne-Marne battle that “In several instances barrage orders were not received by the units charged with their execution in time to permit the numerous calculations necessary.”²⁸ Two months later, GHQ was still lamenting the difficulty in using divisional artillery after the initial advance due to the need to find targets and move forward.²⁹

Recognizing the problem and being able to fix it were not the same. Some things were simply beyond the ability of the artillerymen to repair. Artillery commanders always had to be mindful of the range limits of their guns. At some point in the battle they had to move their cannons forward to keep the advancing infantry within the protective umbrella of their fires. Unfortunately, the forward movement of weighty cannons and caissons, and more importantly, bringing forward the tons of shells consumed by the guns on a daily basis, was a challenge for the AEF throughout the war. In moving forward, the artillery and its vast logistical tail had to traverse devastated areas that slowed their movement to a crawl. This fact was not lost on the infantrymen. In the Meuse-Argonne, Ray Johnson stated, “we had been advancing too swiftly for the artillery supporting us, which was having great difficulty in moving up through the

²⁷ General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No.98, GHQ AEF 09 April 1919*, 9-10. (Here after cited as the Lewis Board) in USAMHI Library., Appendix S, 1.

²⁸ AEF GHQ, *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 1*, issued 7 August 1918.

²⁹ *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 3*, 10-11, 16-18. The report stated of the opening day of the Meuse-Argonne, “the handling of the divisional artillery after the trench to trench phase of the attack was unsatisfactory, as in the St. Mihiel operation.”

devastated terrain we had won.”³⁰ This sluggishness was worsened when the artillery had to use overburdened road networks like those of the Meuse-Argonne region.

There were limitations to what even the heaviest American artillery bombardment could do. If the timing of the fires was off and the infantry “lost the barrage,” if the fires did not neutralize the defenders, or if the infantry was simply unlucky, the effectiveness of the artillery was muted.³¹ If, for whatever reason, the coordination between the infantry and the guns broke down, infantry commanders were generally left with no other option than to push forward without support. Following the attacks in the Meuse-Argonne from 26 to 30 September 1918, the AEF general staff admonished field commander that “advances were generally too slow and too cautious. The fruits of victory were, therefore, not what they might have been.” GHQ criticized the tendency of infantry commanders to “remain inactive in the presence of relatively small hostile forces while waiting for orders, or for artillery support, or for machine guns, or missing grenades, etc.” The staff’s solution was simple:

It is seldom wrong to go forward. It is seldom wrong to attack. The best way to clear up a doubtful situation is to advance. In the attack it is better to lose many men than to fail to take ground. Inaction is the worst military crime.³²

The veiled threat in this message to infantry commanders was clear, and only stated what had long been known within the ranks of the AEF’s officer corps. Despite the AEF’s acknowledgement that artillery played a key role in the infantry’s success, the failure of the artillery was no excuse for the infantry to delay an attack. This point was made abundantly clear to Captain Charles Harrington, an acting battalion commander in the 308th Infantry. He was

³⁰ Ray N. Johnson, *Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken* (Cleveland: O. S. Hubbell Printing Company, 1919), 96. For a similar complaint see Emil B. Gansser, *History of the 126th Infantry in the War With Germany* (Grand Rapids: Dean Hicks Company, 1920), 166.

³¹ For example, while the 312th Infantry’s attack near Grand Pre on 19 October 1918 was preceded by a violent artillery barrage, the German defenders were well protected, and were left largely intact after the bombardment. The enemy emerged from their deep shelters to subject the Americans to a withering fire. *A History of the Three Hundred and Twelfth Infantry* (New York: Privately Published, 1919), 58-60.

³² *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 3*, 14.

relieved from command and sent to Blois on 5 September 1918 for refusing to attack during the Oise-Aisne drive after a promised artillery barrage failed to materialize.³³ This ugly reality also confronted the commander of the 32nd Division's 126th Infantry on 28 August 1918 when the unit's planned rolling barrage never occurred. After waiting 15 minutes, the commander made the agonizing decision to move forward only supported by the fire of his own machine guns. After two days of battling without much artillery support, the regiment was reduced to an effective strength of less than a thousand men.³⁴

For all the power of the American artillery, it could be a very fickle and temperamental tool. Infantry leaders at the company level and below had little to no say in the planning of artillery fires and very limited means to request artillery support after the battle began. Thus, for infantry captains, lieutenants, and NCOs, either the artillery fires came or they didn't. In either case, H Hour was H Hour and the infantry was going over the top with the fires or without them.

Although it is easy to deride Pershing for his desire to create "self-reliant infantry," the sad truth was that at some point in every one of the AEF's engagements, the terrain, the Americans' proximity to the enemy, or the break down of the coordination and cooperation between the infantry and its supporting artillery and machine guns, threw the American infantrymen upon their own resources. At these points, the doughboys could only rely upon the weapons that were organic to their companies, platoons, and squads. Given this reality, it is important to understand the capabilities and limitations of the weapons at the infantry's disposal and the levels at which they were controlled and wielded. This exploration will help to further define the tactical world of the junior infantry leaders and the skills they needed to succeed on the "margins of combat" in this attritional war.

³³ CPT Charles M. Harrington, Blois Case Files, Box 2299.

³⁴ Gansser, 145-153. For a similar problem see, Ashby Williams, 125-6.

The world of the infantry small unit leader was generally bounded by the confines of his regiment. Like all organizations in the U. S. Army, the war brought massive change to the size and composition of the regiment. Prior to the war, a full strength infantry regiment consisted of 51 officers and 1,500 enlisted men. With the exception of a provisional machine gun company containing six guns, the unit's remaining soldiers were armed with rifles or pistols.³⁵ By June 1918, the infantry regiment had grown to 112 officers and 3720 enlisted men. The regimental commander also controlled an organic machine gun company with 16 guns, a Stokes Mortar section of six tubes, and three 37mm guns.³⁶

The regiment was divided into three battalions each under the command of a major, and each battalion contained four rifle companies. The battalion contained no organic support weapons except for automatic rifles and rifle grenade launchers within their companies. However, it was standard practice in the AEF to attach the regiment's machine guns, Stokes Mortars, and 37mm guns to the lead assault battalion in the attack.³⁷ Given the relative scarcity of these heavy weapons, there were seldom enough to go around, and the battalion commanders seldom further detailed these weapons to his infantry companies.

The challenge for battalion commanders was how to integrate these support weapons into his maneuver scheme and tactics to best aid his infantrymen in accomplishing their missions. To achieve this, the battalion commander needed a firm grasp of the inherent technical capabilities and limitations of these weapons, as well as an idea of how they needed to be employed and

³⁵ U.S. Department of War, *Field Service Regulations of the United States Army, With Corrections to May 21, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 20-1.

³⁶ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. I, *Organization*, (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1988), 344.

³⁷ *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, 30-4., Memorandum from Major General C. P. Summerall, Commander 1st Division, dated 25 August 1918 in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *Field Orders, First Division June 1, 1918, to Sept. 18, 1918* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated., Memorandum from LTC James McIlroy, Forward Office, 1st Army Inspector General, Subject: Report of Inspection of 3rd Division 15 Oct. 18., dated 15 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

supplied to be effective in combat. If the commander understood these realities, the employment of support weapons was one of those variables on the margins of attritional warfare that could materially aid him in reducing friendly casualties while still accomplishing his unit's mission.

Let us examine these weapons and the challenges and benefits they brought. Heavy machine guns were the most common support weapons used in the AEF. The AEF generally used three types of machine guns: the French M1914 8 mm Hotchkiss, the 30.06 caliber M1915 U.S. copy of the British Vickers gun, and the 30.06 M1917 Browning gun. The Hotchkiss gun was issued to the first 12 American divisions that arrived in France. The 11 divisions that arrived between May and June 1918 were equipped with the M1915 Vickers, and all the divisions arriving after June were issued the M1917 Brownings.³⁸ Each of these guns had inherent advantages and disadvantages that affected their tactical use.

The M1914 Hotchkiss Gun had a rate of fire of 400 rounds per minute, but was fed by inserting 25 or 30 round metal strips into the side of the weapon. Although some of these strips could be connected into a 250 round "semi-articulated belt," this was a rather clumsy and fragile arrangement.³⁹ This machine gun had four major draw backs. First, it was an air-cooled gun, and thus was liable to overheat during prolonged firing. In all machine guns, overheating can result in jams or in the premature "cook off" of rounds due to heat, resulting in an uncontrollable "run-away" gun that continues to fire until the belt is expended or the gunner cuts or twists the belt to jam the weapon. The second problem with the Hotchkiss was the system for loading its metal strips. This meant that the gun's actual rate of fire was determined by the assistant

³⁸ War Department, *American Munitions: 1917-1918*, 169.

³⁹ The fragile strips often became a logistical nightmare. Since the machine gunners tended to discard the strips after firing and battlefield salvage was a slow process, it was not unusual for these strips to become a scarce commodity. Between 7 and 11 October the 82nd Division's Munitions Officer reported serious shortages of the metal strips used to feed the unit's 8mm Hotchkiss Machine Guns. The supply was so grim that he urged the division's machine gunners to salvage and reload the fragile strips until more could be obtained. "Daily Report of Past 24 Hours" from Inspector, 82nd Division to Inspector General AEF, dated 7 October and 11 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

gunner's dexterity and quickness in feeding the fragile strips into the weapon. The gun's fixed-height tripod gave the weapon a high silhouette, making its crew more vulnerable to enemy fire. The greatest problem was that with gun and tripod the Hotchkiss weighed a whopping 109 pounds. This made their crews slow moving targets to the enemy as they lugged this ponderous weight forward.⁴⁰

The M1915 Vickers Gun fired 500 rounds per minute utilizing 250 round cloth belts. Although lighter than the Hotchkiss, its 98 pound weight (with full water jacket) was still quite a load.⁴¹ The M1917 Browning Gun proved to be one of the best machine gun designs of the war. John Browning's weapon fired 500 rounds per minute, but he was able to reduce the weight of the gun and tripod to 84.5 pounds (with full water jacket). Although the Ordinance Department intended to replace all of the AEF's machine guns with the M1917, the pace of operations gave them no time to accomplish the change-out, and only 1,168 actually made it to the front before the Armistice.⁴²

Both the M1915 Vickers and the M1917 Browning suffered from the inherent limitations of water-cooled machine guns. The water jacket that surrounded the gun's barrel had to be kept full to sustain prolonged firing. The weapons were equipped with a condensation can to catch the steam created by the hot barrels during firing. Unfortunately, water in the jackets was still lost in the process, thus requiring crews to have ready access to relatively clean water sources during combat, and if the crews brought the water with them in the condensation cans, it add an additional weight burden on the already encumbered men. There was also a rather cumbersome process to refill the water jackets.

⁴⁰ Bruce Canfield, *U. S. Infantry Weapons of World War I* (Lincoln, RI: Andre Mowbray Publishers, 2000), 200-9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 211-215.

All of the era's machine guns were prodigious consumers of ammunition. The iron laws of physics dictated that there was only so much ammunition that the crew could bring with them into action. This required that the officers have an effective system for bring ammunition to the front, or they had to rely on ammunition carriers detailed from the infantry to move the weighty burdens forward into battle.

When properly employed, machine guns offered infantry units immediate firepower to deal with a host of combat challenges. Much like artillery, the machine guns could fire over the heads of the attacking infantry to suppress enemy defenders. They could fire to the flanks or rear of the infantry attacks to prevent the enemy from bringing forward reinforcements or supplies. If rapidly brought forward to objectives recently seized by the infantry, the machine guns could break-up the German counter-attacks that invariably followed an American tactical gain.⁴³

To get these effects, however, the battalion commanders had to overcome a number of obstacles. First and foremost was their own ignorance of how to use their attached machine gun units. The summer battles of 1918 highlighted this major problem. At Chateau-Thierry in July 1918, Major C. A. Dravo, a machine gunner in the 42nd Division, observed that "the battalion commanders had their hands full with a thousand infantrymen and had neither the time nor the opportunity for any study of the situation as might be applied to the machine guns attached to his command."⁴⁴ Captain A. M. Patch recalled that "there was no machine gun plan" for the 1st Division's machine gunners supporting the unit's infantry attacks during the Soissons drive. Patch noted that few infantry battalion commanders gave the machine guns any missions, and

⁴³ For examples of the successful use of machine guns in this manner see, *Infantry in Battle*, 239-244., MAJ C. A. Dravo, "Machine Guns: The Offensive in Open Warfare," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (October 1920), 323-5., W. P. Waltz, "Personal Experiences of a Machine Gun Officer at Cantigny, 28th-30th May," Command and Staff College Student Individual Research Study IR-6-1933, in the CARL Archives, Ft. Leavenworth, KS., 12., Chastaine, 236.

⁴⁴ MAJ C. A. Dravo, "Machine Guns: The Offensive in Open Warfare," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (October 1920), 323-5.

thus, “the assistance [the guns] really rendered the infantry, constituted a deplorable and disastrous spectacle.” The outcome of these missteps was that after four days of fighting, 80 percent of the machine gunners were casualties and approximately 85 percent of their equipment was destroyed or abandoned.”⁴⁵ Likewise, Edward Johnston, another participant in the Aise-Marne battles, noted that the machine gunners suffered heavy casualties because they “simply followed the attacking waves” and were given no direction from the infantry battalion commanders they were supporting.⁴⁶

The AEF GHQ and some senior commanders tried to address these problems and prevent this breakdown in cooperation from reoccurring in future battles. In the *Notes on Recent Operations, Number 1* issued after the American attacks of 18 to 31 July, the GHQ castigated the infantry battalion commanders for not adequately directing their attached machine gun companies, and berated the machine gun company commanders for their lack of initiative in employing their weapons and advising their superiors of the gun’s best use.⁴⁷ Major General Charles Summerall, the commander of the 1st Division, demanded that his subordinates improve the responsiveness of their heavy machine guns to the needs of the infantry by establishing a stronger system of liaison between the two units. He also required that machine guns and other support weapons “must at all times be under the eye of a known leader, who is able to preserve cohesion and compel energetic action.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ CPT A. M. Patch, “Machine Gun Organization,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 2 (August 1920), 145.

⁴⁶ Edward S. Johnston, “A study of the nature of United States infantry tactics for open warfare on July 18, 1918, and of their points of difference as contrasted with the United States Army tactics taught in 1914,” Command and Staff College Student Individual Research Study IR-124-1931, Appendix IV, 4. This tendency to try to bull forward was not limited to the 1st Division. The 77th Division experienced similar problems during the battle. Rainsford, 77-103, 108-9, 114-119.

⁴⁷ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 1. issued 7 August 1918.

⁴⁸ Memorandum from Major General C. P. Summerall, Commander 1st Division, dated 25 August 1918 in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *Field Orders, First Division June 1, 1918, to Sept. 18, 1918* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

Both the GHQ and Summerall identified the key problems with efficiently using these weapons as training and leadership. It was clear that neither the infantry nor the machine gun commanders had the requisite training to properly employ the guns in combat. Part of this was the fault of the AEF's own schools. Major Robert Calder, commander of the 1st Division's 3rd Machine Gun Battalion, argued that the army's support weapons "were seldom used to best advantage" because "the personnel was trained in the technical side of the weapons, they were not sufficiently familiar with their tactical employment."⁴⁹ Colonel Joseph Sanborn noted that the machine gunners of his 131st Infantry were given very good instruction on how to operate the Vickers Guns at an AEF school, but, the school "had no competent instructors in tactical employment of guns which was to be deployed."⁵⁰ Also, looking back to the scant amount of time spent on training candidates on machine guns and the other support weapons in the OTCs and COTSS, it was little wonder that their graduates often lacked a basic understanding of these tools.

At times the gun crews even lacked the basic technical training described above. One doughboy recalled seeing the results of the poor training of the crews of support weapons during the attack on Romagne in October 1918. He noted that the nearby machine gunners "had carelessly let their gun get overheated, and when the gunner who was holding the piece withdrew his finger from the trigger the weapon continued to shoot." The crew panicked and let loose of the "runaway" gun, which "began to plunge and buck, firing wildly in every direction." Unfortunately, this incident resulted in the wounding of two nearby soldiers.⁵¹ Considering the lack of even fundamental training illustrated by this example, it was going to take time and

⁴⁹ Lewis Board, Appendix S, 9.

⁵⁰ Sanborn, 191.

⁵¹ L. V. Jacks, *Service Record by an Artilleryman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 276-7.

experience to create the degree of integration between the infantry and machine guns that was demanded by the GHQ and Summerall.

After enduring the “school of hard knocks” during the Aisne-Marne and Oise-Aisne Offensives, some of the AEF’s units puzzled out ways to weld their support weapons more closely to the infantry that they were intended to support. After a week of fighting in the Meuse-Argonne, the AEF General Staff reported “the use of machine guns generally showed a decided improvement over previous operations,” but went on to warn that, “much more remains to be done before they exert the continuous influence throughout the fight.”⁵² As green units were pushed into their first major actions, they too were schooled by the taskmaster of experience. The 29th Division Joseph Lawrence’s noted that after the attack of the 113th Infantry stalled on 10 October 1918,

An attempt was made to break the German lines with machine guns, and as I lay in my hole I saw the machine gunners rush forward through the infantry and mount their guns. I do not believe that they fired a shot; the gunners were mowed down before they could pull a trigger. Those that could, dragged themselves into shell holes and abandoned their guns. Our colonel was later criticized by General Morton for the loss of life...for he contended that if the infantry could not break the enemy lines, machine gunners who were handicapped with heavy equipment and guns that could only be mounted in exposed positions should not be expected to do so.⁵³

Despite the improvements that some units made in infantry-machine gun liaison, overall, the AEF Inspector General found that throughout the Meuse-Argonne Campaign the AEF’s infantry leaders still lacked the “know how” to employ their support weapons and were thus “unable to derive much benefit from these arms.” Even in cases where the weapon crews were well trained, the inability of the infantry commander to establish a system of liaison with the support weapon units hindered the responsiveness of their fires. Where this liaison was lacking, most of the

⁵² *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 3*, 15.

⁵³ Lawrence, 87. For similar examples of these type mistakes, see, Ashby Williams, 129-130., Johnson, *Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken*, 98-9.

support weapons acted “independently cooperating [with the infantry] as best they can.”⁵⁴

Although the AEF Inspector General singled out the late-arriving inexperienced and under-trained divisions as being the most egregious in properly using machine guns to support infantry attacks, even the seasoned AEF divisions had difficulties in this area. A General Staff officer inspecting the 3rd Division on 15 October 1918 reported that officers in the 38th Infantry “found it impossible in their regiments to have close liaison with the machine gun commander,” and it was better to leave the machine gun units to “function independent of instructions of infantry battalion commanders.”⁵⁵ If veteran officers of the storied 38th Infantry were having difficulties in using support weapons, how far out of their depths were the infantry officers of the newly-arrived divisions?

In addition to machine guns, each infantry regiment also had an organic Stokes Mortar platoon equipped with six tubes, and a 37mm gun section of three cannons. Both of these weapons were intended to give the infantry quick and responsive tools to destroy or suppress German machine gun nests or strong points. The regimental commanders generally attached these weapons to their leading assault battalions in the attack. When properly handled, these weapons were very effective in accomplishing their intended missions. Unfortunately, they also suffered from inherent limitations.

The 3 Inch Stokes Mortar was the “trench artillery” most used in American infantry regiments. It had a maximum range of around 800 meters and fired an 11 pound high explosive charge. The barrel, bipod and base plate weighed 108 pounds. Its ammunition was even more

⁵⁴ “Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116. The IG’s observations were also reflected in many of the comments made by members of the Lewis Board. Appendix H, S, and X.

⁵⁵ Memorandum from LTC James McIlroy, Forward Office, 1st Army Inspector General, Subject: Report of Inspection of 3rd Division 15 Oct. 18., dated 15 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

cumbersome and difficult to bring forward into battle than that of the machine guns.⁵⁶

The 37mm gun, or “one pounder,” fired a flat trajectory 1.2 pound high explosive shell with a maximum effective range of 1,000 to 1,500 meters. Its accuracy made it an ideal “sniper weapon” for eliminating enemy machine guns and lightly armored pill boxes. Unfortunately, the gun and tripod for the weapon weighed a hefty 170 pounds. It goes without saying that both the regimental Stokes Mortars and 37mm guns were difficult to man-handle over anything but the flattest and smoothest terrain, features sorely lacking on most of the AEF’s battlefields.⁵⁷

The Stokes Mortars and 37mm guns suffered the same problems of employment as the machine guns; if the infantry officers did not know how to use and supply them, they were of little value in combat. During the Aisne-Marne Offensive, the use of the 37mm guns was very uneven. While some units used them to good effect in destroying machine gun nests, “The general failure by others to use the one-pounder was because the regimental commanders did not assign them to attacking battalions,” or simply left them in the reserve.⁵⁸ Colonel Robert McCormick noted that in the divisions that arrived in the spring and summer of 1918, “knowledge of modern battle conditions was wanting.” He observed,

They had received their trench mortars and their infantry cannons only a short time before and did not know how to use them. Some regiments marched through the whole campaign without taking these indispensable weapons from their trains. They were, in consequence, badly in need of material with which to attack German machine gun nest at close range.⁵⁹

McCormick’s comments had some validity. For example, when the 35th Division’s 145th Infantry attacked on the first day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, its Stokes Mortars and

⁵⁶ Canfield., 247-250. Canfield stated that while the army conducted some tests with smoke, white phosphorus, and gas shells, the 3 inch mortars were rarely used to fire smoke or chemical missions.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 257-260.

⁵⁸ *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 1.*

⁵⁹ Colonel Robert R. McCormick, *The Army of 1918* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 169-170.

37mm guns were at the trail of its formation, where it was nearly impossible for them to move forward to support the attacking infantrymen in any timely manner.⁶⁰

Despite all of the shortcomings in training and leadership, in fairness to the infantrymen and support weapons crewmen, it must be pointed out that some of the failure to more effectively use these tools simply came down to the physics of combat. All of the support weapons, and the ammunition they fired, were very heavy and cumbersome. One must keep in mind the difficulty that the crews had in keeping up with the relatively unencumbered riflemen over difficult, muddy, and shell-torn ground. A machine gun officer in the 79th Division stated that as he moved his unit forward to support the attacking infantry in the Argonne, “So deep were the shell holes and mine craters that the ammunition carriers were even unable to carry two small boxes of ammunition.” The soldiers removed the ammunition belts from the boxes and wrapped them around their bodies to free their hands to crawl through the slippery obstacles. He remembered “at times the guns and tripods had to be thrown from the bottom of the crater up to the top to a man waiting to receive it” and the gunners fought the terrain just as much as the enemy.⁶¹

Another machine gun officer, Lieutenant Malcolm Helms, quickly discovered the innate problem of using support weapons in the attack while serving as a platoon leader in the 1st Machine Gun Battalion during the Soissons Offensive. Ordered to attack with the infantry and then set up their guns as soon as the doughboys stopped to be ready for any German counterattacks, Helm recalled, “carrying our machine guns and heavy cases of ammunition we soon fell behind the infantry...We could see them up ahead while we were floundering through

⁶⁰ Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun*, 58.

⁶¹ Charles M. DuPuy, *A Machine Gunner's Notebook* (Pittsburgh: Reed & Witting, 1920), 79.

the shell holes of our barrage with our heavier loads.”⁶² Private Ray Johnson, a machine gunner with the 37th Division, simply stated that keeping his guns up with the infantry led to “the exhaustion of our reserves of strength by the weight of our equipment.” He went on to note, “It requires every ounce of guts a man possesses to keep pace with the infantry when he is loaded down with fifty pounds of extra weight.”⁶³

Although the preceding passages were from machine gunners, they were equally applicable to the crews of Stokes Mortars and 37mm guns. A number of sources point to the effectiveness of these weapons in destroying German machine gun positions, but in the same breath complain about their difficulties in bringing them forward. For example, an officer with the 29th Division noted that, “trench mortars by reason of their lack of mobility and difficulty of keeping them supplied with ammunition are not considered efficient weapons in mobile warfare.”⁶⁴ In a report issued three days after the Armistice, the commander of one of the AEF’s most combat experienced units, the 2nd Division’s 3rd Infantry Brigade, admitted that while his units had used their one-pounders and mortars before the infantry went over the top, “after that time...the 37 m.m.’s and stokes could not keep up with the advancing troops.”⁶⁵ While most of the officers sitting on the post-war Lewis Board recommended retaining the 37mm gun until a

⁶² 2LT Malcolm Helms, 5th MG BN, 2nd Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey. Helms served with the 28th IN and 1st MG BN in the 1st Division and ended the war as a company commander in the 5th MG BN in the 2nd Division.

⁶³ Johnson, *Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken*, 101-2. An officer in the 5th Division noted a similar problem with his unit’s machine guns “keeping up with the fast-moving doughboys” during the St. Mihiel operation. *The Official History of the Fifth Division*, 103. MAJ C. A. Dravo claimed the 42nd Division solved the problem with the portability of the machine guns by improvising hand holds on their Hotchkiss Guns that allowed two men to carry them into action without separating the gun from the tripod. He stated that “these guns were as mobile as a Springfield Rifle and could be put into action almost as quickly.” While such improvisation certainly helped the problem, it is doubtful if it was as effective as Dravo stated. There was no changing the fact that the two soldiers carrying the weapons were still lugging forward 109 pounds of machine gun. Dravo, “Machine Guns: The Offensive in Open Warfare” 323-4.

⁶⁴ “Report of Operations Argonne Meuse, Officer of the Inspector, 5th Army Corps, Sept. 25-Nov. 11, 18, Extracts of Reports of Div. Inspectors,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116. Similar remarks were made in *Notes on Recent Operations, No. 1*. Generally speaking, infantrymen were more favorable to the 37mm than the Stokes Mortar.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

lighter weapon could be developed, they tended to see the Stokes Mortar as “a trench weapon” that had little future in warfare.⁶⁶

In addition to the problems of training and mobility, one of the other major drawbacks to the use of the support weapons was their logistical requirements. The ammunition for these weapons was heavy, cumbersome, and usually carried forward by hand. In any heavy engagement where units encountered numerous enemy strong points or machine gun nests, the supply of ammunition for the infantry’s support weapons could be exhausted quickly, and bringing up fresh ammunition was nearly always a chore. This was particularly the case for the Stokes Mortars.⁶⁷ The 6th Infantry discovered this fact while trying to force a crossing of the Meuse River at Brioules on 3 November 1918. After his unit ran out of ammunition for the Stokes Mortars and machine guns he was using to destroy the German positions that ringed his crossing site, Lieutenant Colonel Hodges felt that he could not wait for the every-tardy resupply of ammunition for these weapons. He pushed forward using whatever remaining firepower he could muster. However, without any effective suppression of the German machine guns, the American attack ground to a halt with heavy casualties.⁶⁸

The problem of bringing up ammunition was further exacerbated as the campaigns drug on the physical condition of the crews deteriorated. In some cases, units tried to overcome the problem of keeping the support weapons supplied by providing their crews with carrying parties

⁶⁶ For example, Brigadier General G. H. Jameson argued that the Stokes Mortar was “too heavy to be moved with advancing troops, its range too short, and its dispersion too enormous to be of any practical value in open or semi-open warfare.” Colonel John Leonard’s assessment was that the Stokes was a weapon of trench warfare and had “little value in offensive operations.” Lewis Board, Appendix H, 6, Appendix X, 9. It is interesting to note that these opinions were shared by Colonel George Marshall, Appendix X, 10. The members of the Superior Board also questioned the utility of retaining the Stokes Mortars. Superior Board, 24.

⁶⁷ See the comments of MG Frank Winn, MAJ Aaron Becker and COL M. J. Brees, Lewis Board, Appendix H, 18-19., Dienst, 264-5., “Report of Operations Argonne Meuse, Officer of the Inspector, 5th Army Corps, Sept. 25-Nov. 11, Extracts of Reports of Div. Inspectors,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116., Memorandum from LTC James McIlroy, Forward Office, 1st Army Inspector General, Subject: Report of Inspection of 3rd Division 15 Oct. 18., dated 15 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

⁶⁸ *History of the Fifth Division*, 205-7.

drawn from infantry companies. However, at times these carriers could be very unreliable. During the Aisne-Marne Campaign, American machine gunners complained that soon after the guns began to move forward, their infantry carrying parties “almost invariably abandoned the squad during the assault and took part in the fight with their own units.”⁶⁹ Without carriers, the crews were left to muddle through as best as they could. As his unit moved forward for the British Army’s attack on the St. Quentin Canal in late September 1918, Leslie Baker recalled that his company “cracked” from exhaustion while lugging 50 pound ammunition boxes to the front lines. He credited his lieutenant for saving the day when the officer ordered his men to abandon the heavy boxes by the side of the road and move to the trenches without them.⁷⁰ Although the officer accurately assessed the condition of his soldiers and chose to place “men over mission,” he did so at the risk of dramatically reducing the effectiveness of his machine guns.

The remaining non-organic support weapons that were sometimes encountered at the battalion level or below, such as accompanying artillery guns and tanks, also require some discussion. The use of accompanying guns was an attempt by some of the AEF’s units to overcome the problem of responsive artillery by placing a 75mm gun or other full-size cannon under the control of the assaulting battalion commander. Like most things in the AEF, the variety of experiences with these weapons meant that their use was a mixed bag. On one hand, an officer from the AEF Inspector General’s office reported that the accompanying guns attached to an infantry battalion of the 82nd Division managed to destroy eight German pillboxes in one day. However, another division inspector found that in the infantry, “the average battalion commander had not enough experience in handling a battalion of infantry to warrant his paying

⁶⁹ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 1.

⁷⁰ Leslie Baker, *The Company History: The Story of Company B, 106th Machine Gun Battalion* (New York: Privately printed, 1920), 47.

sufficient attention to his accompanying support battery” and many of the leaders forgot that they had the guns at their disposal.⁷¹ Some artillery officers also believed that the practice of providing the infantry with accompanying guns hindered their ability to mass artillery fires and usually led to the gun’s “misuse or enforced idleness.”⁷²

The same ambivalence that characterized the use of the accompanying guns also typified the infantry’s experience with tanks. Infantry-tank cooperation was seldom trained, and misperceptions about the weapon’s capabilities and limitations were common among infantry leaders. One tank corps officer ruefully noted, “It’s surprising what they asked us to do. Doughboys to Generals have set us up against places a battleship couldn’t capture.”⁷³ While tanks often provided the infantry with the mobile firepower they needed to “break in” to the German defenses, the weapon’s mechanical unreliability and limited numbers, the lack of a solid system for tank-infantry cooperation, and the failure of infantry commanders to give the tanks definite and attainable tasks, prevented tanks from playing a more significant role in the tactical world of most American infantry junior leaders.⁷⁴

As infantry units became more experienced in the use of the support weapons discussed above, it seems that most became more comfortable with their use. This is illustrated in the

⁷¹ “Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116. Although some inspectors questioned the effectiveness of the accompanying guns, some did find that the fire of the cannons was “comforting,” and “of extreme value to the infantry in raising their morale.” Also, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Spaulding argued that “results were too often disappointing” and undue casualties were suffered in men and horses when infantry units tried to accompany guns from the field artillery. LTC Oliver Spaulding, “The Tactics of the War With Germany,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (September 1920), 239., Memorandum from LTC James McIlroy, Forward Office, 1st Army Inspector General, Subject: Report of Inspection of 3rd Division 15 Oct. 18., dated 15 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

⁷² COL E. L. Gruber, “Employment of Field Artillery with Infantry,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV, No. 12 (June 1919), 969.

⁷³ Harvey L. Harris, *The War as I Saw It: 1918 Letters of a Tank Corps Lieutenant* (Saint Paul: Pogo Press, 1998), 127.

⁷⁴ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 3, 5, 18., Dale Wilson, *Treat ‘Em Rough* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1989), 220-1.

experiences of the 89th Division's 353rd Infantry. At the close of the unit's first major combat action at St. Mihiel, the regimental commander reported,

The most weapons used were the Infantry rifle and the hand grenade, in connection with the machine guns attached to the 2nd or leading battalion. I saw very little use made of rifle grenades, very little of automatic rifles, and little or nothing accomplished by either the one-pounders or Stokes mortars. Each of the last mentioned special weapons fired a few shots, but usually there is reason to believe that some of the shots of the Stokes, as usual, fell short and injured our own men.⁷⁵

However, by the time of the 353rd Infantry's attack on the Bois de Barricourt on 1 November 1918, the colonel had overcome his initial skepticism and fairly gushed at his unit's ability to coordinate the fire of rifles, Chauchats, 37mm guns, and Stokes Mortars to destroy German machine gun nests. There were some problem that time and experience still could not overcome. For example, the effectiveness of his mortars was still hindered by "the impossibility of keeping of a supply of ammunition" for the weapons.⁷⁶ Even with all this additional firepower, the officer still maintained that "as heretofore, the main work was done by the infantry rifle," and that the rifle and automatic rifles were the weapons most utilized in overcoming the "points of resistance encountered."⁷⁷

While the 353rd Infantry commander's comments may seem like the ranting of a disciple of the Pershing school of "open warfare," he merely expressed the fact that at some time in the fight, his infantry companies still had to move in to terrain and kill Germans aided only by the weapons they had at hand. The AEF's infantry companies and platoons were where "self-reliant infantry" truly existed. It was also at this level where the AEF's battles were fought and all of its shortcomings in training and leadership became most apparent. It is critical to understand the

⁷⁵ Dienst, 258.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 264-5.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

organization of infantry companies, platoons, and squads to comprehend the challenges facing their junior leaders and what could be expected of them in combat.

At full strength, an American infantry company in the AEF was composed of six officers, 48 NCOs and 207 soldiers (a table of organization for an American infantry company and platoon is in Appendix C-1). This was over twice the size of the pre-war infantry company.⁷⁸ The commander could employ the firepower of 16 automatic rifles, 24 rifle grenade launchers, and 192 rifles (excluding weapons used by cooks and other non-infantrymen).⁷⁹ This firepower was equally divided among each of the infantry company's four rifle platoons.

The full-strength rifle platoon consisted of one officer platoon leader, three buck sergeants (one being the platoon sergeant), eight corporals (usually squad leaders), and 47 privates (see Appendix C-2). The rifle platoon had four automatic rifles, six rifle grenade launchers, and 48 rifles. The AEF rifle platoon leaders generally employed their units either as one large mass, as half-platoons which divided the control of the unit between the platoon leader and platoon sergeant (with the officer still retaining overall direction), or as four combat groups divided by weapons type (see Appendix C-3). The last organization would have two combat groups of automatic riflemen, one of hand bombers and rifle grenadiers, and one that consisted solely of riflemen.

While the firepower of these companies and platoons was exponentially greater than those of 1916, their ponderous size made them exceptionally difficult for company commanders and platoon leaders to control. The AEF GHQ was quick to dismiss the concern of some senior officers that the increase in the size of infantry companies and platoons would overwhelm the

⁷⁸ *Field Service Regulations, 1913*, 19. The pre-war infantry company was composed of three officers and 108 enlisted men.

⁷⁹ *U. S. Army in the World War, Vol. 1, Organization*, 347.

already struggling junior leadership. In May 1918, Colonel Hugh Drum, the GHQ Assistant Chief of Staff, responded to criticism of its large formations by arguing,

The difficulty of infantry combat of today is due not so much to the inability to control men as it is the lack of men available to meet each new situation. Difficulties of control arise through lack of sufficient men and not through an excess. There is not doubt in my mind that the platoon leader that controls only 20 men in a task requiring 50 will make more tactical errors than if he had an excess of 30. The tendency to disperse 20 men so as to accomplish the task requiring 50 will often lead to disastrous results. Moreover it is false practice to organize an army on the assumed capabilities of the platoon leader. Platoon leaders are more easily made than supply systems, artillery, organizations, etc.⁸⁰

Drum's convoluted rationale for retaining the bloated companies and platoons was not borne out in combat. The commander of the 7th Infantry Brigade, Brigadier General Benjamin Poore argued,

I believe that the infantry officers will agree that we have used too many men in our combat formations and the inevitable result was greater and probably avoidable losses. The companies were too large to be handled by officers of average ability and little experience. Even a highly trained and experienced officer found great difficulty in handling a company of 250 men.⁸¹

Poore's comments were echoed by the III Corps Commander, Major General John Hines. Hines maintained that "the difficulty of handling infantry in action prohibits the control of more than 32 men by one platoon leader. I think this consideration would limit the control of more than 175 or 180 men by one captain."⁸² As will be seen, the difficulty that junior leaders had in controlling their massive units contributed to the tactical sluggishness of the AEF's units during the opening weeks of the Meuse-Argonne.

As with the heavier support weapons, the armaments that were organic to the AEF's

⁸⁰ *The U.S. Army in the World War, Vol. 2, Policies*, 411.

⁸¹ Lewis Board, Appendix R, 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 5. Not everyone agreed with this assessment. The IV Corps commander, Major General C. P. Summerall, believed that the size of the infantry companies should remain at 256 men because, if it was lowered, casualties and the other non-combat details assigned to companies during operations would quickly make smaller units combat ineffective. Appendix X, 11.

infantry platoons and companies also possessed inherent advantages and limitations. The most common infantry weapon was the M1903 or M1917 rifles. While the M1917 was longer and heavier than the M1903, the operation and rate of fire of the weapons were relatively identical to the individual infantryman. Both weapons fired a 30.06 cartridge from a five-round internal box magazine. Although the rifles were sighted for much greater ranges, their effective range was 350 to 600 meters, depending on the skill of the firer. The aimed rate of fire for the weapons was roughly 15 to 25 rounds per minute, which was governed by the skill of the individual soldier in reloading the weapon using five-round stripper clips. The basic combat load for the infantryman was the 100 rounds that he carried in his cartridge belt, but this could be increased by the soldier carrying one or two 60 round bandoleers.

The most common automatic rifles used in the AEF were the French M1915 Chauchat and the M1918 Browning (soldiers fighting with the U.S. II Corps had the British Lewis Gun). The 8mm Chauchat weighed 19 pounds, had a maximum rate of fire of 400 rounds per minute, and was used by the first 23 American divisions in France.⁸³ It garnered a reputation for unreliability in the AEF; in fact, one American officer characterized the weapon as “a villainous piece of unreliable makeshift.”⁸⁴ However, in the hands of a trained and careful gunner, it provided a fairly light and powerful addition to the firepower of the American infantry. The chief source of the weapon’s problems was its fragile 20 round magazines. The magazine had windows cut in one of its sides to allow the gunner to quickly check to see how many rounds it had remaining. Unfortunately, if the gunner was not careful, mud allowed into these windows jammed the magazine or gun. Any slight bending or deforming of the fragile magazines prevented them from feeding or being loaded. The combat load for a Chauchat gunner and two

⁸³ War Department, *America’s Munitions 1917-1918*, 169.

⁸⁴ MAJ C. A. Dravo, “Machine Guns: The Offensive in Open Warfare,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (October 1920), 319.

assistant gunners/carriers was between 19 to 20 magazines, depending on the type of carriers used. Since each magazine weighed two pounds, the choice of combat load could quickly overburden the crews.⁸⁵

The divisions that arrived in France after June 1918 were armed with the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). The BAR weighed 16 pounds and had a rate of fire of 550 rounds per minute using 20 round magazines. Although the BAR was lighter than the Chauchat, it should be remembered that it was still nearly double the weight of the standard infantry rifle. The basic load for a BAR gunner and two assistant gunners/carriers was between 20 and 24 pounds depending on the cartridge belt and bandoleers used by the crew. The weapon was much more reliable than the Chauchat and was able to produce a large volume of killing or suppressive fire.⁸⁶

Lastly, the company commander and platoon leaders could call on the firepower of their organic hand and rifle grenades. The most common rifle grenade used by the AEF was a copy of the French Viven-Bessiere (VB) Grenade. The VB grenades were fired from “trombone” grenade dischargers mounted to the standard issue M1903 or M1917 rifles. The gas created by the firing of a standard ball cartridge produced enough power to hurl the grenade up to 200 meters. While the Ordnance Department’s Bernard Crowell reported that “any man within 75 yards of an exploding rifle grenade is likely to be wounded or killed,” the actual burst radius of the 17 ounce projectile was much less, and any enemy soldiers employing the barest of overhead cover had little to fear from the grenades.⁸⁷ The commander of the German 102nd Infantry

⁸⁵ Canfield, 147-152, 154., Gerard Demaison and Yves Buffetaut, *Honor Bound: The Chauchat Machine Rifle* (Ontario: Collector Grade Publications, 1996), xvii, 131-145. Demaison and Buffetaut note that the Chauchat had much fewer problems in the French Army than was reported by the AEF. This was most likely due to the latter’s lack of training and familiarization with the weapon.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 156-160.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 238-240., War Department, *America’s Munitions 1917-1918*, 208.

observed, “Much use is made of rifle grenades [by the Americans] but without much success. The bursting point is set too high and the dispersion is limited.”⁸⁸

The combination of rifles, automatic rifles, and grenades theoretically gave the American small units the firepower they required to deal with most of the tactical situations they encountered. However, there was always a sharp divide between theory and reality. The soldiers and leaders of small infantry units often lacked a sound grasp of how to employ their organic weapons. As this was one of those variables on the margins of attritional war where the leaders could gain a slight advantage in grinding away at the enemy, any inability to use these weapons constituted a major flaw in the combat leadership of the AEF’s junior officers and NCOs.

In a 25 August 1918 review of the 1st Division’s recent operations in the Aisne-Marne Offensive, Major General Charles P. Summerall concluded that even in his veteran unit, infantry officers and NCOs were failing to get the best use from the weapons at their disposal. A 25 August 1918 report noted that when it came to the use of the Chauchat automatic rifle,

...these important weapons were virtually turned over to the individual carrier and gunners for such use as they were able to make of them. Many were not fired at all, others were fired at random. Automatic rifles were fired from the hip without need, and the ammunition was often needlessly expended...sometimes the guns were abandoned because the men were tired, or because the ammunition was exhausted. None but the automatic rifle teams had been taught to operate them, and some of these men had only a short period of service and did not know how to prevent or correct jams. In some cases the guns were continuously fired until they became intensely heated.⁸⁹

These problems were not limited to the 1st Division; the *Notes on Recent Operations Number 1*

⁸⁸ Report from the 102nd Regt. to the 63rd Inf. Bde, NARA RG 165, Box 200, German Miscellaneous File. I thank Dr. D. Scott Stephenson, Department of History, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College for bringing this report to my attention.

⁸⁹ Memorandum from Major General C. P. Summerall, Commander 1st Division, dated 25 August 1918 in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *Field Orders, First Division June 1, 1918, to Sept. 18, 1918* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

issued by GHQ after the campaign recorded that “Many organizations failed to use the fire of rifles and auto-rifles to assist in the advance.”⁹⁰ First Sergeant Harold C. Woehl, of the 32nd Division’s 126th Infantry, reported that on 28 August 1918 during his company’s first day of action in the Oise-Aisne Offensive, “Company H had no automatic rifles, no pistol ammunition, no hand or rifle grenades. Just our trusty Springfield rifles and plenty of guts.” Although Woehl did not explain why these key weapons were missing, the end result of their absence was clear. As the company attacked toward Juvigny, it was pounded by enfilading German machine gun fire that it could not suppress. On that day of fighting, the company lost 16 men killed and 27 wounded.⁹¹

Part of the problem of properly using these weapons were the same ones that plagued the larger machine guns and 37mm guns: weight and ammunition consumption. Soon after the Soissons drive, a 1st Division officer noted, “It is evident...that the loads of the automatic rifle and machine gun men are very much greater than the loads of men carrying the service rifle.” He went on to point out,

This difference of load, and consequent difference of mobility, are not apparent in trench warfare but at once make themselves felt when troops must move for long distances over difficult terrain. The men carrying the heavier weapons fail to keep up with those carrying lighter weapons and either fall behind or abandon the heavier weapon for a lighter one which enables them to follow.⁹²

⁹⁰ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 1.

⁹¹ Diary entries for 28 August 1918 in unpublished manuscript, “A Tanglefoot’s Diary” in John D. McDaniels, 126 IN, 32 Div, USAMHI World War I Veteran’s Survey, WWI-456. (hereafter cited as “A Tanglefoot’s Diary”) The manuscript was compiled by 1SG Harold C. Woehl from a diary he kept during the war. It also contains additional information from the battalion adjutant as to the larger situation the regiment faced as well as details of casualties. This source offers a wonderfully detail glimpse into the world of an infantry company during the war.

⁹² Memorandum from Major General C. P. Summerall, Commander 1st Division, dated 25 August 1918 in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *Field Orders, First Division June 1, 1918, to Sept. 18, 1918* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

It was not just that the weapons themselves were heavy, but also that the ammunition and accouterments that went with them also added to their crew's burden.

Captain Ashby Williams estimated that his riflemen marched into the Meuse-Argonne Offensive with 60 to 65 pounds of weapons and gear each. Although some units opted to shed the lower half of their soldier's packs prior to going into action, the Doughboys were still weighed down by loads of approximately 40 to 45 pounds.⁹³ With the extra weight of his weapon and ammunition, a Chauchat gunner would have gone into action with 15 to 18 more pounds of gear to carry than the average rifleman.⁹⁴ This estimate would not have been much less for a gunner with a BAR. While these details may sound minor, that extra weight slowed down the responsiveness and agility of the weapons teams (making them more vulnerable to enemy fire), and encouraged the less disciplined of the gunners to ditch these valuable weapons at first opportunity.

Major General Charles P. Summerall tried to address both the issue of weight and the proper employment of these weapons. In late August 1918, he directed that company commanders and platoon leaders place their automatic rifles under the control of a competent NCO trained in the tactical employment of the weapon. He ordered that all of the soldiers in his infantry companies would learn how to fire the Chauchat so anyone could serve on an automatic rifle team in the event of casualties. To ease the load carried by the automatic rifle team members and solve the units' problems with restocking ammunition in combat, Summerall further stipulated that every soldier in an infantry company would carry an extra loaded

⁹³ Ashby Williams, 69, 80.

⁹⁴ This estimate was based on the fact that the Chauchat weighed nearly 10 pounds more than the M1917 rifle with bayonet, and the Chauchat gunner's bag containing six full magazines would have weighed 12 pounds.

Chauchat magazine into action.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the standard M1910 American infantry pack had little enough space for the soldier's rations and spare clothing, let alone the rather bulky half-moon magazine for Chauchat. Summerall's other goals were more attainable. However, while the 1st Division solved some of its issues with infantry commanders using their weapons to their best effect, this was not always the case in the AEF's other divisions. Colonel George Marshall noted shortly after the war that company commanders were glacially slow "in learning how to combine fire action with maneuver."⁹⁶

Another of the variables on the margins of attritional warfare that the AEF's small unit leaders could influence was their use of tactics. Here, small unit tactics is defined as the art of applying or adapting general formations, maneuver, and firepower to the specific challenges presented by an enemy on a given piece of terrain. The end result of tactics was simple: accomplishing the mission given to the unit by the higher headquarters, and in the process, inflicting as much damage on the enemy as possible while preserving as much of one's own manpower as feasible. To wring the best results from tactics, junior infantry officers and NCOs had to be well versed in the capabilities and limitations of the weapons and their soldiers and be able to adjust their formations "on the fly" to balance the needs of protection with firepower. Leaders also had to grasp how to use the terrain to minimize one's own casualties while also placing the enemy at a disadvantage, and they had to be able to issue orders in the heat of combat that directed their subordinates to accomplish the leader's goals and intent.

It was in the area of tactics that all of the American shortcomings and shortcuts in training were laid bare. From the use of terrain and formations to the combining of fire and

⁹⁵ Memorandum from Major General C. P. Summerall, Commander 1st Division, dated 25 August 1918 in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *Field Orders, First Division June 1, 1918, to Sept. 18, 1918* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

⁹⁶ Lewis Board, Appendix R, 6.

maneuver, American small unit leaders generally showed themselves to be rather sluggish, doctrinaire, and ham-fisted in their application of tactics. This is not to cast blame on the officers and NCOs themselves of this tactical clumsiness. No infantry captain was willfully incompetent or clapped his hands in joy at the thought of leading his soldiers to destruction. The simple fact was that much of their training and experience had not prepared them for the complex task of leading 250 men across difficult terrain against a skillful and desperate enemy. As their training had been poor, their schooling at the hands of the Germans was painful. As one infantry battalion commander commented, since his junior leaders had failed to learn the required tactical skills and knowledge prior to combat, the “officers... must learn their business from day to day at the expense of their trade in human beings. The latter must bear the cost of this learning and pay the price of every experiment in the process.”⁹⁷

As early as the battles in the summer of 1918, the AEF GHQ was noticing worrying signs that the tactical skills of the army’s infantry officers and NCOs were somewhat lacking. The American losses during the Aisne-Marne Offensive were particularly heavy and unexpected. While insufficient artillery support and mistakes by senior French officers certainly contributed to the bloodletting, at the battalion and below, it was much more a case of poor tactical skills rather than these operational missteps that added to the butcher bill.

The common mistake of American infantry leaders was to confuse tactical formations for tactics. Formations were merely a means of moving soldiers forward by balancing mobility with protection and the ability for the leader to rapidly deploy his soldiers to meet situations in battle using fire and maneuver. In a lecture given shortly after the Armistice, Brigadier General Frank

⁹⁷ LTC Jennings C. Wise, “The Soldier’s Life in Battle,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVI, no. 11 (May 1920), 929.

Parker neatly encapsulated the tactical challenges that faced American small unit leaders. He observed,

The object of the infantry attack is to come into physical contact with the enemy and to be alive at the same time. This war has demonstrated the fact firepower is practically independent of numbers; a small efficient, determined combat group consisting of very few men produces a most powerful and destructive fire. The problem then consists in pushing forward a maximum of fire with a minimum of personnel, this personnel so manipulated as to present a minimum target to hostile fire, artillery and small arms.

Parker went on to state that the most important element of the division was the platoon, “as it is the substance out of which the Division is made- if this substance is not solid the division will be a weak structure, incapable of standing strain.”⁹⁸

In the summer operations, the AEF’s junior leaders seemed to have fallen into two broad camps: those whose formations and deployments were based on a hodgepodge of techniques, and those who rigidly kept to the tactical system illustrated in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. In the *Notes of Recent Operations* that followed the Aisne-Marne Offensive, the GHQ staff reported that during the fighting, “An endless variety of attack formations was used.” It also provided an example where a company commander had so failed to understand tactical deployments that he positioned a single platoon on a frontage of 600 meters, negating any hope that the platoon leader had of commanding his unit.⁹⁹ An infantry NCO noted that during his company’s fighting in August, his commander “quickly formed one ‘skirmish line’ of the old style”¹⁰⁰ as his preferred method for attacking German positions. Both of these passages indicate that some small unit leaders were assembling their tactical formations and techniques from a host of doctrinal and non-doctrinal sources. For example, the formations described by the NCO show

⁹⁸ Lecture given by BG Frank Parker, entitled “Certain Observations on Infantry,” dated 2 April 1919 to AEF’s Army Center of Artillery Studies, A.E.F., Third Course. Copy in author’s collection.

⁹⁹ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Entry for 28 August 1918 in “A Tanglefoot’s Diary”

the continuation of tactical concepts from the pre-war *IDR*. That such a *mélange* of formations and tactics was still in use in the AEF in mid-1918 should come as no surprise. The fact that American units had been bombarded with rapidly changing tactical techniques from British, French, and American sources certainly encouraged an “a la carte” approach to formations and tactics.

The other, more common, extreme was those leaders who unbendingly followed the formations given in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Although the distances between soldiers and echelons in the manual were too short, there was nothing inherently wrong with the tactical concepts and intent of the manual’s formations. The problem was in the leader’s application of those formations to the terrain and enemy. In the AEF’s *Combat Instructions*, Pershing decried the fact that,

Attack formations of platoons, companies, and battalions are everywhere too dense and follow too rigidly the illustrations in the *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Waves are too close together; individuals therein have too little interval. Lines are frequently seen with the men almost elbow to elbow and seldom at intervals greater than two to three paces...All formations are habitually lacking in elasticity; there is almost never any attempt to maneuver, that is to throw supports and reserves to the flanks for envelopment. Scouts, if used, are frequently only a few yards in front of the leading waves...Subordinate officers display little appreciation of the essential situation and how to best meet its requirements.¹⁰¹

This point was also made by Captain Manton Eddy of the 39th Infantry. The 4th Division’s assault to the Vesle River on 3 August 1918 progressed in strict adherence to the formations pictured in *Offensive Combat of Small Units* without adjusting them in any way to account for the enemy’s dispositions and the terrain the Americans encountered. Eddy later recalled that his unit’s close formation “was a sight that must have made the German observers gasp in amazement, for before them lay an artilleryman’s dream.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ *Combat Instructions*, 7.

¹⁰² *Infantry in Battle*, 1-3.

Training units to move in formations and to change from one formation to another is relatively easy. In fact Captain B. A. Colonna, the commander of B Company, 311th Infantry, claimed that “the new formations were mastered remarkably quickly” in his unit.¹⁰³ The difficult part was for the leaders to understand the linkages between those formations and the tactical techniques of fire and maneuver that they had to employ to overcome the German defenders. These difficulties were magnified when the junior leaders experienced trouble with command and control due to casualties and the normal fog and friction of combat.

The Americans’ tactical clumsiness was not lost on the Germans. A staff officer in the headquarters of the German 7th Army reported on 23 July 1918 that when the Americans attacked,

[Our] defense was too strong for the limited attack power of the enemy infantry. When the fire protection of the artillery ceased, when the tanks were lost, only seldom did it continue forward. It gave ground to every counter-attack even when made by inferior German numbers. As a result of its dense formations, which was to give the infantry feeling of its own power, it suffered heavy, bloody losses whenever it encountered our artillery fire.¹⁰⁴

The end result of the dearth of tactical savvy in the summer of 1918 was high casualties as the Americans attempted to smother the German positions under the weight of the doughboy’s mass formations. The consequence of some junior officer’s tactical ineptitude left a lasting impression on Private Horatio Rogers. The 26th Division soldier later remembered,

Turning back across the fields I passed between groups of dead Americans lying in short windrows as they had been mowed down by the machine guns from the woods. Wave after wave had evidently assaulted from the ditches along the road before the survivors had obtained a foothold in the woods.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ B. A. Colonna, ed. *The History of Company B, 311th Infantry in the World War* (Freehold, NJ: Transcript Printing House, 1922), 22-3.

¹⁰⁴ Report for 23 July 1918 from the German 7th Army War Diary, in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. II, *German Documents: Aisne-Marne (Soissons)* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated.

¹⁰⁵ Horatio Rogers, *World War I Through My Sights* (San Rafael, Cal: Presidio, 1976), 182.

The dead Americans that Rogers viewed were far from rare. In the 1st Division alone, the butcher's bill was 234 officers and 7083 men killed, wounded, missing, or captured. The 26th Infantry lost all of its field grade-officers, and one battalion of the 28th Infantry lost all its officers except one the first day of the battle, and that remaining officer was wounded on the second day of the drive.¹⁰⁶ The 28th Division's 110th Infantry suffered over 1100 casualties in its repeated attempts to take Cierges by frontal attack on 28 and 29 July 1918. One of the unit's officers honestly admitted that after charge after charge "up the bare slope of the hill," the failure could be summed up as, "artillery was insufficient, team work lacking, and information regarding the terrain meager."¹⁰⁷ Another observer noted, "the men moved with such precision that it looked more like a drill than a great battle."¹⁰⁸

The veterans of Soissons and the other summer battles often profited from this school of hard knocks. Edward Johnston, an officer in the 1st Division, recalled that in May to July of 1918, the unit's infantry regiments usually attacked in mass waves that moved "forward ponderously with heavy losses against hostile fire, with no apparent effort to utilize cover." The infantry's "attack formations were generally too thick," and the doughboys exhibited a "tendency to attempt to overcome resistance by shock rather by fire and shock combined." He did note, however, that the survivors of these encounters gained a large degree of battlefield wisdom and experience. Johnston claims that during the Soissons battle his 28th Infantry learned from the French Moroccan soldiers how to advance by "moving at a run from shell-hole to shell-hole," in a style "utilized by the European veterans."¹⁰⁹ Overall, however, Johnston had to admit "training

¹⁰⁶ Beaumont Buck, *Memories of Peace and War* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1935), 210.

¹⁰⁷ Clement, ed., *Pennsylvania in the World War: The Twenty-Eight Division*, Vol. II, 395-7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Johnston, "A study of the nature of United States infantry tactics for open warfare on July 18, 1918," Appendix IV, 2-3.

in musketry, combat practice, employment of maneuver, and tactical use of its auxiliary weapons was so deficient [in the AEF] as to greatly increase its losses in the attack.”¹¹⁰

In other units the process of internalizing the “lessons” of recent operations proceeded more slowly. The 28th Division’s Hervy Allen noted that the Soissons drive was a bleak coming of age for his soldiers. He emphatically stated,

It was the grim common sense of the ‘doughboy’ and not our obsolete and impossible tactics that won the ground. Oh! the precious time wasted in our elaborate, useless, murderous ‘science’ called ‘musketry.’ It was as much out of style as the musket from which it takes its name. Teaching it should be made a court-martial offense. It is murder in print. Battles were not fought in lines.¹¹¹

Although Allen’s assessment was correct, there was still much to be learned by his unit. For all “the grim common sense of the doughboy,” it did not stop his battalion from still using dense formations of infantry shortly afterwards in its disastrous attacks on Fismes and Fismettes.¹¹²

As the Americans moved into their first independent operation at St. Mihiel, the tactical acumen of the AEF’s infantry captains, lieutenants and NCOs was very much a mixed bag. Some of the AEFs more experienced divisions had made great strides in infantry-artillery cooperation and in instilling a degree of tactical flexibility in their small units.¹¹³ Some had learned the benefits of thoughtful preparations and in taking time to understand and logically responds to a given tactical situation rather than trying to bull forward. Colonel H. P. Hobbs, the inspector of the 26th Division, observed during the St. Mihiel drive,

Our troops had learned much during the Second Battle of the Marne. On September 12th I followed, closely, the 101st Infantry and noted particularly that the infantry worked with much more caution and much better team-work and control than they did during the Second Battle of the Marne. The advance was not delayed by this caution, in fact, much time was saved and our losses

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹¹¹ Allen, 138-9.

¹¹² Ibid., 244-5.

¹¹³ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 114-122, 240-249.

greatly reduced.¹¹⁴

Unfortunately, the coming of tactical wisdom was not universal.

The St. Mihiel Offensive was the first real taste of combat for many of the division that arrived in the spring and summer of 1918. Despite the efforts by the GHQ to use its *Notes on Recent Operations* and *Combat Instructions* to spare the new divisions from the mistakes of its predecessors, the actions of the green units at St. Mihiel highlight the fact that the AEF's methods of transmitting its hard-won "lessons learned" were largely ineffective. The new divisions repeated the mistakes of pushing infantry forward in mass formations and failing to match firepower with maneuver. The small unit leadership exhibited in these units continued to illustrate the army's overarching problems with leader training and initiative.

The experience of the 82nd Division is illustrative of leadership problems in the "new" divisions and the AEF's failure to instill the "lessons learned" from its previous battles into the newcomers. While the division's role in the operation was small, St. Mihiel uncovered that many of the division's infantry officers and NCOs were as deficient in the basic skills of map reading and small unit tactics as had been the case of the divisions involved in the Soissons drive. The confusion caused by these deficiencies is best illustrated by comments made by the 3326th Infantry's Lieutenant Justus Owens in a letter that he sent to his mother soon after the battle,

We left our present positions about 9:00 P.M. . . . We headed for our objective after cutting thru our own wire, but hadn't gone far until we decided we were headed in the wrong direction . . . It afterward turned out that we were headed in the right direction at first and lost out (and ourselves) by turning right . . . We wandered around in the rain and slush and mire of no-mans land for several hours . . . We finally located our woods about 2:15 A.M. It was still so dark that we could hardly see anything, so I placed my men in one corner of the woods and

¹¹⁴ Report of Division Inspector, 26th Division to Inspector General AEF, Subject: "Points noted during the Operations of September 12th, 13th and 14th," dated 30 September 1918, in NARA RG 588, Box 108.

told them we'd hold tight until it got lighter.¹¹⁵

Luckily for Owens and his soldiers, their objective had been abandoned by the Germans. However, his blundering attempts to find the objective and his failure to clear it while he still possessed the cover of darkness put his soldiers at great risk and gave his men grounds to question his leadership. Owens admitted that after their night of futile wanderings his soldiers were wet, tired, and in "bad humor."¹¹⁶

Not all of the 82nd Division's soldiers were as lucky as Owens' command. George Loukides, a private in H Company, 326th Infantry, noted that his officers "were not trained for combat and the privates paid for it." He recalled that at St. Mihiel his company lost "many killed" when their officers led an attack across a dangerously open field in broad daylight.¹¹⁷ Alvin York wrote that during the 328th Infantry's attack on Norroy the regiment's companies "got mussed up right smart," and his unit's inability to protect its flanks or adequately maneuver its units allowed the Germans to enfilade the American positions.¹¹⁸

The St. Mihiel operation also pointed to the continuing inability of infantry units to adapt their formations to the ground and the enemy and the Americans' penchant for resorting to frontal assaults when coming in contact with the enemy.¹¹⁹ Even experienced small unit commanders continued to fixate on maintaining the dressing and alignment of their unit formations as they pressed forward. Private Charles MacArthur was amazed that during one infantry attack by the veteran 42nd Division,

¹¹⁵ Justus Owens to "Mamma" (Settie Owens), dated 14 September 1918, contained in the Justus Erwin Owens Scrapbook, Special Collections, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, folder 2856 (M).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ PFC George Loukides, 326 IN, 82nd DIV. USAMHI World War I Veteran Survey, File #1547.

¹¹⁸ Alvin C. York, *Sergeant York: His Own Life Story and War Diary*, ed. Tom Skeyhill (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), 208-9.

¹¹⁹ For a good example of this, see the attacks by the 90th Division's 358th and 359th Infantry on the German positions near Vencheres. Lonnie J. White, *The 90th Division in World War I* (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1996), 101-103.

The doughboys were scrambling out of their trenches . . . Their officers ran after yelling: “Dress on the right you gosh dam lousy doughboys!”...The doughboys strung along like crowds following a golf match, slowly and deliberately, dressing on the right whenever they were told. Here and there a man stumbled and fell. The line moved on under a cataract of shrapnel and high explosive.¹²⁰

MacArthur’s account was backed by Lieutenant Hugh Thompson, an infantry officer in the 42nd Division. Thompson recalled yelling for his soldiers to “keep your three-yard interval” and recalled the efforts he made to keep his soldiers in strict formation when they attacked in the first wave of the St. Mihiel Offensive. He soon admitted the futility of retaining the lock-step methods of his training under heavy enemy fire as, “all thought of controlling the scattered line gave way to fearful self-preservation.” Thompson realized that “We’d be killed if we lay still” and that “there was a gambling chance if we charged ahead,” and began to move his men forward by “a mad dash” from cover to cover.¹²¹ Under the press of necessity and grim reality, Thompson had accidentally stumbled upon the proper use of movement and terrain.

Here again, the German defenders offered an honest assessment of the fighting skills of their American foes. The Intelligence Officer of the German Army Detachment C, facing the Americans at St. Mihiel reported,

The American advance at the time of the infantry attack was entirely schematic, and betrayed a great lack of skill in the movement of the support waves following in dense formations over the terrain...[They] gave an impression of awkwardness and indecision. Neither the officers or men knew how to utilize the terrain. If they encountered resistance they did not try to seek shelter, but fell back walking upright. The Americans do not know how to move either forward or backward by crawling on the ground or by sudden rushes. They first lie down, then try to rise. The Americans are absolutely ignorant of fighting in a field of shellholes.¹²²

¹²⁰ Charles MacArthur, *War Bugs* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1929), 142-143.

¹²¹ Huge Thompson, *Trench Knives and Mustard Gas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2004), 170, 172.

¹²² “Lecture delivered by Colonel Willey Howell, on 6 January 1919 to the Assembled General Officers and Chiefs of Staff of the First American Army, Subject: “The Second Section, G.S., First American Army in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Operations” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS. The Americans were aware of these German criticisms during the war. A slightly different translation of this German report was printed in, Report of the Acting Inspector General, II Corps to

The German noted that while the average American soldier “is doubtless[ly] brave,” he “is ignorant of the proper behavior in the course of an attack,” and “grenades put him to flight at once.” Of the doughboy’s officers,

The command is extremely bad and without initiative. The enemy has obviously many officers, but they all lack an aptitude of command. Their embarrassment was obvious when they attained their initial success. They found themselves at a loss in the presence of a new situation, and were not capable of exploiting the success.

As they had done after the Aisne-Marne Offensive, the Germans’ trenchant observations provided sad evidence of how little the Americans had learned, and how far they still had to go.

For most of the new divisions, their participation in the St. Mihiel Offensive was not long or intense enough of them to gain the degree of experience that they required to season their officers and soldiers for the operations that lay before them in the Meuse-Argonne. Of the experiences of the 80th Division in the battle, Captain Ashby Williams later wrote “I dare say that few of us realized, even at time, that we had taken part, though a bloodless and inconspicuous one, in the great historic St. Mihiel drive.”¹²³ An infantry officer in the 89th Division wrote in his after actions report of the St. Mihiel Offensive, “the formations adopted and the means at hand proved adequate for overcoming the resistance met.” However, he was also circumspect enough to admit, “had the enemy chosen to occupy his works in stronger force and offered a stiffer resistance, it is believed that our lack of time for thorough consideration of orders and study of maps would have cost us severely.”¹²⁴ The false impression and illusions that the soldiers of the 5th Division had taken from St. Mihiel were later shattered by the realities they faced in attempting to take Cunel on 11 October 1918. As one officer stated, “the men still remembered

Inspector General, AEF, Subject: Notes on Training and Discipline, date 19 October 1918, in NARA 120, Entry 588, Box 108.

¹²³ Ashby Williams, 64.

¹²⁴ Dienst, 261.

the victorious rush at St. Mihiel and dashed forward impetuously. But it was a different enemy here, one who was sticking till the last and fighting for every foot of ground.”¹²⁵ Unfortunately, even if these units had been so inclined, the issuing of orders and the movement of troops to their staging areas for the Meuse-Argonne Offensive left no time to correct the leadership deficiencies again brought to light by the St. Mihiel fight.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the AEF’s largest and most deadly battle of the war. Pershing hoped that the campaign would vindicate his insistence on an independent American Army trained in the fine art of “open warfare.” Instead, the Meuse-Argonne turned out to be a 47-day ordeal that pushed the AEF to the breaking point. General Hunter Liggett, the I Corps commander, noted that the region was, “a natural fortress beside which the Virginia Wilderness in which Grant and Lee fought was a park.”¹²⁶ The German defenders had occupied the region since 1914 and had placed much effort into preparing and sighting the fortifications of their Geselher, Freya and Kriemhilde defensive lines.

The Meuse-Argonne was not only crisscrossed with a vast array of natural and man-made obstacles, but the Germans had made great strides in tying these obstructions into a system of interlocking and mutually supporting machine gun and artillery positions. The Germans attempted to offset their losses in manpower with increases in machine guns. For example, the German 123rd Infantry Division involved in the neighboring Blanc Mont fight was down to 89 officers and 1,705 men by 7 October 1918. It could still wield 198 heavy and light machine guns, or roughly one gun for every 11 German defenders.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ *The Official History of the Fifth Division*, 117, 145, 154.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Donald Smythe, *Pershing General of the Armies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 191.

¹²⁷ *Otto*, 136-8, 155.

Even with fully trained officers and soldiers, the Argonne Forest and the rolling hills of the Meuse region would have presented a formidable obstacle to any army. The complexities of the terrain and the German defense required that junior leaders have a “master’s degree” in tactics while most of the American junior officers were barely out of the grade school of the profession. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the litmus test of the AEF’s junior leadership. The great losses and near disintegration of American units in the battle was the price that the AEF paid for its failure to properly train and develop its company level officers and NCOs.

It is evident from the reports of wartime German units and American staff officers of the AEF Inspector General Office, post war officer boards, participant accounts, and the AEF’s casualty rolls that as the AEF entered into the Meuse-Argonne the junior officers and NCOs in its infantry companies and platoons were still facing difficulties in matching their tactics to the enemy and terrain they encountered. The continued inability of these leaders to combine formations, maneuver, and firepower came at a great price to themselves and their units. The casualties caused by these missteps undercut the morale and effectiveness of the AEF and fueled a personnel crisis within its ranks that only deepened the army’s other systemic problems.

Given the nature of the enemy defenses, any American small unit attack that did not synchronize formations, maneuver, and firepower was likely to fail. In Pershing’s *Combat Instructions*, the commander fairly pleaded with his infantry platoon leaders and company commanders to suppress and pin the enemy machine gunners to the ground with American fire from the front or flank while maneuvering some portion of the unit to attack the German position from the flank. He urged that “Where strong resistance is encountered, reinforcements must not be thrown in to make a frontal attack at this point, but must be pushed through gaps created by

successful units, to attack these strong points in the flank or rear.”¹²⁸ Pershing’s admonitions were absolutely correct. But what seemed so easy on paper at Chaumont was much more difficult for junior leaders to actually carry out in the tangle of the Argonne sector.

To some extent, the young leaders could be forgiven of their tactical sins. Even well planned and executed attacks faced the reality that seeking the enemy’s flanks was easier said than done. Soon after his battalion of the 79th Division started advancing on Montfaucon in the opening hours of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, Major Charles DuPuy came to the disturbing realization that “the tactics which we had learned, proved to be of little value.” He discovered that,

We had always been taught to attack and take a machine gun by the flanks, but in trying to do so we simply ran into a frontal fire from a machine gun on one side or the other of the one we were trying to take, so that it was necessary a great many times to simply charge a gun from the front and both flanks, and take it regardless of our losses, which, per gun captured, averaged ten to twenty men.¹²⁹

This dilemma was also noted by Brigadier General George C. Barnhart, who commanded the 1st Division’s 2nd Infantry Brigade through some of the Argonne fighting. He noted that the tactics used by the AEF seldom enabled it to overcome enemy resistance without heavy losses and pointed out that when American units tried to flank one machine gun nest, the flankers merely stumbled into the fire of a another well-sighted gun.¹³⁰

Colonel E. G. Peyton, who commanded the 80th Division’s 320th Infantry, echoed DuPuy and Barhart’s observations in this description of the fighting in the Argonne:

Here in this irregular line troops gave battle to the German machine guns that could be seen only at rare intervals. The enemy intrenchments (sic) afforded every advantage in position, concealment and for enfilade fire. Time and again rushes were made from the front and flank against the nests only to be met by a curtain of lead that was absolutely impassable...Here lives were needlessly lost in

¹²⁸ *Combat Instructions*, 9, 11.

¹²⁹ DuPuy, 81.

¹³⁰ Lewis Board, Appendix R, 1.

trying to rush through this curtain of lead.¹³¹

When faced with such tactical conundrums, the junior leaders tended to either push the attack to the limit, and, as the 28th Infantry's commander, Colonel Adolph Hugeot, put it, sacrifice "themselves and their men to put the Machine gun out of action," or became so cautious and hesitant that their units gained little from their losses.¹³²

The AEF's junior leaders continued to make some of the same grave mistakes in adapting their formations to the terrain as had been made in the AEF's earlier campaigns. Soon after the Armistice, the AEF Inspector General produced a summary of the observations that its inspectors had made of the American units in combat from 12 September to 11 November 1918. These observations were able to show the army's steep and costly learning curve during its heaviest period of action and a general assessment of the effectiveness of its combat leaders in overcoming the challenges thrown at them during the fighting.

The report noted that in the opening weeks of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the "infantry would advance in their proscribed attack formation until they would run into machine gun fire, they would then halt and call for a barrage or for artillery preparation and would advance in frontal attack upon the machine gun nests, suffering heavy casualties" when the fires were not forthcoming. The inspectors pointed out that "serious losses at first were suffered through the fact that the infantry would be held up by some few machine gun nest long enough to lose the protection of their barrage." Towards the end of the operation, the infantry junior officers had gotten better at combining suppressive fires to pin down machine guns while small parties of soldiers moved around the guns to attack them from the flanks. The artillery also became more adapt at holding their creeping barrages when the attacking infantry became

¹³¹ Colonel E. G. Peyton, "Modern Tactics," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 2 (August 1920), 120.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 4.

stalled. Sadly, the report noted a continuing problem where,

Although orders were issued respecting formations in depth the reserve lines kept crowding forward whenever the attacking battalions were held up. In several instances this resulted in serious machine gun casualties in the support and even in the reserve battalions. The rear lines could not be made to see that their crowding forward did not help the attack but merely fed the men to machine guns.¹³³

Unfortunately, the Inspector General failed to provide any analysis of why the AEF made progress in some tactical areas while it continued to struggle in others. A possible explanation is that heavy losses of junior leaders doomed the AEF's small units to a constant cycle of new groups of officers and NCOs endlessly having to learn the same lessons over and over again.

The AEF Inspector General noted that across the army, leaders were making fundamental tactical errors or mistakes in judgment that were leading to ever greater numbers of casualties. Junior leaders all too often failed to make proper reconnaissance of the terrain over which they were to attack prior to the actual assault. Planning was based mostly on maps, with little to no effort made by the leaders to match the plan to the actual terrain and enemy in the area. The failure of reconnaissance meant that American attacks often blundered into German positions causing unnecessary casualties and throwing off the time lines of the operation. A soldier in the 328th Infantry, for example, reported that when his company attacked near Sommerance on 14 October 1918, it lost 38 men in one brief encounter after his platoon leader led his unit across an open field without conducting even the briefest of reconnaissance. The platoon leader, Lieutenant J. W. Hatton, was also killed in the action.¹³⁴

The AEF Inspector General, Major General Andre W. Brewster, became so concerned about the lapses of sound combat leadership among the AEF's junior officers that he expressed

¹³³ "Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918," in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116.

¹³⁴ *History of Company "C" 328th Infantry* (New York: Hunter Collins, Inc., no date), 23.

his belief that drastic measures needed to be taken to correct the deficiencies. On 21 October 1918, he wrote to the AEF Chief of Staff that,

As soon as the present period of active operations ceases, a series of platoon leader schools should be established through which all platoon leaders should pass before the next period of active operations. Not only have platoon leaders shown lack of resource when confronted with situations on the battlefield but they seem to have forgotten the use of the various instruments of the offense in their platoons. When stopped, instead of developing all of their resources, they have frequently pushed forward blindly and had their platoons suffer heavily. The platoon is the basis of the offensive and our platoons in this last offensive have not developed all of their offensive power nor have the platoon leaders kept their men together. In many cases they have not realized the importance of their command as a complete fighting unit.¹³⁵

Although the war ended before the Inspector General's recommendations could be put into effect, the existence of the memorandum and the force of his statements highlight the fact that the GHQ was growing increasingly concerned with the abilities of leadership of its junior officers corps.

The Inspector General and the GHQ had good reasons to be concerned. Time and time again, American officers were leading their men forward in mass formations against the frontal and flanking fire of machine guns. An artilleryman in the 32nd Division observed one of these attacks in the early days of the Meuse-Argonne drive. He was mesmerized by one attack where,

The infantry advanced with courage and seemed to be making good headway. We noted that all their dead lay in little circles. It was instantly clear to us that they must be entirely inexperienced, or they would never group together while enemy field-gunners had them in sight. Most of the dead had been killed by a light shell dropped dexterously into the center of the ring. Occasionally their officers scattered them but it was difficult to keep them apart. They were evidently coming together for comfort and sympathy, forgetting that in their situation the best comfort lay in keeping far apart and offering enemy gunners the smallest possible target.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Memorandum from AEF Inspector General to AEF Chief of Staff, Subject: "Observations and investigations already made by the Inspectors General in regard to straggling and the use of shelter in the area occupied by the First Army," dated 21 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 113.

¹³⁶ Jacks, 186-7., Horace Baker, *Argonne Days in World War I* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 54.

The infantryman John Barkley saw the results of a similar one of these failed attacks launched by the 5th Division against Cunel in October 1918. He later wrote,

They had evidently tried to hold their formations as they burst from the woods, and had met with machine gun fire from the opposite hill. They were lying now in wave formations. Some of them must have rolled and twisted as they died, but not enough to disturb the outlines of that wave.¹³⁷

However, Barkley's own leaders seemed little better in directing his company than had those of the dead men lying on the hillside. To the soldier in the ranks, like Barkley, the experience of combat and their officers' conduct could seem bewildering. As his unit attacked through the Bois Des Ogons, he recalled, "Suddenly a heavy rifle fire and automatic rifle fire opened directly ahead. I heard somebody yell, 'Lets Go!' and we ran straight forward. At the same time the Germans on the right end of the line opened up on us with dozens of machine guns."¹³⁸ Without better training to fall back on, the junior leaders of Barkley's company limited their tactical options to massing their units against the closest source of fire.

The experience of trying to lead the oversized American units into combat in the Argonne sector was equally bewildering to many of the officers themselves. Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence admitted that during his unit's attack on the Bois des Chenes on 10 October 1918, "I had difficulty keeping my line straight and moving forward in the midst of the chaos, and the men gathered in groups in spite of all the sergeants and I could do..."¹³⁹ Lieutenant Maury Maverick, a new replacement officer with the 1st Division's 28th Infantry, was completely unprepared for

¹³⁷ John L. Barkley, *No Hard Feelings!* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1930), 199. A number of the period accounts point to the fixation of American officers to focus on maintaining formations. From the descriptions they provided, many seemed to have been following the formations outlined in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. For example, see, Sanborn, 229., and 1LT James B. Wharton, "A Battalion in Action," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVI, No. 6 (December 1919), 457-8. Wharton provides a step-by-step account of how his battalion deployed for action during its 29 September 1918 attack on Chene Tondeu.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹³⁹ Lawrence, 86-7.

his first experience in combat. When his veteran officers ordered a frontal attack near Exermont on 4 October, Maverick recalled,

Most of us who were young American officers knew little of actual warfare- we had the daring but not the training of the old officer of the front. The Germans simply waited, and then laid a barrage of steel and fire. And the machine gunners poured it on us. Our company numbered two hundred men. Within a few minutes about half of them were either killed or wounded...everything happened that never happens in the storybooks of war. We literally lost each other. There were no bugles, no flags, no drums, and as far as we knew, no heroes. The noise was like great stillness, everything seemed blotted out. We hardly knew where the Germans were.¹⁴⁰

Under the circumstances encountered by Lawrence and Maverick, the leaders could only draw upon their meager training and experience to puzzle out a solution to their tactical problems.

As Maverick stated, the young officers had all of “the daring but not the training,” to cope with the German machine guns. In these situations, junior officers tended to pick the tactical paths of least resistance, both in terms of using terrain and tactics, to attack the enemy. Under-trained and inexperienced leaders and soldiers are predisposed to follow routes that offer the easiest way forward. They tend to follow paths and opens rather than try to push through areas that are thickly wooded or overgrown. This fact was not lost on the German defenders in the Argonne. A company commander in the 78th Division recalled that the Germans attempted to canalize the Americans by “barring all other approaches with barb wire” except for paths that led directly into the guns’ field of fire zone. He noted that this tactic was very effective because, “after you’ve struggled in barb wire for a while you’ll take a chance on machine gun bullets to get on a path.”¹⁴¹ The officer claimed that after a few sorrowful experiences with this German technique, he and his men became more adept at avoiding them.

Despite the growing awareness of these German machine gun tactics, American infantry

¹⁴⁰ Maury Maverick, *A Maverick American* (New York: Covici Friede Publishers, 1937), 129.

¹⁴¹ Colonna, 51.

units still continued to make many of the same mistakes in attacking them throughout the war. A veteran soldier in the 42nd Division, Martin Hogan, recalled that his officers and comrades came to use “all that they had learned about fighting against men in cover” in his unit’s actions in the Argonne. What stayed with him, however, was that even after realizing that “the paths that led to the enemy machine-gun nests were almost unthinkably bad,” leaders continue to rush through them “front-on, again, and again and again.”¹⁴²

It is interesting to note that these tactical failings were not limited to those American units fighting as part of the AEF. The 27th and 30th Divisions, attached to the British Army during all of their active campaigning, exhibited similar lapses in leadership. In an after actions report of the Ypres-Lys Offensive, an officer from the 30th Division noted,

The natural tendency of men seems to be to rush . . . (machine gun) nests in frontal attacks instead of using a flanking or enveloping movement...Small unit leadership: next to lack of liaison the most glaring defect. Small unit leaders wait to be told how to do every little thing and use little or no initiative of their own, do not assume enough responsibility. In all training of men, they have been too dependent on officers telling them not only what to do but how to do it . . . Platoon leaders have not had instruction and almost no practice in the actual use of maps and aerial photos.¹⁴³

Even with the benefit of close contact with experienced Allied troops and British schools, American junior leaders remained hobbled by their poor initial training.

American junior leaders also demonstrated shortcomings in their knowledge of gas warfare as well as in key leader tasks such as map reading. During the Great War, the Americans lost over 1400 men who were killed outright or later died in hospital wards due to gas poisoning. The AEF hospitalized over 70,552 men for gas exposure, and gas accounted for over 27 percent of the army’s total combat related casualties. An unknown number of these 70,552

¹⁴² Martin Hogan, *The Shamrock Battalion in the Great War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 111.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Elmer Murphy and Robert Thomas, *The Thirtieth Division in the World War* (Lepanto, AK: Old Hickory Publishing Company, 1936), 194.

men later died of complications brought about by gas exposure or limped on with poor health for the rest of their days.¹⁴⁴ By 1918, the major European combatants had reached a point to where gas had, for the most part, become a weapon of harassment; one that degraded the effectiveness of their soldiers without causing an unmanageable number of casualties. This was not the case with the AEF. As the figures above show, the AEF lost considerable manpower to gas exposure. Most of the reasons for the AEF's relatively high losses to gas pointed to poor training and leadership. The reports of gas attacks against American forces compiled by E. W. Spencer in 1928 consistently noted that the AEF's officers, NCOs, and soldiers were woefully untrained in gas warfare. In addition to training, failures in leadership, such as the lax enforcement of gas discipline and poor decisions by officers and NCOs, also caused unnecessary losses.

In a number of incidents, the officers set bad examples for their soldiers in their personal gas discipline, or put their men at risk due to their own ignorance. An inquiry into a gas attack on the 1st Division's 18th Infantry on 4 May 1918, uncovered a deplorable lack of gas discipline among the regiment's officers and soldiers. The investigation revealed that many of the 693 men hospitalized in the attack had been poisoned when they had not been warned of the attack and had remained unmasked in poorly protected shelters. The unit's leaders had failed to enact effective warning measures nor ensured that gas sentries were properly placed and instructed. One of the worse lapses in leadership was the poor example set by the unit's officers. The regimental commander, regimental gas officers, and several of the unit's other officers had taken to wearing an unauthorized French gas mask rather than the cumbersome, uncomfortable, and

¹⁴⁴ Charles Heller, *Chemical Warfare in World War I: The American Experience*, Leavenworth Papers No. 10 (Ft. Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984), 91-3., Rexmond C. Cochran, *Gas Warfare in World War I*, Study 1, *The 78th Division at the Kriemhilde Stellung: October 1918* (Washington D.C.: U. S. Army Chemical Corps Historical Office, 1957), 62-75., Rexmond C. Cochran, *Gas Warfare in World War I*, Study 3, *The 1st Division in the Meuse-Argonne: 1-12 October 1918* (Washington D.C.: U. S. Army Chemical Corps Historical Office, 1957), 51-61., COL H. L. Gilchrist, *A Comparative Study of World War Casualties from Gas and Other Weapons* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 16, 23-6.

more effective Small Box Respirator. This gave their soldiers license to follow their lead, and some were stricken while using the ineffective French M2 masks.¹⁴⁵

On 8 October 1918, the 7th Division's Chief of Staff issued a memorandum informing his officers that "casualties due to gas bombardment are all the more deplorable in view of the fact that they are preventable." He noted that the key to reducing gas casualties was for officers to maintain strict discipline in forcing their soldiers to wear their masks and in properly conducting unmasking procedures.¹⁴⁶ The Chief of Staff's last point identified one of the major leadership failures when it came to gas warfare: officers and NCOs simply did not know when to order their soldiers into or out of their gas masks.

A gas attack against the 26th Division on 10 October 1918 resulted in 111 casualties in the 101st and 102nd Field Artillery which "was caused principally by premature removal of respirators. They were ordered off by Lieut. Ford in charge of Battery B, 102nd F. A. soon after the shelling stopped."¹⁴⁷ In another case, a battalion of the 386th Infantry had to hospitalize over 200 men for gas exposure after it was hit by a German gas attack on 6 October 1918. An officer from one of the gassed companies "gave the order to remove masks in less than two hours after the bombardment." The Division Gas Officer reported, "I cannot understand how any officer could be so ignorant of the effects of mustard gas to issue such an order and this order was responsible for at least two-thirds of the casualties in this attack" (original emphasis).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ E.W. Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks Upon the American Expeditionary Forces During the World War*, Part I, *First Division*, Report on the Gas Attack of 3-4 May 1918, in the CARL archives, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 34-41. Colonel Robert R. McCormick found a similar lack of leadership oversight in 1st Division units at Cantigny. McCormick, 142-3. A March 1918 attack against the 42nd Division's 165th Infantry resulted in the gassing of 19 officers and 405 soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel H. L. Gilchrist, a medical officer who investigated the incident, discovered that "many soldiers and officers were found without proper gas protection, that is, respirators either not in the alert position (mounted on the soldier's chest ready to be donned) or no respirators [being worn] at all." Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks*, Part I, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks*, Part I, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks*, Eighty Ninth Division, Report of Gas attack 7-8 August 1918.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, "Report of Gas attack 5-6 October 1918."

Junior leaders also had some difficulty in mastering the art of land navigation. There is an old army joke that the most dangerous man on the battlefield is a second lieutenant with a map. Sadly, during World War I, the second lieutenant in question was also joined by his captain and major when it came to map reading and orienteering. In an examination given by the II Corps Headquarters to a mixed group of field grade officers immediately after the war, only 5 out of 57 leaders tested could accurately locate map coordinates.¹⁴⁹ The ability of leaders to use maps and compasses to report their positions, plan fire support, and find their way to tactical objectives was a vital combat skill that was not given the emphasis needed during the training of the AEF's officers and leaders. Given the tangled terrain of the Argonne sector, leaders frequently had to follow compass directions just to move forward. Yet, an officer in the 5th Division stated that training in the use of a magnetic compass was not given to his unit until a lull in the Argonne drive, after the area's terrain had demonstrated to the unit the need for such equipment and training.¹⁵⁰

Failures in land navigation could have critical implications for small unit actions. Corporal Berch Ford, a soldier in the 16th Infantry, recalled that during the Soissons drive, his platoon discovered that its lieutenant could not read a map, and had taken the unit far beyond their objective. The unit was fortunate that the platoon sergeant was a long service regular and reoriented that platoon after telling the officer that he was taking over command.¹⁵¹ During the Meuse-Argonne fighting Captain Sam Woodfill got into an argument with a fellow company commander whose inability to read a map was jeopardizing his unit. Woodfill noted, "Instead of makin' for the woods I had just patrolled they were goin' straight toward another wood which we

¹⁴⁹ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1988), 403.

¹⁵⁰ *The Official History of the Fifth Division*, 185.

¹⁵¹ CPL Berch Ford, 16 IN, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

knew was chuck-full of Germans.” While he managed to talk the other captain into changing his course, the mixed-up officer left Woodfill still declaring that he knew exactly where he was.¹⁵²

While all of this paints a rather bleak portrait of American junior leadership, it must be stated that not all American leaders made these mistakes or failed to learn from their experiences. Some officers actively sought to adapt their tactics to the challenges that confronted them. The diary of Harold C. Woehl indicates that the officers of the 126th Infantry experimented with new tactics and methods of organizing and fighting after their heavy losses in the Aisne-Marne and Oise-Aisne Campaigns. On 20 September 1918, First Sergeant Woehl recorded that his company received orders from the regiment to practice fighting “in line of gangs.” This was different from the “combat groups” listed in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Rather than having squads organized around a single weapon, as was done in “combat groups” (i.e. two automatic rifle squads, a bomber squad, and a rifle squad), the “combat gangs” were to be all-arms squads built “with the Automatic Rifle as a group nucleus.”¹⁵³

First Lieutenant Fred Jankoska, the company commander for H Company, 126th Infantry, also displayed a marked ability to change his formations and tactics to suit the combat situations he encountered. For example, on 1 October 1918 he opted to send the company’s first and second waves forward “a few men at a time filtering forward from shellhole to shellhole to advance our line” rather than attacking in the lines of platoons as directed by *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Although the assault encountered heavy fire and slowly ground to a halt, the company only had three soldiers killed in the action. The next morning Lieutenant Jankoska

¹⁵² Lowell Thomas, *Woodfill of the Regulars* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1929), 274-5.

¹⁵³ Entry for 20 September 1918 in “A Tanglefoot’s Diary.” Interesting, the Lewis Board recommended a fundamental reorganization of the infantry squad along the lines of the ones used in the 126th Infantry. It favored the continuation of the basic eight man squad under the command of a corporal, but rejected the ponderous “combat groups” in favor of establishing uniform squads within the platoon each armed with seven rifles, an automatic rifle, and a rifle grenade discharger. Lewis Board, 20.

again changed his method of attack. To cross an unavoidable 100 yard wide swath of open space he infiltrated the deadly ground by sending one man over at a time. The move forward proceeded at a snail's pace under constant enemy artillery and machine gun fire, but the company suffered the loss of only one wounded man.¹⁵⁴

Why was Jankoska able to do this while other officers failed? Part of it was his longevity in the unit. He had been in the regiment since it had arrived in France, and had been assigned with H Company since early August. Jankoska was a veteran of the school of hard knocks, and had lived through the experience while many of his fellow company officers had fallen to death or wounds. If "lessons" are to be learned in small units, their leaders must live through the ordeal to tell the tale. Furthermore, Jankoska's superiors were willing to ignore the aspects of the doctrine coming out of Chaumont that did not match the realities of combat. This willingness to abridge or discard the "book" when it was not relevant supports Grotelueschen's contention that tactical adaptability in the AEF often came from below. Sadly, few of the divisions that arrived in the summer and fall of 1918 had the time, experience, or ability to advance to this level of tactical common sense.

It must also be noted that learning at the school of hard knocks could be very costly in terms of human lives. A 42nd Division infantry captain admitted to a division inspector on 22 October 1918 that the experience had forced him to change his formations and tactics. He had originally placed all of his automatic rifles in his first wave of attack so they could immediately fire on any machine guns they encountered. Unfortunately, he found that in doing so, all of the automatic rifles were quickly "put out of action early." He intended to group all of his automatic rifles and rifle grenades in the second wave the next time his unit advanced. Although it was good that the captain was learning from his past mistakes, the automatic rifle

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., Entries for 1 and 2 October 1918.

squads decimated in his first attack probably did not share in the joy of their leader's self-discovery.¹⁵⁵

The available German sources also point to the lack of training, initiative, and skill of the American small unit leaders. German officers were endlessly surprised by the density of the American formations and the penchant of their leaders to launch frontal attacks with little to no regard for the terrain and the German dispositions. The German commander facing the 1st Division's attack against Exermont on 4 October 1918, reported that "The mass concentration of men was so large that the one wave pushed the other forward in a certain sense."¹⁵⁶ One after action report of the 31st Bavarian Infantry Regiment stated,

Even when deployed the enemy suffered bloody losses. The separate and isolated groups coming in carelessly at first, were at once subjected to the withering concentrated fire of light and heavy machine guns... Gaping holes were torn in the lines of riflemen, entire columns being mowed down... They were visible at great distances and offered excellent targets... One could plainly observe that the unrest in the ranks grew every minute. Lone individuals and frequently entire detachments ran aimlessly about.¹⁵⁷

Tim and time again, from the Aisne-Marne to the closing weeks of the Meuse-Argonne fight, German officers described the American attacks as being made in "dense masses" or "dense waves."¹⁵⁸ As late as 20 October 1918, the commander of the German 170th Infantry Regiment

¹⁵⁵ Memorandum from Forward Office, Inspector General's Department, 1st Army, to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: "Report of inspection in sector of 42nd Division," in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 2.

¹⁵⁶ "Combat report of the M. G. School of the 3rd Army during its employment at Group Argonne from the 26 September to 5th October 1918," in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930). not paginated. The fact that the Germans had been forced to use its school units in combat gives an indication of the dire condition of the German Army in October 1918.

¹⁵⁷ Otto, 79.

¹⁵⁸ For examples see, Otto, 76, 112-113, 119, 165., Group Argonne, report dated 10 October 1918., Report of 1st Guard Infantry Division, 30 September 1918., 5th Guards Division Battle Diary entry for 4 October 1918., Report of the 3rd BN. 150th Infantry, dated 5 October 1918., Report of the 2nd BN. 150th Infantry, dated 14 October 1918, in War Department, *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne* (Washington DC: Army War College, 1930), not paginated. Also see, Edward S. Johnston, "A study of the nature of United States infantry tactics for open warfare on July 18, 1918, and of their points of difference as contrasted with the United States Army tactics taught in 1914," Command and Staff College Student Individual Research Study IR-124-1931, in the CARL Archives, Ft. Leavenworth, KS., 12. Not everyone agreed

reported, “in action the American appears very awkward. The hostile infantry attacks in large masses, at times in as many as 15 waves.”¹⁵⁹

Some German sources also made the same observations of the American fixation for maintaining rigid formations regardless of the tactical situation as had been made by the AEF’s inspector generals. Ernst Otto, a German officer facing the 2nd Division’s attacks on Blanc Mont, praised the bravery and their tenacity of the Americans, but he later noted that his enemy’s lock-step effort to keep formation and tendency to remain in dense “battalion-columns” resulted in many of the American losses.¹⁶⁰ On 26 October 1918, the commander of the German 111th Infantry Regiment reported that the U. S. Army “is effective solely on account of its mass action and its freshness.” The Germans also observed, “A certain naïveté manifests itself during assembly. In this connection the Americans conduct themselves rather boldly, indicating their inexperience.” He went on to argue,

The advance of the hostile infantry was not consistent. On one hand it advanced in skirmish lines, another time in file, then again in light groups, even though the terrain was not favorable for such.¹⁶¹

Although it might be easy to discount the German views as “sour grapes” or wishful thinking, their observations were echoed in the comments made by officers sitting on the boards that collected the AEF’s “lessons learned” from the war. During the Lewis Board, Brigadier General Malin Craig, one of the U. S. Army’s shining intellectual lights, argued that throughout the war, “our men still inclined to go forward in close masses and to take shelter in masses,

with this German view. LTC Oliver Spaulding argued that the Germans’ perspective was skewed by optical illusions where soldiers advancing over rolling terrain in thin lines appeared to seem closer together from a distance. His argument is not all together convincing. LTC Oliver Spaulding, “The Tactics of the War With Germany,” *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (September 1920), 229-230.

¹⁵⁹ “Experiences from last action,” German 1st Battalion 170th Infantry Regiment, dated 20 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁶⁰ Otto, 192-4.

¹⁶¹ “Experiences with the American method of combat,” 111th Inf. Regiment, dated 26 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

instead of reducing the size or the target by intervals.”¹⁶² Colonel Gordon Johnson pointed out that, “the tendency to belt straight ahead within a given sector was the cause of not only of many losses, but [also] of the failure to properly use all the means at hand for overcoming resistance.”¹⁶³ Thinking back on his wartime experiences, Major Robert Calder, commander of the 1st Division’s 3rd Machine Gun Battalion, was moved to state, “In this war our men in the ranks have been superior to our officers, that is as soldiers they were better than the officers were as leaders.”¹⁶⁴ The members of the Superior Board concluded that “untrained leaders were too often found in the line,” and that this “oftentimes jeopardized the chance of success and unquestionably increased the casualties within our ranks.”¹⁶⁵

Even some experienced American units could fall into the tactical traps described by the Germans and lamented by the Lewis and Superior Boards. George Cornish, an officer in the 1st Division’s 26th Infantry, recalled that the “normal” attack formation used by his unit during both the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Offensives was to place two companies abreast in the lead echelon with “each company with two platoons in the first wave and two in support [in the second wave].” The platoons were to deploy “with one-half [its strength] in the front line and one-half in the second,” with “50 meters between the lines, 100 meters between waves.” The battalion’s remaining two companies were to support the advance and remain 400 meters behind the assault companies. In this formation, the battalion frontage was 600 meters, and its depth, with an attached machine gun company, was 1200 meters. While these formations were nearly identical to those given in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, their spacing was 100 meters wider than the frontage given in the manual.

¹⁶² Lewis Board, Appendix R, 2.

¹⁶³ Ibid., Appendix R, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., Appendix S, 9.

¹⁶⁵ Superior Board, 20-1.

Even with these changes, the formation proved too dense during the regiment's attack on the Exermont Ravine on 4 October 1918. The regiment's 1st Battalion was particularly hard hit and had "practically lost all of its officers and suffered about 50% casualties" during the advance. The 2nd Battalion maneuvered a bit more skillfully, breaking out of the "normal formation" and moving forward "in squad columns widely deployed" and crossing "the exposed ground by infiltration." This suggests that even within the same regiment, you could have one commander who rigidly adhered to "doctrinal" formations and techniques, like the 1st Battalion commander, while others, like the 2nd Battalion commander, adapted to the situations they encountered. By the end of the day, the 26th Infantry's attack had seized a mile of ground at a cost of 565 officers and men. Although it generally benefited from superior artillery support during the next seven days the regiment was in the line, and advanced a total of five miles, the assaults had cost the regiment 41 of the 84 officers and 1600 of the 3300 men it had entered the fighting with on 3 October 1918.¹⁶⁶

In addition to the poor use of tactics and formations by junior officers, a number of German officers noted the American tendency to lose any element of surprise by their predictable sequences of preparing for, and executing, attacks. Colonel Baumfelder, the commander of the German 102nd Infantry Regiment, reported on 1 November 1918 that the Americans generally provided their enemies indicators of their future actions long before going over the top. He observed,

The Americans betray their offensive intentions repeatedly, by conspicuously orienting themselves on the terrain before the attack. They show themselves as individuals and groups, apparently officers, during the day, by walking around noisily with unfolded maps without any cover. The preparations for an attack are also repeatedly carried out in conspicuous fashion, so that our artillery

¹⁶⁶ George Cornish, "The Twenty-Sixth Infantry (U.S.) in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive," Command and Staff College Student Individual Research Study IR-104-1931, in the CARL Archives, Ft. Leavenworth, KS., 210., *Offensive Combat of Small Units*, "Supplement to Instructions," Plate 11.

and machine gun fire can disrupt them...

The [American] attack is carried out not in firing lines but in little groups in rows or packs, moving unskillfully over the terrain offering lucrative targets for machine guns and infantry. The American soldier is brave and bold, lacks the proper junior leadership and often shows himself to be improperly trained. If our artillery and machine gun fire comes into effect properly, the opponent is thrown into confusion and the attack comes to a halt.¹⁶⁷

The commander of the German 170th Infantry also noted that the doughboys always signaled the location and direction of their coming attacks with a very predictable morning assault preceded by a bombardment lasting several hours.¹⁶⁸

The propensity of the Americans to “telegraph their punch” gave the Germans an obvious tactical advantage. As they expected the Americans to make morning attacks preceded by artillery fires, it was not uncommon for the Germans to lose their own artillery and machine gun fires on identified and possible American assembly areas for the coming attack. One German officer reported during the Argonne fight, “when annihilation fire is placed on the hostile assembly areas in a timely manner, a part of the force of the assault is taken from the enemy.”¹⁶⁹ The Germans were fully aware of the Americans’ lack of basic training in gas warfare and used this knowledge to delay, disrupt, or halt the doughboys’ attacks before they gained momentum. “The Americans are very much afraid of artillery fire and especially gas shells,” a German officer noted, and, “a few yellow cross shells [Mustard Gas] are sufficient to start the gas alarm

¹⁶⁷ Report from the 102nd Regt. to the 63rd Inf. Bde, NARA RG 165, Box 200, German Miscellaneous File.

¹⁶⁸ “Relative to experiences as to the method of attack of the Americans,” 170th Inf. Regt., dated 15 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*. For other German reports noting the tendency of the Americans to betray their intentions to the enemy, see, “Experiences relative the method of attack of the Americans,” 169th Inf. Regt., dated 25 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*, “Experiences during recent actions,” German 37th Division, dated 13 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁶⁹ “Experiences during recent actions,” German 37th Division, dated 13 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

and considerable confusion.”¹⁷⁰ The German officer’s assertion was confirmed by the Americans themselves. During an attack in the Meuse-Argonne on Hill 378, an officer in the 2nd Battalion, 313th Infantry reported “the enemy fire and gas were so bad that the Battalion became somewhat disorganized and lost the barrage.” Although the battalion gained its objective, it only did so with very heavy losses.¹⁷¹ Lieutenant Hervey Allen also admitted that when his battalion was hit with German gas, “the usual result was great trouble. Platoons and companies lost touch with each other, and there was great difficulty in giving orders or having them understood.”¹⁷²

One of the gravest criticisms that the Germans levied against the American junior leaders was their lack of initiative in combat. On 26 October 1918, the commander of the German 111th Infantry Regiment reported to his brigade commander that, “All American attacks had a very limited objective. The successes were never exploited, as otherwise on many occasions this could have had disastrous consequences [for the Germans].”¹⁷³ After his encounter with the Americans in September 1918, another German commander noted,

The [American] leadership was altogether clumsy...most of them do not possess the qualifications necessary of leadership. It was impossible to overlook the embarrassment displayed by the Americans as soon as their initial aims were achieved. They helplessly faced their new positions, unable to take any advantage of them...Favorable opportunities to overtake and encircle us were allowed by them to go by...As soon as the infantry, charging straight ahead, had achieved its goals, leaders, as well as the rank and file, were nonplused.¹⁷⁴

Lastly, a German regimental commander explained, “As soon as [the Americans] had a success

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in “Lecture delivered by Colonel Willey Howell, on 6 January 1919 to the Assembled General Officers and Chiefs of Staff of the First American Army, Subject: “The Second Section, G.S., First American Army in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Operations” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

¹⁷¹ Henry Thorn, *History of 313th U. S. Infantry* (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, 1920), 46-8.

¹⁷² Allen, 192.

¹⁷³ “Experiences with the American method of combat,” 111th Inf. Regiment, dated 26 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁷⁴ George Viereck, ed., *As They Saw Us: Foch, Ludendorff and Other Leaders Write Our War History* (New York: Doubleday and Doran, 1929), 38.

he failed to exploit it but remained in position for hours without moving forward in the terrain.”¹⁷⁵

Adding to this lack of small unit initiative, German officers frequently noted the benefit that their units gained from the inability of their American foes to maintain adequate fire support for their assault units after the preliminary and rolling barrages. An officer of the German 169th Infantry maintained that, “after the infantry attack is launched, in most cases there is no liaison between the artillery and the infantry; the American artillery always seems not to learn the location of the forward line until later and as a result either does not fire at all or rather [fires] far into the rear.”¹⁷⁶ Another German officer stated, “Liaison between [the American] infantry and artillery was poor. This manifested itself primarily during the [German] counter-attacks. Then the hostile artillery was silent in most cases.”¹⁷⁷

The failure of American infantry-artillery cooperation and of the AEF’s junior leaders was a disastrous combination. In both cases, the American inactivity allowed the Germans to mass and launch their inevitable counterattacks to dislodge the Americans without fear of retaliation by the doughboys’ artillery or much reaction from their infantry. A German infantry commander reported with great relish that in those situations, “A single counter-attack impaired the whole activity of the enemy for days and cost less casualties and demand less on the nervous energy of the [German] troops than the wait under very heavy artillery fire without cover.”¹⁷⁸ Compounding this problem, American Inspector Generals had found that in the fighting at St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne, “our infantry did not dig in during temporary halts. In many

¹⁷⁵ “Experiences from last action,” German 1st Battalion 170th Infantry Regiment, dated 20 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁷⁶ “Experiences relative the method of attack of the Americans,” 169th Inf. Regt., dated 25 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁷⁷ “Experiences with the American method of combat,” 111th Inf. Regiment, dated 26 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular*, Vol. IV, *German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

instances...the infantry did not dig in, and were quickly blown off the height by concentrations of enemy shell fire which invariably resulted in it becoming necessary to retake the position with loss of men.”¹⁷⁹ This fact was illustrated during an American attack against the German 151st Infantry on 11 October 1918. Although the American assault succeeded in collapsing the enemy’s defenses, the failure of the Americans to either capitalize on their success by continuing their attacks against the fleeing Germans, or to at least consolidate their gains, allowed the German commander the time to halt the rout of his troops by deploying his regimental staff as skirmishers and collecting the men retreating from the lines. The counterattack launched by these hastily assembled scratch forces succeeded in pushing the Americans back to their start point.¹⁸⁰

It was in instances such as these that the U. S. Army’s general failure to teach its junior leaders how to exercise intelligent initiative came back to haunt the AEF. Although junior officers were often cognizant of their own shortcomings and lack of experience, they generally resented the micro-management of their superiors. The company grade officers argued that the direct involvement of senior officers in the command and administration of their companies diminished their authority and leadership within their units. An infantry captain decried what he saw as “interference by officers higher than Company Commanders in those problems of responsibility and duty of the Company Commander, with the result that Company Commanders were often mere figureheads.”¹⁸¹ One officer resented the fact that "in most places the junior officers, especially Reserve and National Guard officers, have been treated more as dishonorable

¹⁷⁹ “Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116.

¹⁸⁰ “Combat Report for the 10th, 11th and 12th October 1918,” from Infantry Regiment No. 151, dated 12 October 1918, in *World War Records, First Division, A. E. F. Regular, Vol. IV, German Documents: Meuse-Argonne*.

¹⁸¹ “Replies to Officers' Questionnaires” from Morale Branch of the War College and War Plans Division to the Chief of Staff, dated 5 November 1919, in NARA, RG165, NM84, Entry 378, Box 6 (here after cited as *Morale Branch Officers’ Survey*), 26.

and dishonest men...and not treated as officers should be treated."¹⁸² Another captain noted the tendency of senior leaders to treat their subordinates "as if they were irresponsible and had no idea of right and wrong."¹⁸³

The senior officers seemed to justify their micro-management on the grounds that junior leaders could not be trusted to carry out important assignments without their close supervision. This perceived need to regulate junior officers further stressed already overburdened senior commanders and staffs and also created command climates where initiative and independent decision-making were not prized or encouraged. As a second lieutenant noted shortly after the war,

There are too many instances of Colonels doing Platoon Leader's work. There are too many lieutenants doing the work of sergeants. There is a tendency on the part of the General Staff itself to direct the simplest movements of small units in detail instead of giving a general outline in orders and leaving the details to be worked out by those who are commissioned for that purpose.¹⁸⁴

There seems to be much truth in the accusations of both sides. In *Notes on Recent Operations Number 3*, the AEF GHQ went so far as to admonish commanders for their constant "interference in the province of subordinates" when issuing orders.¹⁸⁵ Major General Edmund Whittenmyer condemned instances where "superiors directed the work of units of inferiors, the results were not satisfactory, and, in my judgment, there resulted a loss in accomplishment."¹⁸⁶ These admonishments did little to change the army's culture of micromanagement. Of his regiment's action in the Argonne, for example, the 42nd Division's Lieutenant Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan recalled, "There were green company commanders with the

¹⁸² Ibid., 27.

¹⁸³ Ibid. This was a frequent complaint in the Morale Branch Report. Many junior officers noted that their superiors did not treat them as officers and "men of trust."

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 3, 8.

¹⁸⁶ Lewis Board, Appendix R, 19.

companies...There were times when I had to march at the head of the companies to get them forward...(the) new men needed some visible symbol of authority.”¹⁸⁷ While Donovan’s micromanagement was perhaps justified, he seemed oblivious to the long-term implications of his actions.

Shortly after the war, Major General Robert Alexander stated that in his 77th Division there had been a general failure in “the development of individual initiative along proper lines” among his junior leaders. He noted,

It did not seem to me that the Junior officers and non-commissioned officers realized the importance of maneuvering as a means whereby successful results might be attained with a minimum of losses. This was not due to any lack of good will or earnestness. It was simply due to the fact that their instruction had either not been conducted along lines that would impress upon them the vital necessity for such maneuver, or the course of instruction through which they had been put had not made upon them the impression desired.¹⁸⁸

The AEF Inspector General agreed with Alexander’s assessment and laid the fault for much of the U. S. Army's problems on the lack of responsibility and initiative on the part of the junior officers.¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the AEF’s senior leaders failed to see their own culpability in their subordinates’ failures. To a great extent, the command climate that Pershing instilled in the AEF only served to exacerbate the problem of initiative in his commanders.

While the senior officers often criticized and distrusted the abilities of their subordinates, the AEF's junior leaders frequently held equally low opinions of their superiors. Like their subordinates, the senior leadership had virtually no experience with massed artillery, machine guns, tanks, or the other technological changes affecting the battlefield. The junior leaders

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in, James H. Hallas, *Doughboy War: The American Expeditionary Force in World War I* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 279.

¹⁸⁸ “Lecture Delivered by Major General Alexander, 77th Division, on 3 February 1919, Subject: “Operations of the Division, 26th of September to the 11th of November,” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

¹⁸⁹ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 15: *Reports of Commander-in-Chief A.E.F. Staff Sections and Services*, 304-5.

chaffed under what they considered the field grade officers' hypocritical criticisms of their competency. The junior officers countered contempt with contempt and lashed their superiors with telling accusations. One young officer blasted the "lack of experience and common sense in the handling of large bodies of troops by some higher officers," while another bluntly wrote "the field officers and many general officers did not understand their work." An infantry lieutenant accused, "In battle, General and Field Officers remained far to the rear, but after the battle they came and bitterly criticize[d] the work of the combatants, when if the higher officers had been in their proper places they could have personally directed the fighting."¹⁹⁰

The junior officers' most striking criticism was that their superiors often lacked basic command skills and were out of touch with the realities of modern warfare. In the Morale Branch survey a field artillery officer commented, "Many Commanding Officers were ignorant as to what their organizations were capable of doing in action. That is they expected the impossible at times and did not take advantage of things they could do at times."¹⁹¹ These charges had some merit. Soon after the war, field-grade officers in II Corps schools were found to be unable "to write a clear, concise message, and had small conception of the general tactical principles employed in offensive movements."¹⁹²

The inability of senior officers to issue clear and timely orders often hobbled the operations of their subordinates. One 4th Division machine gun battalion commander complained that,

Consideration is not given [by senior officers] to the absolute necessity to move and properly...[deploy] troops in combat. Battalion and company commanders were kept in the dark almost up to the last moment and then comes the order, the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 21. The report of returning officers is replete with harsh and bitter invectives against the AEF's senior leadership. While some of the comments stem from hard feelings, there can be no doubt that much of the criticism is accurate.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 403.

execution of which is to be practically immediate and with no chance to properly study the ground or maps. This was not because there was not time enough from the time the attack was planned but because the staff took too long and gave the line too little time.¹⁹³

Incidents were rife in the AEF where the foot dragging of senior headquarters in issuing orders directly caused unnecessary casualties among the attacking troops. A mix-up in orders for an attack by the 2nd Division's 23rd Infantry on 6 June 1918 so delayed the issuance of instructions to the unit's company commanders, that in order to make the attack time, they had to sprint back to their companies and push the men over the top with little guidance or direction. The attack commenced without artillery support and the regiment's Stokes Mortars and 37mm guns were eliminated by enemy fire. The American attack was checked by German machine gun fire and the regiment "suffered severe casualties."¹⁹⁴

A similar series of events happened to units of the 36th Division when they were attached to the 2nd Division for an attack on St. Etienne on 8 October 1918. The 2nd Division's attack orders for a 6:15 AM attack were not briefed to the company commanders of the attached 141st Infantry until 6:11 AM on the morning of the assault. In fact, "the battalion commander of the front line-battalion of the 141st Infantry was just in the act of imparting detailed instructions to his company commanders when the rolling barrage commenced."¹⁹⁵ After losing the rolling barrage, the attacking battalions suffered heavy casualties and the attack stalled shortly after it began. By the end of the day, the attacking 71st Infantry Brigade had lost 33 percent of its officers and 23 percent of its enlisted men.

¹⁹³ Lewis Board, Comments of Major E. M. Almond, 12th MGB, Appendix R, 12.

¹⁹⁴ CPT J. O. Green, "Operations of 3rd Battalion, 23rd Infantry from 30 May to 12 July 1918," Command and Staff College Student Individual Research Study IR-53-1931, in the CARL Archives, Ft. Leavenworth, KS., 12. For a similar case of poor planning see the discussion of the 126th Infantry's 14 October 1918 attack on the Kriemhilde Stellung see Gansser, 186-8.

¹⁹⁵ Otto, *The Battle at Blanc Mont*, 140-1, 146.

The 36th Division's Captain Ben Chastaine noted that prior to the abortive attack "only the smallest amount of information had been obtained of the position" and "no maps had been distributed to the companies and only the most general idea of the terrain was to be had."¹⁹⁶ He denounced the fact that the combat instructions given to the officers were so rushed and sketchy, "they were useless as far as the commanders of the combat units were concerned." One company commander never even received these incomplete orders, for the runner sent to bring him to the battalion commander's hurried orders briefing was killed and his message undelivered. When the absent commander noticed that the battalion was attacking, he quickly, but belatedly set his own company into movement. The ill-planned attack was a disaster, and in the confusion, the "troops of the supporting battalion coming up from the rear only served to make the line denser and increase the number of casualties."¹⁹⁷

Based on their study of the Great War, officers at the Infantry School later admitted that "instances abound in which attack orders were received after the hour specified by the order for the jump-off" of the attack.¹⁹⁸ Given the minute planning required to make the American artillery effective, such last minute issuing or changing of orders often ensured that the outwardly improvised attacks would fail or at least saddle junior leaders with a host of new complications. For example, the morale and effectiveness of the 140th Infantry, a unit already wracked by heavy casualties, were further shaken by last minute changes to formations and orders it received only minutes prior to its newly scheduled attack time on 29 September 1918. One officer angrily noted, "the higher commanders were in a state of confusion and excitement and to this cause was undoubtedly due much of the confusion of the troops." The ill-planned and

¹⁹⁶ Chastaine, 94.,

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98-105. Even after this debacle, the orders process did not markedly improve. When elements of the 36th Division resumed the attack on 10 October, the orders came so late that "the maps were not pasted together and the officers did not have sufficient opportunity to give instructions to their men." Chastaine, 166-7, 180.

¹⁹⁸ *Infantry in Battle*, 92, 131.

poorly-supported attack against a strong German position produced predictable results, and it quickly bogged down. When the brigade commander ordered the troops to return to their start line, panic ensued. A 140th Infantry staff officer reported, “instead of doing as ordered by Officers and NCOs, they started to break and run, almost turning into a stampede. Men of all regiments, Officers and NCOs were headed to the rear.”¹⁹⁹

In instances such as these, the fear of relief and disgrace led far too many senior officers to push attacks long after their chances of success were past. This reality was not lost on the enlisted men. On 11 October 1918, the 325th Infantry launched an attack across the Aire River near St. Juvin to route the Germans entrenched on a ridge to the north of the town. The frontal assault made grudging headway against the strong German positions. One of the regiment’s soldiers, Sergeant Victor Vigorito, recalled that the order from higher headquarters was to “push steadily on, regardless of the cost.” He noting in trying to carry out those instructions, “we lost 280 officers and men in a few minutes,” and claimed, “it was the worst piece of wholesale murder I saw in the whole war.”²⁰⁰

It is probable that the willingness of infantry commanders to attack without artillery support, or to follow orders that were based on faulty assumptions, stemmed from the fear of repercussions if their attacks did not go off as scheduled. When senior officers told their subordinates to take or hold ground “at all cost,” too many officers seemed willing to follow those instructions without question. After the Germans dropped a lethal combinations of gas on the 82nd and 89th Divisions during a relief in place on 7 and 8 August 1918 near Seicheprey, the two divisions suffered a combined total of 47 men killed and another 759 evacuated for gas exposure. An investigation concluded that “the large number of casualties was in part due to the

¹⁹⁹ Edwards, *From Doniphan to Verdun*, 79, 109., *Infantry in Battle*, 162-4.

²⁰⁰ Craig Hamilton and Louise Corbin, ed., *Echoes From Over There* (New York: Soldier’s Publishing Company, 1919), 205.

lack of knowledge, on the part of officers and men involved, concerning Mustard Gas.”

Furthermore, “When the men went into the line they were told to hold their positions at all costs, and apparently men and officers alike considered it almost a point of honor to remain despite the Mustard Gas...”(original emphasis).²⁰¹

Another such incident occurred on 7 November 1918 when the 79th Division directed that each of its infantry company commanders send out a 16 man patrol to locate machine gun nests and bring back German prisoners. Captain Arthur Joel, a company commander in the 314th Infantry, recalled, “One’s first opinion naturally was that there must be some mistakes in the orders. To send a patrol across the lines in broad daylight ...seemed like suicide!” Despite great reservations and the gnawing feeling that the orders were a mistake, Joel philosophically shrugged that “orders were orders” and sent the men out. As he had predicted, the patrol was shot to pieces by machine gun and artillery fire.²⁰² A similar event occurred on 10 November 1918, when First Lieutenant Glen Gardiner, of the 5th Division’s 60th Infantry, delayed attacking Juvigny for approximately 12 hours. The officer’s delay ensured that that objective was not captured prior to the time that the Armistice went into effect at 11:00 AM on 11 November. Gardiner claimed that the two companies given him to command for the attack were “short of ammunition and had no grenades,” lacked artillery support and also had not been fed. For his decisions, Gardiner’s commander sent him to Blois for reclassification.²⁰³

Although AEF commanders stated that they wanted their junior leaders to exercise initiative, in choosing his men over the mission in the waning hours of the war, Lieutenant Gardiner had, of course, not exhibited the “right kind” of initiative. The failure of the AEF’s

²⁰¹ Spencer, *History of Gas Attacks Upon The American Expeditionary Forces During The World War, Seventy Ninth Division*, Report of Gas attack 9-10 October.

²⁰² Arthur H. Joel, *Under the Lorraine Cross* (East Lansing: Privately published, 1921), 54-5.

²⁰³ 1LT Glen Gardiner, Blois Case Files, Box 2298. Also see 2LT Earnest Porten, Blois case file, Box 2310.

senior leaders to reconcile their demands for absolute obedience to orders with the need for their small unit leaders to exercise initiative left junior officers and NCOs unsure of what the “right kind” of initiative actually looked like. This failure led to some of the army’s most ironic moments. When his unit was pulled out of the lines around Cantigny in late May 1918, Lieutenant Jeremiah Ewarts was ordered to follow a given route to the rear area and not to deviate from the path. After finding that the route was under observation by German balloons and being shelled, Ewarts quickly diverted his unit off the road and moved it across country by a safer path. Just as he reached his destination, the lieutenant was accosted by a division staff officer who questioned him about his failure to obey orders and stated that he would report his actions to the division commander. In the end, the young officer was reprimanded for his intelligent and common sense use of initiative.²⁰⁴

There is an old army expression that “shit rolls downhill.” It reflects the fact that when one’s superiors are feeling the heat for some problem or are being goaded into action by their bosses, inevitably you (and consequently your subordinates) will be spurred in a given direction. The same captains that complained of the micromanagement of their superiors, seemed to have had little compunction of exhibiting the same behavior toward their own lieutenants and NCOs. In training and combat, the American junior officers demonstrated a propensity for consolidating decision-making and supervision into their own hands. On 17 October 1918, the 6th Division’s Inspector General reported,

Experience and observation convinces me that in our Army sufficient responsibility is not placed upon squad leaders-and they are not impressed with that responsibility. The squad is the unit around and upon which our Army is [built], and can easily be supervised by one man- whereas it is absolutely impossible for one man (the Company Commander) to properly attend to the needs and wants of each man, by himself. We have yet to learn a proper sub-

²⁰⁴ Jeremiah M. Ewarts, *Cantigny: A Corner of the War* (Privately published, 1938), 49-61.

division of duties, and a distribution of responsibility, and only by making each squad a real “unit” is military efficiency to be obtained. (original emphasis)²⁰⁵

One officer recalled that a fellow captain had won the favor of his commander by “going through all the prescribed motions” in his daily duties. The officer was so intent on keeping up appearances for his boss that he “supervised himself” the routine work of his soldiers, “least his executive officer might slip up on some of the ritualistic detail.”²⁰⁶

The end results of these actions were predictable. Junior leaders that were separated from their commanders by accidents of the action or casualties, often found themselves unready to assume the mantle of command themselves. For example, during the fighting in the Argonne sector on 7 October 1918, the 82nd Division’s Inspector General complained, “the failure of some squad leaders to meet the demands of succession of command, and exercise aggressive control in platoons which had lost the lieutenants and sergeants” had exacerbated the unit’s straggler crisis and caused much of the sluggishness that characterized the division’s recent attacks.²⁰⁷

The failure to use their initiative when the tactical situation demanded often came with dire consequences for their units. During the Argonne drive, Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence waited impatiently for one of the trail companies to come up to support his unit’s tenuous hold on the frontlines. When the supporting company failed to appear, Lawrence sent runners to find the missing unit and led them forward. The runners found the needed company firmly ensconced some 75 yards behind Lawrence’s embattled unit. When Lawrence pleaded for the commander to move his company forward, the officer replied that he had been placed there by their battalion commander, and he would not move unless ordered to do so by the major. When Lawrence

²⁰⁵ Report of LTC V. M. Elmore, Inspector General, 6th Division to the Inspector General, AEF, Subject: Recommendations, dated 17 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 108.

²⁰⁶ Anonymous [Bob Casey], *The Cannoneers Have Hairy Ears* (New York: J. H. Sears & Company, 1927), 121.

²⁰⁷ Report of Inspector, 82nd Division, to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: “Daily Report of Past 24 Hours,” dated 12 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 796, Box 3.

found the major to inform him of the situation, the superior officer berated him for leaving his company, ordered the lieutenant out of his dugout, and promptly went back to sleep.

Unfortunately, when the major discovered his mistake the next morning and ordered the support company forward, it was chewed up by German fire as it advanced in the daylight. The company commander who had initially refused to take the initiative to support Lawrence the night before was also killed in the move.²⁰⁸

It would be wrong to say that American junior leaders actively avoided taking the initiative. There are a number of examples where their timely actions were critical to the accomplishment of missions or saving American lives. For example, Stanley Herzog observed a particularly effective use of initiative by some junior officers of the 26th Division during the Aisne-Marne Offensive. After the doughboys of the 102nd Infantry had been held up by a German strongpoint, a lieutenant commanding an artillery battery, on his own, coordinated with the nearby machine gunners to bring the enemy positions under the synchronized and concentrated fire of their collective artillery and machine guns. This effective suppression allowed the infantry to advance and seize their objective.²⁰⁹ In another instance, when his regiment was held up by heavy German fire while trying to cross a Meuse River canal on 4 November, the 5th Division's Captain Edward Allworth swam the river with the remainder of his company and managed to dislodge the German defenders.²¹⁰ However, these incidents transpired in spite of, rather than because of, the training the leaders had previously been given.

Ultimately, the outcomes of these various and assorted lapses in small unit leadership were the line of dead and wounded that they left in their wake. These losses in turn led to a

²⁰⁸ Lawrence, 109-110.

²⁰⁹ Stanley J. Herzog, *Helmets* (Stamford, CT.: The Bell Press, 1930), 112-119.

²¹⁰ U.S. Army Center for Military History, *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), 309. Allworth won the Medal of Honor for this feat.

steady erosion of morale, unit cohesion, and the combat effectiveness of the AEF's infantry companies, platoons, and squads. The AEF suffered over 256,000 battle casualties during the war. Of these, slightly less than 50,000 were killed in action or died of their wounds. While these statistics pale in comparison to the losses of the other powers, well over half of the American casualties occurred in the last seven weeks of the war. Of the AEF, Marshal Foch commented, "It can be stated that the percentage of its losses in relation to its effectives engaged and to the length of time it was in the field was found to be the highest of all the Allied armies in 1918."²¹¹

As its casualty numbers make it an "average" AEF unit, the experiences of the 82nd Division is useful to illustrate the effects of poor tactics and leadership in the Meuse-Argonne. The division's first three days of combat in the Argonne shocked the doughboys with its ferocity and deadliness. In the six months that the 82nd Division had served in France prior to the Meuse-Argonne, the division had lost a total of 133 soldiers killed in action, 1244 wounded or gassed, and 13 captured. From 7 to 10 October, the 327th Infantry alone suffered the loss of 118 soldiers killed, 700 wounded and 96 captured. When the 82nd Division was relieved from the lines on 30 October 1918 after 23 days of continuous fighting, the unit had lost 902 soldiers killed in action, 4897 wounded and 185 taken prisoner.²¹²

This level of casualties was devastating to the AEF's small units. After three days of impaling itself on the German defenses at Belieu Bois and the Bois d'Ormont in late October 1918, the 26th Division's 101st Infantry, 102nd Infantry, and 102nd Machine Gun Battalion had been sadly depleted. One black joke in those units ran that when they were pulled from the lines,

²¹¹ Quoted in Viereck, 10. For statistics on American losses, see *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary*, 117-124.

²¹² Edward G. Buxton, ed. *Official History of the 82nd Division* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1919), 16, 29, 86-87, 213. The strength of an American "square" division of the First World War was 1000 officers and 27,000 men.

their replacement's asked "Hey, Buddy! What Company?" Only to hear the retort, "Company? Hell, it's the whole damned regiment!"²¹³ This sad joke was not far off the mark.

The units' frontal attacks had left many corporals commanding companies and had forced the consolidations of battalions and their subordinate units. Company A of the 102nd Machine Gun Battalion was to have had six officers and 172 men. When it came out of the line on 29 October, it was down to one officer, eight NCOs, and 47 privates. The unit's one officer was a lieutenant from the 101st Infantry that had been assigned to the company when it lost all of its officers in combat. To top it off, by 4 November, the company had lost three of its NCOs to direct commissions or officers' training.²¹⁴

Company E of the 107th Infantry had already lost a number of its officers to transfers, and NCOs to the AEF candidates' school, and the steady drain of its leaders only worsened once it entered combat in August 1918. Soon after being relieved from the British trenches near Mt. Kemmel, the company was ordered to send two of its best NCOs to officers training. In its attack on the Hindenburg Line on 28 September, the company strength stood at three officers and 170 men. Within 24 hours, all of its officers were dead and the unit had been whittled down to only 46 men. Although the company was down to only four sergeants and six corporals, on 2 October, two of its remaining sergeants were ordered to the candidates' school. Ten days later, the unit lost two more NCOs to officers' training and one of its new officers to gas poisoning. When the depleted company reentered the fight on 18 October, it lost its new company commander, when the novice officer led a frontal attack on a German machine gun nest.²¹⁵

²¹³ Arthur C. Havlin, *The History of Company A, 102nd Machine Gun Battalion, Twenty-Sixth Division* (Boston: Privately printed, 1928), 166-7.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162-9.

²¹⁵ War Veteran's Association, *History of Company "E," 107th Infantry* (New York: Privately Published, 1920), 105-121.

Between the times that it entered the lines around St. Mihiel on 22 September 1918 until it was relieved from their sector of the Meuse-Argonne on 5 November 1918, B Company of the 311th Infantry was decimated and rebuilt three times. An attack that the company participated in on 26 September in the St. Mihiel sector, which was intended to draw the Germans' attention away from the American main effort in the Meuse-Argonne did not go well for the company. German machine guns and artillery fire shredded its ranks, and every effort the commander made to flank the German guns merely landed it in another kill zone. In the confusion of the fight, the company commander lost all touch with one of his platoons and did not regain it until late in the afternoon when he stumbled across its six unwounded survivors.²¹⁶

On 12 October the company was brought up to strength after receiving 104 replacements, who, unfortunately, contained a large number of men that "had never fired a rifle and were not familiar with the use of the gas mask."²¹⁷ As there were still only two officers in the company, all of the platoons were commanded by buck sergeants. Three days later, the company reentered combat in the Meuse-Argonne. In the midst of the fighting on 17 October, three of the company's NCOs, including one of the acting platoon leaders, were ordered to the Army Candidate School. One of these sergeants was killed by artillery fire only an hour before he was to leave for the school. When the company was relieved from the lines on 26 October, it was again down to a strength of less than two platoons. Furthermore, the regimental commander assigned one of the company's two officers to another unit to make up their shortage of leaders. Soon after leaving the front, the company commander was ordered to attend the Army School of the Line for a six week course, and the unit, now down to one officer and 80 men was

²¹⁶ Colonna, 58-61.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

reorganized as a platoon.²¹⁸

Before the company reentered the fight on 29 October, it was again replenished with replacements. However, after only a single day of fighting, the unit's manpower had again shrunk to less than two platoons. Furthermore, the mortal wounding of the company's only officer and other losses of junior leaders meant that when the unit reorganized into two platoons, both were commanded by a corporal and the company was led by a buck sergeant.²¹⁹

There are a number of things that the narratives of these three companies have in common. All highlight the underlying deadliness of the attritional war that the AEF faced. They also demonstrate the overall indifference of the AEF GHQ to the needs of its small units. Regardless of the condition of a unit coming out of action, or their need to retain NCOs and officers to rebuild the cohesion of their outfits and serve as a point of continuity for passing on the unit's hard won "lessons learned," the quotas for the AEF's bloated school system took precedence over all else. This was a key mistake, for the AEF never copied the British practice of always leaving a portion of battalion officers and NCOs out of a given action to serve as a cadre to rebuild the unit in event of heavy losses. In the British Army, these cadres were expected to retain the unit's collected battlefield wisdom and "know how" to pass on to the replacements that would soon fill its ranks. The examples also illustrate the steady and heavy hemorrhaging of junior officers and NCOs those small units endured to casualties and other requirements.

The most deadly position in the entire AEF was that of a company-grade infantry or machine gun officer. By far, infantry and machine gun units made up the greatest percentage of the AEF's fatal casualties. Nearly 52 enlisted infantrymen out of 1000 were killed in action or

²¹⁸ Ibid., 66-7.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 69-71.

later died of wounds. Infantry and machine gun officers, though, suffered over 80 men killed or died of wounds for every 1000 officers from those branches. As a point of comparison, the AEF's casualties for artillerymen were eight out of every 1000 officers and nearly six out of every 1000 enlisted men.²²⁰ On average, there were six men wounded for every one man killed.²²¹ Using this rough figure as a guide, over 560 infantry and machine gun officers out of 1000 were killed or wounded during the Great War. Although the author could uncover no information on the casualty rates among infantry and machine gun NCOs, it is probable that their loss rates fell somewhere in between those of the officers and privates. The evidence of losses among NCOs from period narratives seems to back this assumption.

These losses in leaders had significant ramifications for the combat effectiveness of the AEF. As you might recall from Chapters 8 and 9, officers tended to be the best trained personnel in the new divisions. Although much of this training was rather poor, the loss of these struggling "subject matter experts" did result in a relative decline of "know how" in small units. As Darryl Henderson noted, the small unit officers and NCOs played the vital role of setting and maintaining the behavioral norms of their units and served as the intermediaries between the higher headquarters and the individual soldiers. When these leaders were lost, cohesion and effectiveness declined.

In their seminal work "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz argued that German units continued to fight effectively as

²²⁰ Leonard Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1919), 121. This discrepancy in the casualties between officers and soldiers is also borne out in other sources. After his brigade's attack on Cantigny, Brigadier General Beaumont Buck confided in his diary that the losses for the operation in the 28th Infantry, the unit that led the assault, had been particularly heavy. That regiment went in with 2800 men and lost 15 officers killed and 30 more wounded, and 130 enlisted men killed and 690 wounded. He noted that the casualties had fallen hardest on the company officers, with 60 percent of them being killed or wounded in the action as opposed to 32 percent for the enlisted men. Unpublished diary of Brigadier General Beaumont Buck, entry for 28-30 May 1918, in the U.S. Army Cavalry Museum Archive, Fort Riley, KS.

²²¹ Ayers, 130.

long as they remained part of a cohesive small unit “primary group” that cared for its members’ physical and emotional needs and possessed leadership that balanced the needs of the men with the demands of the mission. They argued that the effectiveness of the Wehrmacht began a steady decline in the winter of 1945 as soldiers became increasingly isolated physically from their comrades, when their “familial ties” to home were broken, when unit leaders became unable to meet their soldiers’ physical survival needs, and when the close bonds between group members and its leaders were shattered by casualties.

Shils and Janowitz maintain that in the German Army of World War II, the heavy loss of junior officers and NCOs “resulted in a reduction in the amount of face-to-face contact between officers and men and in reduced feeling of the officers’ protective function.” Furthermore, as the Germans were rebuilding by consolidating depleted outfits and filling them with replacements, “the top non-commissioned officers often did not have sufficient time to promote the growth of strong identifications between themselves and their men.”²²²

In the fall of 1918, the AEF’s small units suffered from many of the same challenges that bedeviled those of the Wehrmacht in 1945. The leadership in the AEF’s small units was constantly being rebuilt due to casualties or the loss of leaders to AEF schools or other requirements. Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence recalled that of the 11 other officers assigned with him to the 29th Division after graduating from the AEF candidates’ school in September 1918, seven eventually made it into the fighting in the Meuse-Argonne. Of these seven, three were killed in action and two more were wounded and evacuated. Only Lawrence and one other

²²² Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer, 1948), 280-299. Not everyone agrees with their conclusions. In a 1999 article in *Armed Forces & Society*, Robert Rush noted that on the Western Front in 1944 high casualties had led to the creation of a number of ad-hoc German units which lacked most of the elements that Shils and Janowitz purported to be the prerequisites for cohesive and effective units. Despite the lack of these elements, these units remained very deadly because “there was no alternative” otherwise open to them. Robert S. Rush, “A Different Perspective: Cohesion, Morale, and Operational Effectiveness in the German Army, Fall 1944,” in *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring 1999), 477-508.

officer survived the battle without a scratch.²²³ Lieutenant Henry Thorn, of the 79th Division's 313th Infantry, reported that his regiment's four-day attack to seize Montfaucon had cost the loss of 45 officers; 12 of whom were killed in action. To make matters worse, as soon as the regiment came out of the line, orders came down to send one officer per company to the II Corps schools. Their places were filled by a replacement captain and 15 replacement lieutenants.²²⁴

The AEF's junior officers came and went in infantry companies with a bewildering rapidity. Company A, 1st Battalion, 308th Infantry, had seven different company commanders from July to November 1918. During the same period, Company B had five commanders; Company C had six, and Company D had four. The battalion's turn-over of lieutenants was just as great. C Company had 21 officers pass through its ranks in those same four months.²²⁵ The 308th Infantry's experience was far from uncommon. In the 27th Division's 107th Infantry, on average each of the unit's line companies had over 16 captains and lieutenants assigned to them over the course of the war. The regiment's A Company suffered the most changes in its officers, with 25 being assigned to it during the war.²²⁶ Interestingly enough, the AEF GHQ had some inkling of the negative effect of these changes. In August 1918, an AEF staff officer observed that frequent changes in battalion and company commanders in the 27th Division had undermined "discipline and efficiency" within the division's units.²²⁷ Unfortunately, this complaint went unanswered.

The effect of this revolving door change over of leaders was the break down of the vital "face to face" relationships between the leaders and the led and the negative effect that the

²²³ Lawrence, 60-5.

²²⁴ Thorn, 36, 40.

²²⁵ L. Wardlaw Miles, *History of the 308th Infantry* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 315-322. The heavy losses and rapid change-over of infantry company commanders was also experienced by the 77th Division's 307th Infantry. Rainsford, 294-9.

²²⁶ Gerald F. Jacobson, *History of the 107th Infantry U.S.A.* (New York: The De Vinne Press, 1920), 443-7.

²²⁷ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 3, *Training*, 213.

changes had on the morale and cohesion within the AEF's infantry companies. As his unit entered the Meuse-Argonne, John Barkley noted that "officers were like passing shadows with us now. It hardly paid to try to get acquainted with them" for they generally and quickly became casualties.²²⁸ The casualties that his unit soon suffered in the Argonne later led him to note, "the regiment was in bad shape. We'd been cut to pieces a dozen times, and the remains reorganized so often that nobody knew what he belonged to."²²⁹ Following ten days of bloodletting in the Argonne, a soldier in the 78th Division's 312th Infantry observed,

The previous days of fighting had depleted the numbers until there were left not more than an average of sixty men in each rifle company. No battalion could boast of more than five line officers, while the lack of non-commissioned officers was a serious handicap. A thorough reorganization was necessary, a division of rifle companies into two platoons in place of the customary four and a redistribution of officers to provide at least one to each company- fortunate indeed [was] the company commander who could boast a subaltern to assist him. Hasty appointments of acting non-commissioned officers to lead the subordinate elements followed as a matter of course. **No longer did the officer have an intimate personal knowledge of the individuals under his supervision...** (emphasis added).²³⁰

A number of doughboys echoed these sentiments. For example, Private Milton Sweningsen, an infantryman in the 35th Division, reported that this unit was so wracked by the loss and replacement of leaders that "I hardly knew the officers of my own company."²³¹

These losses could have an immediate and negative effect on a unit's performance and cohesion. Private Charles Flacker, an infantryman in the 28th Division's 112th Infantry, recalled that his company suffered so many casualties among its leaders that low-ranking men from the ranks had to fill the positions. After that, he noted, it was "every man for himself" in the

²²⁸ Barkley, 187.

²²⁹ Ibid., 251.

²³⁰ *A History of the Three Hundred and Twelfth Infantry*, 73.

²³¹ Unpublished memoirs in PVT Milton B. Sweningsen, 138th IN, 35th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey. 2. Private Connell Albertine of the 26th Division offered a similar view. After the Soissons drive he noted that after casualties and transfers, "there were so many changes in officers that we didn't really know who our commanding officers were." Connell Albertine, *The Yankee Doughboy* (Boston: Branden Press, 1968), 160.

company.²³² After the near disintegration of the 35th Division in the opening days of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign, Colonel Robert McCormick remarked that “casualties among the officers were undoubtedly responsible for a great deal of the disorganization,” and that “most of the straggling and confusion was caused by men getting lost and not having leaders, and not from any deliberate design to go to the rear in order to avoid further fighting.”²³³ During the 5th Division’s time in the Argonne, the division inspector reported that due to heavy losses, “in some organizations the officers had been on duty for a very short time, and did not know the men, nor did the men know the officers. Apparently a great many men did not know their officers by sight.” This presented insurmountable obstacles to the division’s cohesion and contributed to its lackluster combat performance. The officer remarked that when the 11th Infantry was sent forward to relieve another unit in the line, “it was shelled by the enemy, and the men scattered.” He went on to report that “a great many stragglers resulted from this...and the other regiments also lost a large number of stragglers by the confusion caused by the relief.”²³⁴

The losses of junior officers and NCOs also created a nearly insurmountable personnel crisis for the AEF during the Meuse-Argonne Campaign. As previously discussed, the unexpectedly high loss of infantry officers in the summer and fall of 1918 had forced reductions in the time allotted to officer candidate training in the United States and in the AEF. As small units were deprived of leaders who had gained a modicum of experience in the school of hard knocks, their places were filled by men whose lack of training led them to repeat many of the same tactical mistakes that had laid their predecessors low. Private Herman Dacus laconically

²³² PFC Charles W. Flacker, 112th IN, 28th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

²³³ McCormick, 171-4.

²³⁴ Memorandum from Forward Office, Inspector General’s Department, 1st Army, Subject: Inspection 5th Division 22 Oct. 1918, dated 22 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8.

recorded that “most of the replacement officers made good, if they were lucky enough to come through a couple of battles” unscathed.²³⁵ Here was one of the AEF’s fundamental dilemmas. The AEF’s junior leaders were caught in a vicious cycle where inexperienced but brave officers and NCOs were being killed and wounded, only to be replaced by other inexperienced and brave officers and NCOs. How could units learn from their previous experiences when their leaders, the ones tasked with interpreting and disseminating this battlefield wisdom, were chewed up at such a rapid rate? Herein lay the reason why the AEF never truly experienced a marked improvement in its combat effectiveness during the war.

High casualties and the constant levying of NCOs from the AEF GHQ to fill quotas for the AEF Candidates’ School also undercut the ability of small infantry units to learn from their combat experiences. The records of Company H, 126th Infantry noted that the vast majority of the soldiers and officers it lost to wounds never returned to duty with the company. When the company came out of the lines from the Oise-Aisne drive on 31 August 1918, it had lost 26 men killed, and two officers and 38 men wounded. Of the wounded, 23 never returned to the company; eight returned to duty by the end of August; six more by the end of October, and one did not return until after the Armistice. The 126th Infantry was pulled out of the line for the final time during the Meuse Argonne Campaign on 18 October 1918. From the 1st to the 18th of October, H Company lost two officers and 20 men killed in action, one officer and 107 men wounded, three missing, and three evacuated for illness. Of the wounded, 69 percent never returned to duty with the company; 12 percent returned to duty the same day they were wounded, and 19 percent returned to duty after the company’s final combat action. Although some of the wounded who did not return to the company for duty may perhaps have been assigned as replacements for other organizations, their experience was lost to H Company for the duration of

²³⁵ PVT Herman Dacus, 28th IN, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

the war.²³⁶ In addition to the loss of officers and soldiers to casualties, it must be noted that Company H also lost one first sergeant to wounds and two first sergeants to the AEF Candidates' School between 29 September and 26 October 1918.²³⁷ The loss of these key experienced NCOs was a further blow to the unit.

As noted in Chapter 9, by the fall of 1918, the AEF Candidates' School was having difficulty finding qualified men to fill its ranks. Although the NCOs sent by Company H were by all accounts stellar soldiers and leaders, that could not always be said for the candidates that other units sent to the school. Given the heavy casualties among junior officers, some enlisted soldiers chose to improve their chances of survival by remaining in the ranks. In a letter home dated 25 October 1918, Sergeant Benjamin Heath wrote, "I could get an opportunity to go to the infantry training camp, but I would rather come home safe and sound without a commission than perhaps not at all."²³⁸ Fendell Hagan, a first sergeant in the 140th Infantry, had similar sentiments and chose to stay with his unit in the Argonne rather than report as ordered to the OTC.²³⁹ Given the school commandant's belief that the quality of candidates he was receiving in late 1918 was in great decline, the AEF would have been better served by leaving the experienced NCOs in their original units rather than trying to make officers of them.²⁴⁰

High casualties and the levying of NCOs for schools also exacerbated the AEF's already dire need for qualified NCOs. An officer with the 77th Division stated on 24 October 1918 that "the question of non-commissioned officers in Infantry Companies of this division is serious," due to heavy casualties among their ranks and the lack of men "with sufficient training" to

²³⁶ Entries for 31 August and 18 October 1918 in "A Tenderfoot's Diary."

²³⁷ Ibid., Entries for 29 September and 9 October 1918.

²³⁸ Letter from Benjamin Heath to "Dear George and Mabel" dated 25 October 1918, in SMG Benjamin Heath, 328 IN, 82nd Div, WWI 2880, USAMHI.

²³⁹ Fendell A. Hagen, 1SG, 140th INF, 35 DIV, USAMHI WWI Veterans Surveys.

²⁴⁰ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 340.

replace them.²⁴¹ The Lewis Board concluded that combat losses among infantry NCOs led to a drastic reduction in the quality and reliability of small unit leaders in the last months of the war. The board maintained that “nearly every survivor who belonged to a rifle company, and who was not a complete mental failure, of necessity had to become a non commissioned officer in order to rebuild a cadre that could absorb the replacements.” This fact, they maintained, led to the AEF having to rely on a cadre of “poorly trained and rather dull non commissioned officers.”²⁴²

The AEF’s problem with junior leaders was not just that inexperienced second lieutenants were having difficulty commanding their platoons, it was also the fact that casualties were rapidly promoting those novices to company, and sometime even battalion, command. The loss of officers was so great in the 77th Division’s 308th Infantry in the Meuse-Argonne that second lieutenants “just out of training school” were assigned as company commanders.²⁴³

Joseph Lawrence reported that the 113th Infantry suffered so many officers casualties that one of the newly commissioned officers that reported to the regiment with him on 6 October was a company commander by the 10th of October. When this officer was killed a few days later, he had only been an officer for 20 days.²⁴⁴ In a similar case, after his battalion’s costly assault south of the Vesle River during the Ainsie-Marne Offensive, the 4th Division’s John Hull was transferred to take command of a line company, even though he was still but a second lieutenant, because all of the company’s other officers had been killed or wounded in action.²⁴⁵

Sometimes, the result of these young officers rapidly ascending to their “Peter Principle” level was deadly. Heavy officer casualties in Horace Baker’s unit had placed the command of

²⁴¹ Report of effective strength of 77th Division, dated 24 October 1918, in RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

²⁴² Lewis Board, 9-10.

²⁴³ Miles, 173.

²⁴⁴ Lawrence, 84, 124.

²⁴⁵ Transcript of interview of General John E. Hull by LTC James W. Wurman on 22 October 1973 in Washington D.C., in MHI Oral History Collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

the battalion into the hands of a lieutenant in early November 1918. The officer was clearly out of his depth and decided that in the battalion's attack on Brandeville it was best to push the attack without putting out patrols. The unit quickly blundered into the German defenses and the attack became a hasty retreat. Baker later confessed that given the strength of the German fire, he did not "deem it a disgrace to have fled from that fatal field."²⁴⁶ After regaining his composure, Baker again moved forward to try to rejoin his company. In the "fatal field" that he had initially fled, he discovered "American soldiers, dead and wounded, but nearly all dead...actually lay in windrows, just as the lines had stood when the machine guns had mowed them down." The frontal assault had cost Baker's company 19 dead and so many wounded that the company strength was down to 60 percent.²⁴⁷

The heavy losses in the AEF's infantry companies dealt a double blow to the cohesion of the units. One of the blows was the break down of the intense group identity that soldiers had tried to build with their comrades despite the endless levies of personnel that had wracked the divisions forming and training in the United States. Soldiers returning to their units after convalescence from wounds or sickness were often shocked by the changes in personnel that had occurred since their departure. When Private Irving Abrahams returned to his company after being hospitalized for 45 days for wounds he received during the Soissons drive, he noted "In my old company I felt like a stranger, for so many of the old crowd had been killed at the time that I got mine. Replacements had come, however. The ranks were full."²⁴⁸ Private Duncan Kemerer recalled that when he returned after a month in the hospital that there were "very few of my old buddies left" and that the company was now composed "of mostly drafted men, and all new officers." In the preceding month, the company had lost all of its officers during the Oise-

²⁴⁶ Horace Baker, *Argonne Days*, 108.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 109, 112-113.

²⁴⁸ Hamilton and Corbin, 105.

Aisne drive and had one captain and two lieutenants killed leading the company during the Meuse-Argonne.²⁴⁹

Officers were not immune from the psychological effects of the loss of friends and comrades. In a letter home on 5 August 1918, Lieutenant John Horton described his first combat with the 47th Infantry as “a big smell of pure hell.” Horton, a West Point graduate from the Class of 1917, noted that in three days of fighting during the Aisne-Marne Offensive, he “lost 80 men in his company, including 2 off[icers] wounded & 1 killed,” and that at the end of the drive only five officers were left in his battalion. While he joked to his father, “Am I not lucky?” he also asked him not to “tell mother what I have been through.”²⁵⁰ A week after posting the letter, the 21 year old officer was wounded by shell fragments and sent to a hospital to recover. When he returned to his unit on 12 October 1918, he observed sadly, “there aren’t many of the original bunch left.”²⁵¹

These rapid changes in leaders and the break down of “buddy groups” undercut the ability of small units to stand the shock of battle. When one fights with strangers, one never knows the other’s abilities, skills, and reliability. The 111th Infantry’s Duncan M. Kemerer stated that during the Argonne offensive his unit had learned how to spread out their formations and send scouts out “so we would not suffer heavy casualties by so many troops walking into a trap or German lines.” But heavy losses in leaders and experienced soldiers meant that his regiment was less successful in using these techniques once it was moved to the Thiaucourt

²⁴⁹ PVT Duncan M. Kemerer, 111th IN, 28th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

²⁵⁰ Letter from 1LT John H. Horton to “My Dear Father,” dated 5 August 1918, in Captain John H. Horton Collection, USMA Library Special Collections, West Point, NY.

²⁵¹ Letter from 1LT John H. Horton to “Dear Father,” dated 15 October 1918, in Captain John H. Horton Collection, USMA Library Special Collections, West Point, NY., Letter from Ethel Cawerder to “My Dear Mrs. Norton,” dated 31 October 1919, in Captain John H. Horton Collection, USMA Library Special Collections, West Point, NY. The luck that he had claimed during the Soissons drive left him in the closing days of the war. Shortly after the Armistice, Horton was hospitalized for high fever and exposure to gas. He died on 21 November 1918 of broncho-pneumonia.

Sector in mid-October. During an attack on 4 November 1918, the Germans caught the American in the open with small arms, artillery and mortar fire while also laying down a heavy barrage to the rear of the doughboy's formations to block their escape. Kemerer noted that after taking heavy casualties, "we were ordered to retreat which became, I am ashamed to say, to resemble a rout as everybody started to run" to escape the fire.²⁵²

The other blow to unit cohesion was the steady decline of the soldiers' faith in their leadership. Shils and Janowitz argued that "the men must be sure that their officer is duly considerate of their lives: they must know that he does not squander his human resources, that the losses of life which occur under his command will be minimal and justified."²⁵³ Given the clumsiness of the American attacks and the casualties that resulted from them, some soldiers started to wonder if their leaders were "duly considerate of their lives." This problem was compounded when their leaders made decisions that seemed to the doughboys to lack common sense or purpose. In his diary entry for 11 October 1918, Private Fred Takes wrote that he and his comrades were demoralized by their company commander's refusal to allow his platoon to pull back 25 yards from an exposed position being heavily shelled by the Germans. After suffering several losses, the men disobeyed the commander's orders and pulled back on their own. As a result of this shelling and a series of ill-planned attacks, Takes' company was down to only 35 men by 16 October. After his officers ordered the company to attack a German position that had withstood previous assaults, Takes wrote, "when we got the orders to go over the top at 5 A.M. we were disgusted, thinking they [his company and battalion commanders] wanted to kill us all off."²⁵⁴

²⁵² PVT Duncan M. Kemerer, 111th IN, 28th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

²⁵³ Shils and Janowitz, 297.

²⁵⁴ Fred Takes, PVT, 325th INF, 82 DIV, file WWI-1760, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey. This file also includes Takes' unpublished diary.

Along similar lines, Wilbert F. Stambaugh noted that after his captain was killed in action, his replacement inspired little confidence in the men. He was disgusted by the fact that the “newly commissioned lieutenant did not understand action in war [and] tried to force us beyond our own artillery fire.”²⁵⁵ In another instance, Sergeant William Triplett of the 35th Division witnessed the devastating failure of a frontal attack against the town of Cheppy on the first day of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Triplett noted that some adjoining companies from the 138th Infantry, “tried to do a ‘Charge of the Light Brigade,’ only they didn’t have any forces to get away on. The stretcher men were gathering ‘em in and lining ‘em up” for the rest of the day.”²⁵⁶ The junior officers of the division continued to throw their soldiers against the German defenses in frontal attacks for the next three days. As one member of the division recalled, the units “simply had melted under machine gun fire.” After four days of uninspired slugging the 35th Division had lost 8023 men.²⁵⁷ The unit’s morale was so shattered by the action that it was withdrawn from the line, never again to see significant combat.

It did not take long for the soldiers to realize that their officers’ lack of skill was hazardous to the average doughboys’ health. They resented the rather nonchalant indifference that some officers held toward casualties. In his after action report of the Argonne battle, Captain John K. Taylor informed his regimental commander,

To hasten the movement of the men to the front line positions here, I told them not to mind the bullets, that most of them were from our own machine guns. Upon seeing two men fall dead and another wounded by my side, I overheard a man say "our machine guns are sure hell."²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Wilbert F. Stambaugh, 2nd Field Signal Battalion, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

²⁵⁶ William S. Triplet, *A Youth in the Meuse-Argonne* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 246.

²⁵⁷ Kenamore, 206, 240.

²⁵⁸ "Impressions and Recollections of Operations, C Co, 325 In" Dated 26 December 1918 from "CPT John K. Taylor, Commanding C Company to COL. Whitman, Commander 325th Infantry." contained in unpublished "History of the 325th INF, Letters from Company Commanders" in BG Walter Whitman , 325 IN, 82nd DIV, WWI 6052, USAMHI. Taylor's report is of his company's 11 October 1918 attack on St. Juvin.

In his cavalier bragging to his superior, Taylor seems to have missed the fact that his soldiers were being critical of his leadership and decisions. Whether unskillfully charging into machine gun positions or carelessly and unnecessarily exposing their soldiers to fire, the leader's poor combat leadership was breaking down their soldiers' trust and confidence. As one captain argued, "It is useless to try to fool the American enlisted man: he soon loses respect for his officers when he observes their lack of experience, gained through the school of hard knocks."²⁵⁹ A sergeant in the 1st Division explained why some of the doughboys viewed their officers with a jaundiced eye by simply stating that the soldiers "could not understand why the officer was always the boss when often he did not know what he was talking about."²⁶⁰

Some of the dissatisfaction expressed in the sergeant's statement was also evident in the remarks made by some of the wounded evacuated from the Argonne fighting to the AEF's base hospitals. On 3 November 1918, the agents working for the 83rd Division's (Depot) intelligence officer at La Mans reported the statements made by wounded men from the front in local hospitals. He recorded that "several of the men said that the American disaster at Argonne Wood was the result of bad officering. Companies were bunched together and were easy victims of Boche machine guns. Two of the men quoted a chaplain as saying 'someone will be held accountable for the officering here.'"²⁶¹

The historian Leonard Smith argues that during the war units of the French Army developed an unofficial system where the soldiers regulated their aggressiveness based on a "cost/benefit" negotiation with their officers. If the soldiers believed that a given attack was of great importance to the nation, they willingly sacrificed themselves to win the contest. If, on the

²⁵⁹ Morale Branch Officers' Survey, 34.

²⁶⁰ SGT Charles Strikell, 5th FA, 1st Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans' Survey.

²⁶¹ Memorandum from C.V.L. to Major Charles D. Gentsch, G-2, 83rd Division, Subject: Classification Camps Report This Date, dated 3 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 195 (one box), "Reports Related to the Morale of American Troops 1917-1918."

other hand, the benefits gained from the operation were not worth the cost in human lives, the soldiers held back their full support and made only half-hearted attacks. Smith notes that the break down of this social contract between the French leaders and the led fueled the mutinies of 1917.²⁶² The soldiers of the American Army never even came close to approaching the depths of despair that helped push the French Army into mutiny. However, there is evidence that some doughboys sought to conduct similar “cost benefits” negotiations with their officers or otherwise limit their leaders’ command options. The AEF Inspector General noted a troubling tendency among the army’s junior officers to not follow orders or adequately supervise their execution. He stated, “when violations of such orders were brought to the attention of the junior line officers they would answer, ‘well, I gave the order to stop it.’” This led to a condition where “the soldiers do not obey or respect the orders of their officers, and the junior officers often appear timid about enforcing their orders.”²⁶³ This polite refusal to follow certain orders seems to have been more common when inexperienced replacement officers were placed over veteran soldiers.

Stanley Herzog recalled that in some instances officers did not know the limits of their soldiers’ abilities and endurance. When soldiers reached these limits they believed that they had met their end of the social contract, and accordingly limited their aggressiveness. During the 26th Division’s attack during the Aisne-Marne Offensive, a company of infantrymen near his artillery position “refused to go forward.” He defended their actions by noting that it was “not that they were cowards, but they were so fatigued that there was no strength left in them.”²⁶⁴

Where the bonds between the junior leader and his soldiers were strong, officers were sometimes forced to make agonizing choices between following the orders of their superiors or

²⁶² Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11-19.

²⁶³ “Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116.

²⁶⁴ Herzog, 81.

the desires of their enlisted men. One of the most noteworthy incidents of junior leaders choosing to place men above their mission occurred in early November 1918 and involved the 26th Division's 103rd Infantry. On 5 November 1918 an officer from the 78th Division discovered that soldiers in the regiment's outposts in the Bois d' Haumont had established an informal "live and let live" truce with the Germans residing only 20 to 75 yards opposite them. The Germans had told the American soldiers in the area that they expected peace at any moment and saw no point in risking their lives. The Germans refused to surrender because they feared reprisals against their families if they were reported as deserters. Both the Americans and the Germans agreed that if forced to fire, they would aim high, give warning to the other of impending attacks or raids, and, in the event of artillery bombardment, would signal the guns to shift their fire away from the opposing frontlines and outposts.

An investigation by a senior division officer uncovered that units from both the 103rd and 104th Infantry had been involved in the truce. The officer also discovered that while at least one battalion commander and a company commander had ordered their soldiers to fire on the enemy, the soldiers in the outposts claimed that "they had seen nothing to shoot at," or that "the order had not reached the men." Although "no officer would admit that he knew of any condition of laxity existed," the investigator believed that some of them were turning a blind eye to the practice.²⁶⁵ One of the battalion commanders, Major Elson Hosford, stated that orders had been issued by the brigade commander, Brigadier General Charles Cole, to limit aggressive action against the enemy, a charge that Cole denied. The incident resulted in the relief of Hosford, Cole, and the commander of the 103rd Infantry, Colonel Frank Hume. It also gave Pershing an added

²⁶⁵ Statement of CPT Joseph H. W. Hinkson, 311th MGB, dated 5 November 1918., Confidential Memorandum from LTC C. M. Dowell to Chief of Staff, 26th Division, dated 7 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 540, Box 2273, Gondracourt Reclassification Depot, Investigation of BG Charles Cole.

pretext for relieving the 26th Division commander, Major General Clarence Edwards, from command.²⁶⁶

Although the refusal of units to attack or efforts by doughboys to restrain the authority of their officers were rather rare, there were other avenues that soldiers could follow to circumvent the orders of their leaders. A path that some soldiers took to remove themselves from combat and the orders of their leaders was to resort to self-inflicted wounds. As AEF units became increasingly involved in major operations in July 1918, the army witnessed a dramatic increase in self-inflicted wounds. The 1st Division alone had 72 cases during the month. Of these only one had been proven to be intentional, but 11 more were due to “willful carelessness” or other “intentional misconduct.” On 8 August 1918, the AEF Adjutant General, Brigadier General Robert Davis, warned Pershing that he feared a recent spike in self-inflicted wounds might foreshadow greater problems for the army in the future. He pointed out that “unless this tendency is checked it may become prevalent at times when morale is weakened by great strain.” Davis recommended that the most effective and appropriate punishment for soldiers found guilty of deliberately injuring themselves was for them to be set “at hard labor in the most dangerous place where labor of soldiers is necessary.”²⁶⁷

In response to Davis’ concern, the AEF Chief of Staff directed all units to submit reports

²⁶⁶ Colby L. McIntyre, *The Old Man of the 103rd: The Biography of Frank M. Hume* (Houlton, ME: Aroostock Print Shop, 1940), 84-98., Memorandum from Commanding General, 1st Army to Commander in Chief AEF, Subject: Recommendations regarding 26th Division, dated 7 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 540, Box 2273, Gondracourt Reclassification Depot, Investigation of BG Charles Cole., “Brief History of the Case of Major General Clarence R. Edwards,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 464, Box 2267, “Personal Files of Brigadier General R. C. Davis.,” MAJ Elson A. Hosford, 103rd IN, 26 Div, in Blois Case Files, Box 2301.

²⁶⁷ Headquarters, 1st Division, “Report of Self-Inflicted Wounds,” dated 3 August 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 108., Memorandum from AEF Adjutant General to Commanding General, AEF, Subject: Self-inflicted wounds, dated 8 August 1918 in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 113. In one case of a soldier making himself unfit for combat, Private Tom Carroll, recalled that just before his unit attacked Cantigny, one of the men in his company “lost” his false teeth after finding out that he could not be sent to the front lines because without teeth, he would be unable to hold the mouthpiece of his gas mask. The captain had little option but to put him on permanent kitchen patrol until the unit was pulled from the line, and the man was refitted with a new set of teeth. It is unknown how many of these types of incidents occurred for they were not considered self-inflicted wounds. Unpublished manuscript, “Tom Carroll’s Diary, Co. F. 16th Inf. A.E.F. WWI,” in USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

on self-inflicted wounds within their organization to the AEF Inspector General. In August 1918, the AEF Inspector General received reports from 14 divisions of 179 cases of self inflicted wounds. Of these, the divisions claimed that 131 were accidental, 13 were intentional, and in 25 cases, the investigators could come to no definite conclusion on the soldiers' intentions. These figures point to both the poor level of weapons training in the AEF, as well as the fact that some of its soldiers were so dissatisfied with their lot, or so afraid of combat, that they were willing to injure themselves to get out of their units.²⁶⁸ Although these measures helped to reduce self inflicted wounds, the problem was never eliminated. On 17 October 1918, the 6th Division Inspector General, V. M. Elmore reported that between the time that the division entered Gerardmer Sector on 6 September 1918 until it was relieved from the sector on 12 October, the unit had 44 cases of self-inflicted wounds. Although 15 of the cases were accidental, the remaining 29 were "intentionally inflicted, with a desire to evade and avoid further active service."²⁶⁹ Luckily for the AEF, the number of self-inflicted wounds or efforts by soldiers to incapacitate themselves never reached the crisis point that Davis feared.

The easiest and most common way for a soldier to remove himself from the control of his leaders was simply to straggle from the lines. The AEF's problems with straggling were evident from its earliest operations. Major General Robert Bullard recalled that during the AEF's summer battles between the Marne and Aisne Rivers,

...far back behind our lines and camps my provost marshal now began to gather large numbers of American soldiers from...various divisions. The French villages were full of them. Relative to the number of American soldiers that had been here, the stragglers were few, but actually their numbers were great. Popular

²⁶⁸ Reports of Self-Inflicted Wounds from the following divisions, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 27th, 30th, 33rd, 36th, 39th (5th Depot), 77th, 80th, 85th (4th Depot), 87th, to AEF Inspector General, for August 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 108. In all but 15 of the 179 cases, the soldiers were in infantry or machine gun units.

²⁶⁹ Report of LTC V. M. Elmore, Inspector General, 6th Division to the Inspector General, AEF, Subject: Recommendations, dated 17 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 108.

public perceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, we had in our army dead-beats and deserters, evaders of battles and danger.²⁷⁰

However, the massive number of stragglers in the Meuse-Argonne sector in September and October of 1918 reached crisis proportions and weakened the effectiveness of the AEF's units by their drain on combat manpower. After the war, Major General Hunter Liggett estimated that approximately 100,000 soldiers had straggled from their units in the first month of the Argonne drive. Between 900,000 and 1.2 million American soldiers participated in the campaign. If Liggett's estimate is correct, round ten percent of the army's manpower simply stopped fighting and straggled towards the rear.

It is difficult to uncover how closely Liggett's figures matched reality. However, there is enough evidence to give at least some indication. During the Argonne fighting, the AEF Inspector General stated that,

One division reported that it had only 1600 men in the front line including an Engineer battalion that had been sent forward... This division was taken out of the line and upon arriving in its rest area it was found that the infantry regiments alone had in them 8418 men not counting the Engineer battalion.²⁷¹

The Inspector General rightly concluded that the 6,000 soldiers who appeared in the rest area were stragglers from the division's front line units.²⁷² When the 91st Division was pulled out of the Meuse-Argonne fighting on 4 October 1918, a V Corps inspector reported that in its ten days of combat, the unit had lost 148 officers and 3197 men killed or wounded. More alarmingly, the officer noted that seven officers and 2206 soldiers were missing, but added hopefully "it is expected that this item will be reduced."²⁷³ In Raucourt, the lieutenant in charge of the town

²⁷⁰ Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1925), 251.

²⁷¹ "Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918," in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116.

²⁷² Hunter Liggett, *A.E.F. Ten Years Ago in France* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927), 207.

²⁷³ Report of Inspector, V Corps to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: Extract Report of Division Inspector, 91st Division, dated 5 October 1918 in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

rounded up “between 600 and 700” stragglers from the 1st Division on 8 October 1918.²⁷⁴ Four days later, the 36th Division’s Military Policemen claimed to have rounded up “500 men of the division classed as stragglers.”²⁷⁵ The same month the Military Police units of the 2nd Army arrested 439 men for being AWOL, and another 370 men for the same offense in November.²⁷⁶ Although it is impossible to accurately establish the number of men absent from the AEF’s combat units, it is clear that the figure was substantial.

What was equally clear was that the AEF’s senior leaders were cognizant of the dangers that these stragglers presented to American operations. For example, the inspector attached to the 37th Division reported that on 2 October 1918, he had found so many stragglers in the unit’s rear area that he estimated “that combat troops only had 80% in strength due to this fact.”²⁷⁷ Given this drain on combat power, the AEF’s senior officers took actions to reign in these disappearing doughboys. Lieutenant Colonel Troup Miller, a 1st Corps staff officer, stated that, “It was found necessary in addition to the line of straggler posts formed by the Division to establish a line in rear of each Brigade in order to reduce to a minimum any attempt at straggling. Troops of this purpose were taken from the reserve.”²⁷⁸ He pointed out that the first time men were caught, they were simply returned to their units; the second time, they were turned over to the military police for trial and put to “the most disagreeable work that could be found.” The

²⁷⁴ Memorandum from LTC J. C. McIlroy, Advance Section GHQ Inspector General Office to LTC R. G. Peck, Inspector I Corps, Subject: Stragglers, dated 10 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8.

²⁷⁵ Brigadier General Henry H. Bandholtz, *History of the Provost Marshal General’s Department, American Expeditionary Forces* (Chaumont, France: AEF Provost Marshal, 15 April 1919), 6.

²⁷⁶ Report from Commanding Officer, 2nd Provisional M.P. BN, 2nd Army to Provost Marshal, 2nd Army, Subject, Reports of Arrests by Months up to Dec. 31, 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 918, Box 84.

²⁷⁷ “Report of Inspection of the 37th Division,” dated 2 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8.

²⁷⁸ “Lecture presented by LTC Troup Miller on 20 January 1919 at Fifth Army Corps Headquarters, Subject: “Plan of communication, supply and evacuation, 1st Corps, for St. Mihiel Offensive and Meuse-Argonne Offensive,” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

1st Corps also tried to shame the soldiers back into line by making the reprobates wear “a large white placard...upon which was printed in conspicuous black letters ‘straggler from the front line.’”²⁷⁹

The V Corps G-1, Colonel A. W. Foreman, stated that by 18 October 1918 the number of stragglers had grown “to such an alarming proportion” in the First Army that the corps formed a 4,500 man “Hobo Barrage” to “systematically mop up and thoroughly search all dugouts, houses, hospitals, railheads, Y.M.C.A.’s, etc in the area assigned to them.”²⁸⁰ Additionally, his corps established three tribunals under the direction of an officer at Recicourt, Avocourt, and Montfaucon to interrogate all stragglers brought in to determine if the soldiers caught were truly stragglers or had been unjustly arrested. In a short amount of time, the “Hobo Barrage” arrested 719 soldiers and returned over 150 “unauthorized stragglers” to their units.

The commander of the 82nd Division, Major General George Duncan, noted that after a spike in the number of stragglers from his unit, he was forced to order his subordinates to “post file closers behind each platoon, in addition to the usual straggler’s posts” and to direct his MPs to continually search likely straggler hiding or congregation points in the unit’s rear. He also required platoon leaders to carry a list of all their unit’s members which they constantly checked at halts or lulls in the battle to keep an accurate tally of their losses and quickly identify any men who had straggled from the lines. By these methods, the division’s strength rose by over 500 “fighting effectives” between 25 and 29 October, without including replacements.²⁸¹ In a similar move, on 30 October 1918 the commander of the 89th Division ordered his MPs to move their

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ “Lecture delivered by Colonel A. W. Foreman on 27 January 1919 at Fifth Army Corps Headquarters, Subject: “Administration and Supply of the 5th Army Corps during the St. Mihiel Offensive and Meuse-Argonne Offensive 1918,” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, FT Leavenworth, KS.

²⁸¹ “Lecture Delivered by Major General George B. Duncan, Commanding 82nd Division, on 3 February 1919, Subject: “General Missions of the 82nd Division in the Argonne-Meuse Offensive,” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

straggler line “forward to a point three hundred meters in the rear of the front line” and to move forward “in very close contact with the advancing infantry.”²⁸²

Unfortunately, these steps were not enough to stem the tide of stragglers. In a 21 October 1918 report to the AEF Chief of Staff, the AEF Inspector General, Major General A. W. Brewster, observed that despite efforts to stem the tide of straggling with patrols and stationary posts, “any quick witted straggler can get through these lines, especially at night.”²⁸³ Even when senior officers attempted to rally the troops and send them back to the lines, they met with little success. Captain Thomas H. Barber noted that one angry brigadier tried to halt the steady parade of “skulkers” going to the rear and even drove some back by threatening to shoot them himself. Barber recalled, “it struck me as a very remarkable performance, as the skulkers merely went around and back another route; but at least it seemed to afford the old gentleman considerable satisfaction.”²⁸⁴

Contrary to the statements of senior AEF leaders, the U. S. Army was never able to resolve its straggler problem. As late as 9 November 1918, the 2nd Army Provost Marshal warned his subordinates that “straggling has been allowed to become a menace to the success of operations,” and ordered them to “take such definite, immediate, and aggressive steps as will insure without question the immediate apprehension and return of these men to their proper places in [the] line.”²⁸⁵ Between 28 October 1918 and 1 November 1918, the MP companies operating straggler posts in the 1st Army area of the Meuse-Argonne sector rounded up 613 stragglers. On 30 October alone, the MPs apprehended 193 stragglers. The stragglers came from

²⁸² Bandholtz, 8.

²⁸³ Memorandum from AEF Inspector General to AEF Chief of Staff, Subject: Observations and investigations already made by the Inspectors General in regard to straggling and the use of shelter in the area occupied by the First Army,” dated 21 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 113.

²⁸⁴ Thomas H. Barber, *Along the Road* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1924), 69.

²⁸⁵ “Memorandum to Corps Provost Marshals and Division A.P.Ms” from 2nd Army Provost Marshal, dated 9 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 55, Box 83.

22 different AEF divisions, with the vast majority of them coming from infantry regiments or machine gun battalions.²⁸⁶ These apprehensions were likely only a small fraction of the stragglers roaming the AEF's rear area. If Brewster was correct, and a "quick witted straggler" was able to avoid arrest, the number of absent soldiers probably continued to number in the thousands.

The greatest problem the AEF's senior leadership faced in halting straggling was simply a shortage of resources. As the number of American stragglers continued to grow at an alarming rate in the second week of the Argonne drive, the 33rd Division inspector reported to the AEF Inspector General, Major General Andre Brewster, that the fact that "there is but one [MP] company of three officers and one-hundred and forty-four men, covering an area difficult to access in many cases of practically sixteen square miles," limited the ability of the MPs to apprehend stragglers and also accomplish their other missions.²⁸⁷ During the Argonne, drive at least two division commanders requested a troop of cavalry from their corps commanders to drive stragglers out of woods and other sanctuaries in their rear areas.²⁸⁸

Wendell Westover claimed that much of the problem with straggling and malingering stemmed from the impossibility of having any effective punishment for the reprobates. Even when commanders were successful in bringing charges,

...the Court-Martial was so frequently overruled by soft, slab-sided desk

²⁸⁶ Reports of stragglers apprehended on October 28-31 and 1 November 1918 by Company A, 313th MP, Assistant Provost Marshal, Souilly, France, A Company, 117th MP, B, C, and D Companies, 1st Army MP BN, and H Troop, 2nd Cavalry, in NARA RG 120, Entry 865, Box 269. On 28 October, the MPs apprehended 108 stragglers, 140 on 29 October, 193 on 30 October, 75 on 31 October, and 97 on 1 November 1918.

²⁸⁷ Report of Division Inspector, 33rd Division to Major General Brewster, I. G., AEF, Subject: "Report of Straggler Posts," dated 14 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8. After observing the 5th Division, Colonel J. A. Bauer informed his superior that "straggler posts are in operation, but they do not stop straggling." Memorandum from COL. J. A. Bauer, Advance Section, Inspector General, dated 18 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

²⁸⁸ The divisions in question were the 82nd and 89th. William Wright, *Meuse-Argonne Diary: A Division Commander in World War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 23., Memorandum from Forward Officer, Inspector General's Department, 1st Army, Subject "Investigation of Straggling in 82nd Division," in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8.

hounds...that discipline was hard to enforce anyhow. What did they know about the added danger to an outfit going in, incomplete because some quitter had dropped out with ammunition? What did they know of the instant effect on morale by desertion of just one man at a critical time, to say nothing of the added losses if such spirit was allowed to extend, or the operation was hindered by lack of men?²⁸⁹

As senior commanders had limited the ability of their junior officers to punish wayward soldiers in any meaningful manner, the soldiers faced few repercussions for their straggling. In most cases the stragglers were merely returned to their units without further action.

While often depriving junior leaders of much of their coercive and “legitimate power,” senior officers were quick to blame these officers and NCOs for failing to maintain discipline within their units. An Inspector General investigation of straggling in the 1st Army stated the causes for the problem were a “Lack of discipline among both the officers and soldiers,” a “lack of personnel and supervision of the men by the battalion and company commanders,” and a “lack of leadership by platoon leaders and sergeants.”²⁹⁰ The report maintained that one of the primary reasons for the crisis was that “platoon leaders do not know where their men are,” and made little effort to track them down. The Inspector General’s belief that the failure of junior leadership led to straggling was accurate and legitimate. When examining the straggler crisis, one can see that junior officers and NCOs were unable to retain the control and discipline of their units. The reason for this failure was due to a host of leadership issues, some of which were beyond the control of the leaders involved.

The key question that must be resolved is, why did the doughboys straggle from the front lines? Unfortunately, few stragglers gave any reasons for their absence other than they were lost and became separated from their units. For many soldiers this was an honest and accurate

²⁸⁹ Westover, 250.

²⁹⁰ 1st Army Inspector General, “Memorandum from Observations and investigations already made by the Inspector General in regard to straggling and the use of shelter in the area occupied by the First Army,” dated 21 October 1918, National Archives, RG 120, Entry 588, Box 113.

confession. The difficult terrain of the Argonne region, morning fog, and battlefield smoke resulted in a number of doughboys truly becoming detached from their commands. On 10 October 1918, the 82nd Division's Inspector General reported that "an unestimated number of men, reported to be considerable, have returned to their regiments during the past 24 hours stating that they had become separated and temporarily lost in the woods or during darkness." The inspector remarked that "their present attitudes and desire to fight indicates the truth of most of these statements."²⁹¹ Private Ray Johnson, a machine gunner in the 37th Division, noted that during the Argonne drive some men, "being separated from their outfits by chance shellfire or orders to spread out, wandered helplessly about or attached themselves to other advancing units."²⁹² One such refugee, the 91st Division's Private Vernon Nichols, spent three days wandering leaderless in "no man's land" after he and two other soldiers lost contact with his company on the first day that his unit was committed to the Argonne battle.²⁹³ Nichols and his comrades spent their time fighting with whatever American units they encountered, and would then leave the unit to find food or attach themselves to someone else as the spirit moved them.

In moving through the jumbled terrain in the Meuse Argonne, the problems with the AEF's junior leaders' ability to command and control their enormous companies and platoons became apparent. The experiences of Captain Clarence Minick illustrate the problems that company commanders faced in maintaining control of their units. On 29 September 1918, his company was part of the 91st Division's attack to seize the high ground to the northwest of Montfaucon. After fighting through most of the morning, Minick's battalion halted while the brigade commander attempted to sort out some of the confusion and mix-up of units that had

²⁹¹ Report of Inspector, 82nd Division to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: "Report of Past 24 Hours," dated 10 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8.

²⁹² Johnson, *Heaven, Hell, or Hoboken*, 95.

²⁹³ Vernon Nichols, "Our Battle of the Argonne," *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XV (September 1919), 189-194.

occurred earlier in the day. At 2:30 PM, Minick's battalion was ordered forward to seize Gesnes. Shortly after leading his unit forward, Minick discovered that he was missing most of his company. The only elements under his control were one and a half platoons.²⁹⁴

Minick later discovered that prior to the jump off of the attack, a runner from battalion headquarters had given a message to one of his missing platoon leaders ordering the company to attack immediately. When the platoon leader asked the runner if Minick had been informed of the change in orders, the messenger answered yes. Unfortunately, the order did not reach Minick for some time, and the platoon leader, who was out of direct contact and sight of the rest of the company, moved forward as directed. Minick confessed that due to this confusion, his company "was pretty badly disorganized." Despite these mix-ups, the captain still managed to take Gesnes, but suffered heavy losses in the process. After consolidating his hold on the town, Minick had to give up his hard won gains after the unit on his flanks pulled back and left his position untenable. Minick was not able to find his wayward platoon and squads until 7:00 AM on 30 September.

Minick's battalion was ordered to attack again on 30 September 1918. The events of this day were as confused and tragic as the day before. The American lines were in such a state of disorder that Minick's battalion and company were filled with soldiers from various units of the 91st, 37th, and 35th Divisions. Officers simply corralled all the soldiers they came across and pushed them forward in the attack. The cohesion of this pick-up team was sparse, and as the ad-hoc unit came under heavy German fire, soldiers began to melt away. By 1:00 PM the attack had

²⁹⁴ Entries for 26-30 September 1918 in the dairy of CPT Clarence J. Minick, Clarence J. Minick Papers, Liberty Memorial Archives, Kansas City, Missouri., Also see, 91st Division Publication Committee, *The Story of the 91st Division* (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, 1919), 28-32.

ground to a halt, and the American troops returned to their jump-off line.²⁹⁵ Although part of this debacle was due to circumstances beyond Minick's control, the young officer still made little or no effort to ensure that his subordinates were briefed and ready for the attacks of 29 and 30 September.

This degree of confusion could even occur with experienced leaders and units. Despite nearly 20 years of soldiering, Samuel Woodfill was not immune from problems with command and control. While attacking near Cunel on 12 October 1918, the terrain and vegetation of the area presented Woodfill a situation where,

I could see some of my men creeping up near me. I signaled them to move forward. I knew [First Sergeant] Nelson was somewhere to my right. The company was scattered through the wood; I had lost control of them as a unit. It was every man for himself... Those soldiers of mine, some of them so green that they'd hardly smelled powder before, were on their own now.²⁹⁶

Woodfill won the Medal of Honor for that day's action, but it was only after he basically shook off the mantle of company leadership and fought his way forward as an individual rifleman that he claimed that honor. One wonders what his "green" soldiers thought of being left "on their own?"

In trying to retain control of their units and direct them towards accomplishing the unit's missions, junior officers were often hobbled by their lack of trained and experienced NCOs. Given the size of the AEF's companies and platoons and the lack of effective tactical communications, junior officers were dependent upon their NCOs to aid them in leading their extended or scattered ranks. The inability of some NCOs to step in to their leadership roles led to dire consequences. An infantry battalion commander remembered that after his companies were shelled, the unit lost all order and cohesion. He wrote,

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Thomas, *Woodfill of the Regulars*, 284-5., *The Official History of the Fifth Division*, 135.

Over the suddenly disorganized mass the mere handful of officers, without the slightest voluntary aid from the noncommissioned officers, are able to exercise but little control. The battalion is hopelessly scattered in the woods for the time being. All semblance of organization has vanished.²⁹⁷

In another instance, Private John Barkley recalled,

A group of our men led by a lieutenant, the last of our company officers, tried to cross the road. The lieutenant dropped...We found one of our sergeants commanding what was left of the company. The sergeant completely lost his head. He sent a detail out to bring the lieutenant in. They were all hit before they got to him. The sergeant ordered me to form another detail, go out in close formation, and come back with the lieutenant. I asked the sergeant to wait a little, then let me take Mike and go out alone. . . I said "There is no use killing any more soldiers by sending them out there now."²⁹⁸

A senior 82nd Division officer complained on 7 October 1918 that far too many of the unit's squad leaders had failed to "exercise aggressive control" in their units following the loss of their officers and NCOs.²⁹⁹

Given the little emphasis that the army had placed on selecting and developing its wartime NCO corps, it was little wonder that they often proved unable to either assist their officers or assume the mantle of leadership themselves. The 7th Division's Corporal Frank Dillman went so far as to state that his officers had done so little to uphold the status and authority of their NCOs that, "the boys virtually refused to work except when a commissioned officer was over them."³⁰⁰ Given the casualty rate among officers, this shortcoming was a fatal flaw. As an officer in the 119th Infantry lamented, his NCOs "have been too dependent on officers telling them not only what to do but how to do it." He criticized the failure to allow the

²⁹⁷ Wise, "The Soldier's Life in Battle," 931.

²⁹⁸ Barkley, 126-7. Barkley later won the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Meuse-Argonne.

²⁹⁹ Report of Inspector, 82nd Division, to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: "Daily Report of Past 24 Hours," dated 12 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 796, Box 3.

³⁰⁰ Quoted in Ernest Fisher, Jr., *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Non Commissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 201.

NCOs “to make and correct their own mistakes with less interference from officers.”³⁰¹ It must be stated that these observations reflected a general systemic problem in the AEF. There were numerous occasions where NCOs demonstrated superior leadership and tactical ability. However, in these cases the NCOs had been “thrown into the deep end” of the tactical pool and forced to swim out of grim necessity. Again, in rising to the occasion, they generally did so by overcoming the systemic barriers that limited their responsibility and in spite of their previous training and experience.

Officers often compounded their problems with command and control, and further undermined the ability of their NCOs to operate on their own, by failing to brief their soldiers on the details and intent of their unit’s missions. Private John Nell, an infantryman in the 77th Division, remembered of his time in the Argonne, “we enlisted men never knew much about our movements, only what we were told and what we could see and hear. The woods were so thick; our vision was only in and around where we were standing or walking. We did not know what day of the week or day of the month it was the entire time.”³⁰² Private Milton B. Sweningsen stated that when it came time for his unit’s attacks in the Meuse-Argonne, “I guess the officers knew [the plan], but privates were given no such information.”³⁰³

Without any clear conception of the details of their missions and cut off from the orders of their officers, some soldiers straggled because they simply had no clue of what else to do. During an attack on 29 September 1918, Private Sweningsen noted the isolation and fear that he felt after being separated from his unit without adequate knowledge of what he was supposed to do. As he moved forward, he recalled, “I can’t remember seeing any of our company on either

³⁰¹ Murphy and Thomas, 194.

³⁰² John W. Nell, *The Lost Battalion: A Private’s Story* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2001), 87-8.

³⁰³ Unpublished memoirs in PVT Milton B. Sweningsen, 138th IN, 35th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey. 4.

side of me because the undergrowth was so thick.” Breaking out of the woods and undergrowth he found no trace of anyone, American or German, and none of his comrades followed him out of the woods. He remembered thinking,

What to do? It did not make sense to me to start attacking alone. This was not a one-man war. I knew that there were no soldiers anywhere I could see, so I guess I started for the rear. Somewhere that morning there had been a rumor that we were about to be relieved; that may have influenced me to head back.³⁰⁴

While his men worked along the road on 1 October 1918, Captain Thomas Barber found large groups of soldiers aimlessly wandering around the rear area. One party consisted of a sergeant and 28 men, and another was made up of a corporal and 30 men. They had straggled back to recover the packs that they had left when they went into action and claimed that their officers were all dead. Barber made no effort to organize these stragglers.³⁰⁵ One of the reasons Sweningsen and the men encountered by Barber straggled was because their officers had neglected one of the major tenants of combat leadership: keep the men informed of the commander’s intent to enable them to react to the unexpected.

While men lost from their commands were accidental stragglers, it is clear from the evidence that many of the men absent from the ranks did so with deliberate intention. These men absented themselves from their units in a calculated effort to remove themselves from combat. Private Horace Baker, a soldier who admitted to frequently leaving the lines, drew a sharp distinction between his actions and those of the doughboys that he found lurking in abandoned German barracks behind the lines. To Baker, these men “were stragglers pure and simple, willfully playing out of battle, or in stronger terms deserters,” while he was simply out of the lines for a break and always intended to return.³⁰⁶ The AEF Provost Marshal also differentiated

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

³⁰⁵ Barber, 82-3.

³⁰⁶ Baker, *Argonne Days*, 119-120.

between common stragglers and “battle stragglers.” A straggler was “a soldier absent from his unit without permission or who cannot produce satisfactory evidence that he is on duty,” while “battle stragglers” were “N.C.O.’s or men who straggle from the immediate fighting line, or from their units, when these units are moving up to the immediate fighting line.”³⁰⁷ Battle straggling carried the connotation of deliberateness.

The available evidence suggests that the largest number of cases where men straggled from the line was directly related to the failure of junior leaders and their superiors to live up to their end of the social contract. Masses of men simply left the lines because their officers had failed to provide for the soldiers’ basic needs for food and water. Combat logistics, the forward push of rations, ammunition and supplies and the rearward movement of casualties, had long been a sore spot in the AEF and the cause of much straggling.³⁰⁸ For example, during the Aisne-Marne operation, the 2nd Division’s MPs reported that,

The difficulty of getting the food to the troops soon resulted in looting for the men were searching the whole country for deserted chickens, rabbits and scant food supplies left by the villagers. Looting and straggling went hand in hand for it was noticed that in nearly all cases where arrests were made the looter was found also to be absent without leave from his organization.³⁰⁹

During the St. Mihiel Offensive, the IV Corps Inspector General, Colonel Edward Carpenter, also noted the difficulty that the units had in getting rations to the frontline troops, and that “reserve rations were repeatedly eaten without the orders of the organization’s commander and at

³⁰⁷ AEF Provost Marshal, “Field Handbook Provost Marshal General Department for Military Police Corps, American Expeditionary Force in France” dated September 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 55, Box 4148. John Stringfellow, an infantry captain in the 80th Division recalled that his unit was hit by a rash of “shell-holers” when it went into action in the Argonne. A “shell-holer” was a man “who in an advance got into shell holes and then liked it so well that they stayed there while their comrades advanced unsupported by them.” Captain John S. Stringfellow, *Hell! No!* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1936), 251-2.

³⁰⁸ *Notes on Recent Operations*, No. 3, 6-8, 12-13, 16, 21., *Notes on Recent Operations* No. 2 issued on 8 September 1918 dealt exclusively on the use of sanitary troops and the evacuation and treatment of casualties.

³⁰⁹ Bandholtz, 2.

other than proper time.”³¹⁰ The problem with getting rations and supplies to the frontlines became even worse when the AEF moved into the Meuse-Argonne region. The region had a very limited road network and four years of fighting and shelling had left large swaths of the area nearly un-trafficable for the army’s heavy artillery and supply wagons and trucks.³¹¹

Within days of the start of the offensive, soldiers were already complaining about their lack of rations. Officers in the 79th Division’s 313th Infantry noted that during their attack to take Montfaucon during the opening days of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, “It had been nearly impossible to get rations and the food carried in the packs had been consumed...and together with the lack of food and rest, the troops were in a pretty exhausted state.” Ultimately, the soldiers of the regiment went nearly four days without any food except for their reserve rations.³¹² Between 12 and 14 October 1918, Company H, 126th Infantry’s mess sergeant was unable to bring rations up to the line. The units made due by having returning stretcher bearers bring up hard bread and cans of corn beef. On 15 October the only supplies brought forward were hard bread and bandoleers of ammunition. When the company commander sent back rations carrying parties on 16 October, the men were “too tired, wary, and weak to carry the marmite cans of hot food thru the back area brush and shell holes.” As a result, the only rations the company again received was hard bread.³¹³ The artilleryman L. V. Jacks recalled that despite the best efforts of his unit’s cooks during the Meuse-Argonne, the lack of food meant that they

³¹⁰ Report of COL Edward Carpenter, IV Corps Inspector General to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: Observations on the Offensive for the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient, dated 27 September 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 108.

³¹¹ Bullard, 264-5, 270-2, 287-8., James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France: 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936), 436.

³¹² Thorn, 33, 35.

³¹³ Entries for 11-16 October 1918 in “A Tenderfoot’s Diary.”

“tightened their belts, for downright starvation seemed imminent.”³¹⁴ If things were bad for artillery units behind the lines, it was even worse for the infantrymen battling forward of them.

One of the fundamental tenants of the army’s paternalistic leadership and the social contract between the leader and the led was that the officer would provide his soldiers the basic necessities to maintain life and health. Shils and Janowitz argued that one of the major factors in the decline of the Wehrmacht’s cohesion and effectiveness was that its unit leaders became unable to meet their soldier’s physical survival needs.³¹⁵ As with the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, when leaders failed to live up to their end of the bargain in providing for their survival needs, doughboys felt justified in withholding their participation in military operations by straggling from the lines in search of food.

On 9 October 1918, the Inspector General for the 82nd Division reported that over 100 soldiers from the 78th Division had straggled into his unit’s rear area between the night of 8 October and the morning of 9 October. He declared that “all of these men asked for food, stating that none of them had anything to eat since the night of October 7th,” and “some men stated that they had had nothing to eat for a longer period than two days.” All admitted that “no permission had been given to leave their camp,” but their officers had made no effort to account for their men, nor given them any indication when food would arrive. He also noted that “the personal appearance of these men indicated a general disorganized condition, as evidenced by torn and shabby clothing, unbuttoned blouses and overcoats, failure to shave for several days.”³¹⁶

Private Horace Baker, admitted that he “went on an exploring trip” from the frontline during the Meuse-Argonne fighting but stated in his defense that “the pangs of hunger were

³¹⁴ Jacks, *Service Record by an Artilleryman*, 209.

³¹⁵ Shils and Janowitz, 281, 291-2.

³¹⁶ Report from Inspector General, 82nd Division to Inspector General AEF, Subject: “Condition of Troops from 78th Division,” dated 9 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

largely responsible for this.” In his defense, after stealing a large can of corn beef from the field kitchen of another division he returned back to the front to share his loot with his comrades.³¹⁷ A soldier in the 82nd Division recalled that his unit was so short of food on 11 October 1918 that he was forced to rifle through the pack of a dead German to get the man’s black bread. After two more days without food, he straggled from the lines to try and find some rations.³¹⁸ Sometimes even officers were complicit in this form of straggling. Captain Thomas Barber’s company grew so short of food during the Argonne Offensive that he selected four men that he “judged good thieves” and sent them to the rear to beg, borrow, or steal whatever rations they could find. Finally, the captain himself left the front with eight men to forage the rear area for food.³¹⁹

Field kitchens located in the rear of the firing lines attracted hungry soldiers like moths to a flame. The problem became so acute that one officer eventually placed a guard on his mess line and kitchen to keep stragglers “from sneaking in.”³²⁰ The staff of the V Corps noted, “It was found that permitting the Y.M.C.A. and other canteens to approach too close to the front lines induced straggling. Many men who did not intend to become stragglers slipped away to get a cup of hot chocolate or some cigarettes and were picked up as stragglers.”³²¹ In some cases the satiated soldiers returned back to the front following their repast. One infantryman in the 91st Division discovered at a kitchen by an artillery officer, told the lieutenant that “all of our officers is gone an’ we more or less shift for ourselves.” He stated that he had come back for “some coffee an’ a night’s sleep,” and then planned to return to the fight in whatever place he saw fit. The incredulous officer mused,

³¹⁷ Baker, *Argonne Days*, 39.

³¹⁸ CPL Fred Takes, 325th IN, 82nd Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey.

³¹⁹ Barber, 71-2, 83.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

³²¹ “Lecture presented by LTC Troup Miller on 20 January 1919 at Fifth Army Corps Headquarters, Subject: “Plan of communication, supply and evacuation, 1st Corps, for St. Mihiel Offensive and Meuse-Argonne Offensive,” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

They had discovered an excellent arrangement whereby they might commute to the front with their bellies filled with hot coffee. Presently they would be starting for the Front again to take up their jobs where they had left them last night. M.P.s over at Very were beginning to round them up. But they required no persuasion. It was one thing to fight a war on a piecework basis and quite another to quit a job and leave one's friends holding the sack.³²²

The last line explains much of why these "situational" stragglers continued to fight despite the failure of their leaders to uphold their end of the social contract. However, the desire to not "leave one's friends holding the sack" could only sustain cohesion for so long, especially when the list of "one's friends" kept getting shorter.

Much of the problem with getting rations to the front was due to circumstances that were far beyond the control of the unit's junior leaders. Tangled supply routes and German actions frequently slowed the movement of supplies forward to a trickle. However, there were also instances where the officers' failure to plan for the re-supply of their units caused or exacerbated their soldiers' hardships. In a particularly egregious case, one officer took the idea that rank hath its privileges too far. Lieutenant Joseph Lawrence reported that even though his company had been without food, water, or sleep for three days, the company commander took the lion's share of the rations that managed to make it forward.³²³ Most cases involved less malice and forethought by officers, though they had the same effect on their soldiers. After bewailing the inability of his mess sergeant to bring up hot food, Captain Thomas Barber later sheepishly admitted that he had ordered his company kitchen to remain in place until he ordered it forward, and then had forgotten about it for over two days.³²⁴ A veteran of the 5th Division, Major Merritt Olmstead, blamed the division's disorderly withdrawal from combat on the failure of regimental commanders to keep their superiors accurately apprised of the actual situation at the front,

³²² Anonymous [Bob Casey], *The Cannoneers Have Hairy Ears*, 203-4.

³²³ Lawrence, 114-5.

³²⁴ Barber, 71-2, 83.

especially in the physical conditions of their soldiers. He also noted that had “commanders been more interested in the welfare of their commands and given some personal attention to the supply of food, their men would not have gone hungry throughout 12-13 October.”³²⁵

Shortly after the war, the commander of the 52nd Infantry, Colonel E. V. Smith, reported that “the greatest difficulty was met with by me in getting officers to properly handle supply and administration.” He noted that his officers lacked the time and training to adequately deal with these areas, and,

...since the war began most officers have been in a “mental fog” due to the crowding and cramming process in vogue. They had small chance to learn company duties and, in consequence, discipline ran low, kitchens were neglected, equipment and clothing overlooked.³²⁶

As Smith realized, little in the training and education of the junior officers prepared them to adequately deal with issues of logistics. As in Barber’s case, this resulted in the inability of many officers to “do routine things,” such as feeding their soldiers, “routinely.” For the individual doughboy, it mattered not that his lack of food resulted from the failure of supply lines or of his leaders. He was tired and hungry, and the duly appointed representatives of the army, his officers and NCOs, were unable to do anything about it.

Shortages of food also worsened other problems that wore away the soldiers’ health, stamina and morale. During his unit’s time in the Argonne, Private Leslie Langille found that not only were his rations scarce, but also that none of his superiors was ensuring that the food that did reach the troops was edible. He wrote,

We subsist on stuff called “camouflage” by the men because it looks like and tastes worst than our camouflage nets would have tasted had we put them in a pot of water and boiled them...It keeps one’s bowels in a constant state of uproar and

³²⁵ Major Merritt Olmstead, “A Critical Analysis of Troop Leading within the 5th Division during the Second Phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive,” Command and General Staff School, Individual Research Paper, 1933, CARL Archive, FT Leavenworth, KS.

³²⁶ Lewis Board, Appendix P, 16.

dysentery rages rampant in the outfit.³²⁷

An officer of the 36th Division recalled that the water situation in his infantry unit was more dire than shortages of rations. In fact, the heavy salt in the corned beef rations served only to worsen the need for water. Unfortunately, the nearest water point was over a mile away from his unit, and “the line was too thinly held to send details to the rear for water.”³²⁸ Another infantry officer stated that when the 35th Division’s soldiers began their attack in the Meuse-Argonne,

They carried a canteen of water and two days’ reserve rations. As the drive progressed, it was with great difficulty that rations could be brought forward to the lines. Canteens were soon emptied, and they drank water wherever they could find it- in shell holes, crevices, and in fact any place that water was obtainable. The eating of cold rations out of unwashed mess kits, this drinking of foul water, and the exposure and strain, caused every man to suffer from dysentery.³²⁹

Dysentery and exhaustion, brought about by the physical and mental exertion of combat and the lack of food and clean water, became as great of a scourge on the AEF’s infantrymen in the Argonne as German shot and shell.

On 19 October 1918, the 1st Army’s Inspector General reported that the 91st Division was in dire straights and needed at least seven days rest to rebuild its strength. The division surgeon informed the inspector that after 19 days of fighting and marching, “none of the men were fit for duty owing to dysentery, fatigue and stomach trouble.” He also noted that “the 2309 replacements recently received are all contacts with influenza, 40% now being sick with that disease.” Furthermore, the inspector discovered that there were a “considerable” number of stragglers from the unit and 955 men were still reported as missing. The commander of one of the division’s infantry regiments concurred with the inspector’s grim assessments of the unit’s condition. The commander of the 361st Infantry stated that “the fighting ability of the men he

³²⁷ Leslie Langille, *Men of the Rainbow* (Hamond, In.: W. B. Coakley Company, 1933), 158.

³²⁸ Chastaine, 134., L. Wardlaw Miles, *History of the 308th Infantry* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927), 132.

³²⁹ Carl E. Haterius, *Reminiscences of the 137th Infantry* (Topeka: Carne and Company, 1919), 153.

had left was not over 20% of what it was on Sept. 26,” while the commander of the 362nd Infantry “believed he did not have a single man who is an effective in the proper sense of the word.”³³⁰

There were measures that junior leaders could have taken to lessen some of these physical discomforts endured by their soldiers. As the veteran French infantryman-novelist Henri Barbusse observed, in combat, “Damp rusts men as it does rifles; more slowly, but deeper.”³³¹ In this environment it was incumbent on junior leaders to see that their men were at least well clothed and equipped to deal with the cold and the damp. A 32nd Division infantryman reported that by 19 October 1918, the lack of basic necessities in his unit was causing great hardship. The soldier was still wearing summer weight underclothes, was suffering from dysentery, and he recalled that the “lack of food caused me to be very weak.”³³² Another doughboy in the 82nd Division remembered that when the officers failed to supervise and discipline their soldiers, the men,

... threw away their raincoats and overcoats when they went over the top, so that later they had nothing at all to protect them from the cold and the wet. They went for days and days, sleeping in shell holes filled with ice-water, living on nothing but bully beef and water.³³³

This failure of officers and NCOs to maintain even this level of discipline meant that the health and combat efficiency of the units quickly flagged. During October, the 82nd Division's medical staff reported an average of 700 soldiers per day in their hospitals suffering from influenza,

³³⁰ Memorandum from, Forward Office, Inspector General's Department, 1st Army to Inspector General AEF, Subject: “Combined reports on 91st Division made up from report of Lt. Col. McKenney, dated 16 Oct., Lt. Col. J. G. McIlroy dated Oct. 16 and 18,” dated 19 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

³³¹ Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1926), 17.

³³² Baker, *Argonne Days*, 79.

³³³ *The Service Record: Atlanta's Military Weekly*, 5 June 1919, 57. The rapidity that the American soldiers discarded “un-needed” equipment was nothing new. During the St. Mihiel Offensive, the IV Corps Inspector General, Colonel Edward Carpenter reported, that “many soldiers threw away their equipment along the road.” Report of COL Edward Carpenter, IV Corps Inspector General to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: Observations on the Offensive for the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient, dated 27 September 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 108.

diarrhea and exhaustion.³³⁴ Oliver Q. Melton, commander of K Company, 325th Infantry, reported that between 16 and 30 October, "everyone was sick and weak, many of the men were on the verge of a nervous breakdown."³³⁵ Although some of these problems were due to the inherent nature of combat, the failure of leaders to be more proactive in ensuring the comfort of their men certainly contributed to the predicament.

The 82nd Division was not the only combat unit suffering from the combined effects of high casualties, loss of leaders, battlefield exhaustion, and shortages of supply in the Argonne. Inspector General reports from other divisions revealed the same poor physical conditions and morale in their units. The lack of strong junior leadership to provide for the soldiers' basic needs, build unit cohesion, and reinforce their soldiers' morale could have striking consequences. After only a week of the offensive, the 1st Army Inspector General reported a disturbing conversation with the 3rd Division G1,

Colonel Stone...stated that the 3rd Division relieved the 79th [the] day before yesterday. He says that the 79th Division was the most demoralized outfit that he had ever seen; that the men had thrown away a great deal of their equipment and that the 3rd Division has equipped a complete Machine Gun Company with the machine guns thrown away by the 79th; that the men are dejected and demoralized and apparently not the subject of any discipline. From his talk with different men of the 79th he was convinced that they were utterly unfit for any further operations.³³⁶

The situation only worsened as the campaign dragged onward. After his unit lost over 9000 men in two weeks, the 1st Division's Inspector General reported on 16 October that "the morale of the

³³⁴ War Department, *Annual Report for 1919*, Vol. 1, Part 3, 3374-6.

³³⁵ "Report of MAJ Oliver Q. Melton, Commander K Company, 325th Infantry to COL Whitman, Commander 325th Infantry," undated, in BG Whitman Papers. In the same collection, 1LT W.G. Green reported that on 16 October the "greater part of the company was taken sick with disintery and dyreahea (sic) and we evacuated (sic) a number of men for this reason. They were to weak to perform their tasks."

³³⁶ Memorandum from Colonel A.C. Read, 1st Army Inspector General, titled "Ammunition supply, morale, roads, etc." dated 2 October 1918. National Archives, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4. COL Read was only partially correct in his assessment. On 3 October the V Corps commander pulled the 79th Division out of the line and sent it to serve with the French II Colonial Corps near the now quiet St. Mihiel sector. On 30 October the division returned to the Muse-Argonne fight, but saw only sporadic fighting for the remainder of the war.

unit is not nearly as high as it formerly was. This is shown by the general demeanor of the men and the lack of snap and spirit which formerly prevailed in this unit.”³³⁷ After a series of costly attacks, the 3rd Division Inspector General reported on 15 October, “Although I am inexperienced in judging men under battle conditions, I wish to state that those officers and men whom I saw of the 38th Infantry appeared to me, to use a slang term, ‘all in.’ ”³³⁸ The day after this report was made, the Military Police rounded up over 500 stragglers from the division loitering in the rear area. Weeks of frontal attacks, combined with the leaders’ inability to care for their soldiers, had brought the AEF to exhaustion and the brink of dissolution.

While some doughboys straggled from the lines due to being lost, hungry, sick, or leaderless, other left the lines to deliberately avoid combat and the conditions described above. The Meuse-Argonne region was crisscrossed with dense woods and shelters, dugouts and barracks that had been constructed by the French and Germans over the past four years of the war. The natural and man-made features provided a ready sanctuary for any doughboy seeking to escape combat. While soldiers straggling in the immediate rear of the frontlines could offer the excuse that they were lost from their units, men hiding out in shelters and woods far behind the lines indicate that their straggling was a premeditated attempt to dodge the fighting.

It is impossible to determine how many of the stragglers left the front to avoid combat. There is some evidence to show that the numbers were relatively large. The 82nd Division’s Inspector General reported on 12 October that while most of the division’s stragglers were simply lost, “a small minority, difficult to estimate, were undoubtedly, endeavoring to evade

³³⁷ Inspector General, 1st Division, “Report of Inspection, 1st Division, 16 Oct. 18.” 3. NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

³³⁸ Inspector General, 3rd Division, “Report of Inspection, 3rd Division, 15 and 16 Oct 18.” NARA, RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

their duty and were collected from dugouts in Chatel Chehery and elsewhere.”³³⁹ However, eight days later the division could still not account for 1019 men and the adjoining 78th Division reported that the woods in its area were “full of stragglers” from the 82nd Division.³⁴⁰ On one occasion in early October 1918, a detail from the 32nd Division’s Military Police searching for stragglers in abandoned shelters found 90 men hiding in one large dugout.³⁴¹ The “battle stragglers” could be a very inventive lot when it came to evading combat. Lieutenant Colonel Troup Miller recalled,

In one instance back at the rear a man was found with an old saddle and some other junk in a pile walking post guarding it, stating that he had been left there to look after it. Further investigation disclosed the 2nd and 3rd relief carefully tucked away in a well camouflaged shelter tent in the bush nearby—apparently a very efficient self-constituted guard.³⁴²

These reports indicate that a number of men were seeking to dodge combat by straggling, and the fact that they were doing so with relative ease.

Another indication of the depth of the problem of combat avoidance was the number of men apprehended multiple times for straggling. On 14 October 1918, military policemen from the 32nd Division complained that they had apprehended a number of stragglers from the 5th Division and returned them to their units, only to find the same men shortly after again hiding out around the Montfaucon.³⁴³ The commander of H Troop, 2nd Cavalry, assigned to straggler

³³⁹ Report of Inspector, 82nd Division, to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: “Daily Report of Past 24 Hours,” dated 12 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 796, Box 3.

³⁴⁰ Memorandum from Forward Officer, Inspector General’s Department, 1st Army, Subject “Investigation of Straggling in 82nd Division,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 8.

³⁴¹ “Report of Operations Argonne Meuse, Officer of the Inspector, 5th Army Corps, Sept. 25-Nov. 11, Extracts of Reports of Div. Inspectors,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116. The commander of the 89th Division, Major General William Wright, wrote that while moving through the rear area he “found a number of stragglers from the Eighty-ninth, Forty-second, and Second divisions. They were out in the woods and making themselves comfortable in the Boche dugouts and apparently with the intention of staying there.” Wright, *Meuse-Argonne Diary: A Division Commander in World War I*, 23.

³⁴² “Lecture presented by LTC Troup Miller on 20 January 1919 at Fifth Army Corps Headquarters, Subject: “Plan of communication, supply and evacuation, 1st Corps, for St. Mihiel Offensive and Meuse-Argonne Offensive,” in Lectures: [operations of the First Army]/ First Army Staff, CARL Archives, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

³⁴³ Report of Inspector, 32nd Division, dated 14 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 2.

post duty with the 1st Army during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive reported that the 103rd Infantry's Private Raymond Wellman was a "professional straggler" who had been caught by his posts on at least two different occasions. Upon capture, Wellman stated that "he didn't want to go back to his outfit or any outfit."³⁴⁴ These incidents tend to support the point that the AEF had men who were so adverse to fighting that they risked capture multiple times, that the fear of punishment in these men was rather small, and that despite repeated infractions, their small unit leaders were unable or unwilling to do much about it.

This last point needs further exploration. The acting first sergeant for Company K, 142nd Infantry, Archibald Hart, recalled finding a number of stragglers hiding in a German bunker while searching for water for his company. Hart noted that they had picked a spot near a supply route where they could steal food by night, and then "return to their comfortable quarters near the water supply and, undisturbed, catch up on their sleep during the day." The sergeant opted not to report the men for several reasons. First of all, he believed that such activities were an officer's purview, and he did not think his new commander would make an effort to follow up on the matter because the soldiers were not from his company. Also, he concluded philosophically, "a cozy hideout, well to the rear and out of harms way, was a proper place for a skulker," for "he definitely would be a liability in the front line, and his Company would function better if he kept himself out of the way."³⁴⁵

It is hard to argue with Hart's logic, but if his laissez faire attitude to straggling was indicative of the opinions of other AEF junior leaders, their inactivity only encouraged straggling. One straggling soldier marveled "at the freedom I had in the advanced regions." He admitted that he frequently left the front lines and at times strayed over two miles from his unit.

³⁴⁴ Report of stragglers apprehended from Commander, H Troop, 2nd Cavalry, dated 1 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 856, Box 269.

³⁴⁵ Archibald Hart, *Company K of Yesterday* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969), 108-9.

The infantryman noted, “the peculiar thing is that usually I did not have permission to go and never once got into trouble for going.”³⁴⁶ In this situation, either the soldier’s officers and NCOs never realized that he was gone or turned a blind eye to his actions. In either case, it was a lapse in basic combat leadership at the company level and below.

Unlike those soldiers who left the lines because they were lost or hungry, discovering why “battle stragglers” sought to avoid combat is much more difficult. Since few admitted their motives, any discussion in this area must be based on the observations of third parties or speculation. Some of the reasons certainly went back to issues with leadership in the AEF’s small combat units. For example, Captain Thomas Barber attributed much of the straggling to poor leadership and with men becoming “fed up” with the uncertainties and pettiness of everyday military life.³⁴⁷ In some cases, the junior leaders set such a bad example for their soldiers by their own misconduct that the men were naturally bound to follow. Private Ernesto Bisogno stated that at Chatel Chehery “some officers ran like sheep” and abrogated their responsibilities by trying to save their own skins.³⁴⁸ A 28th Division soldier recalled that when he, a sergeant, and two other enlisted men were ordered to scout the German lines prior to his unit’s attack in the Argonne on 1 October, soon after leaving the American lines, “our sergeant deserted us,” leaving the patrol alone and leaderless in no man’s land.³⁴⁹ Joseph Lawrence, an infantry officer in the 29th Division, reported that his company’s first sergeant deserted the unit in the middle of the Argonne fight, taking with him “several other men of the company.” He also noted the poor example set by a company commander nicknamed “Dugout Pete” for his

³⁴⁶ Baker, *Argonne Days*, 118.

³⁴⁷ Barber, 82.

³⁴⁸ Ernesto Bisogno, PVT, 328th IN, 82nd DIV, USAMHI WWI Veterans Survey.

³⁴⁹ Unpublished memoir in PFC Jonas E. Warrell, 103rd Ammunition Train, 28th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey. 46.

refusal to leave the safety of his bunker during his unit's attacks.³⁵⁰

After observing the 5th Division, Colonel J. A. Bauer informed his superior that “the officers with the troops of this division appear ‘jumpy’,” and suggested that this fact explained many of the unit's 2500 stragglers.³⁵¹ Bauer's assessment of the 5th Division was close to the mark. During the 3rd Battalion, 61st Infantry's attack on the Bois des Rappes on 15 October 1918, the unit's adjutant broke down after witnessing the death of the battalion commander and two company commanders. When the adjutant “became panicky and departed precipitately to the rear. The few men in his immediate vicinity naturally followed.” The terror-stricken officer soon reported to the regimental commander that the unit “was all cut to pieces and what was left of it was retreating.” This bogus report led to the entire regiment being pulled back from the line, only to suffer heavy casualties over the next two days trying to recover the terrain it had previously taken.³⁵²

A similar case of officer straggling and poor leadership occurred in the 4th Machine Gun Battalion during one of the 2nd Division's October 1918 attacks on Mont Blanc. During a move to the front, Wendell Westover's first sergeant reported that one of the company's lieutenants had left the formation during the march claiming to have been wounded, and was nowhere to be found. The sergeant offered his opinion that he hoped that the officer would not come back, and darkly hinted “he won't live through the attack to-morrow if he does show up again.”³⁵³ The NCO's veiled threat indicates the hatred that soldiers often felt for leaders who failed to live up

³⁵⁰ Lawrence, 88, 102, 114-115.

³⁵¹ Memorandum from COL. J. A. Bauer, Advance Section, Inspector General, dated 18 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 4.

³⁵² Major Merritt Olmstead, “A Critical Analysis of Troop Leading within the 5th Division during the Second Phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive,” Command and General Staff School, Individual Research Paper, 1933, CARL Archive, FT Leavenworth, KS. This incident was also discussed in *Infantry in Battle*, 400-405.

³⁵³ Westover, 219-220.

to the men's expectations and, perhaps, the lengths that some soldiers would go to rid themselves of a particularly odious or incompetent leader.

Sergeant Archibald Hart recalled that the 142nd Infantry contained one such officer, a lieutenant "known by sight to every man in the Regiment; known and in varying degrees hated." He noted of the officer,

He hadn't what it takes to be a martinet, and so, employed and flaunted a constant attitude of contempt for all enlisted personnel; on the drill grounds and off. Whatever his behavior in [the] officers' mess may have been, no enlisted man or men ever encountered him when he wasn't exhibiting by tone, manner and expression his utter distaste and aversion.³⁵⁴

In the Meuse-Argonne, one of Hart's soldiers straggled from the line rather than follow the unpopular officer, and only the sergeant's inadvertent intervention had kept another soldier who had already "drawn a bead on the Lieutenant's back" from killing the despised leader. Hart later recalled,

Sometimes in Camp Bowie one would hear vague predictions that this or that man, not necessarily an officer, would certainly get his once the outfit reached the front, but as a rule these ominous hints were ignored... The Lieutenant, however, had planted his seeds of ill will over the entire regimental area, and no doubt on more than one occasion had stepped far enough beyond the bounds of his usual contumely to incur a bit of vindictive enmity.³⁵⁵

It is impossible to determine how many unpopular officers or NCOs met their ends at the hands of their own soldiers, but Westover's and Hart's accounts illustrate that at least some disgruntled doughboys were pushed in that direction by poor leaders.

Some of the "battle stragglers" were simply men who had stayed at the front until they had reached the breaking point of physical and psychological collapse. One officer later wrote that after grueling weeks at the front under constant fire, men tried to slip to the rear for "a few minutes of relief from the hell on the line." He recalled that "this kept up all night, making it

³⁵⁴ Hart, 92.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 93.

necessary for me to patrol the line...I would drive one man back to his position and another would try to slip by.”³⁵⁶ One infantryman blamed this type of straggling on the fact that commanders “had forgotten that there is a limit to human endurance.”³⁵⁷

Other “battle stragglers” were perhaps motivated to avoid combat long before this “limit to human endurance” was reached due to fear and the realization that neither their own, nor their leaders’, training had prepared them for battle. The AEF’s soldiers were “thinking bayonets” who could not have helped to have been cognizant of these shortcomings. Henderson, Shils and Janowitz all argued that one of the major pillars of small unit cohesion was the soldier’s faith that their leaders will be “duly considerate of their lives” and that the inevitable casualties of war will still be “minimal and justified.”³⁵⁸ The fact that the AEF had large numbers of men actively seeking to avoid combat indicates that there were major problems with cohesiveness within the army’s small units. In many of the AEF’s small units, it was simply the case of the unwilling being led by the unready into the unknown. As soldiers weighed their chance of survival in combat and opted to “vote with their feet,” the quality of their leaders was undoubtedly one of the factors that influenced their decision.

Even some of the more reliable soldiers opted to moderate their aggressiveness based on the odds of survival. When Horace and his unit were ordered back to the front at 8:30 AM on 11 November 1918, the soldier did not want to risk his life for nothing and decided to hide out for a few hours to see what happened. After a bit of moral calculus, Baker decided that if fighting continued after the Armistice time of 11:00 AM, he would dutifully return to the fight; if the fighting ceased, he figured that no harm was done by his straggling and he had been right in

³⁵⁶ Lawrence, 121-3.

³⁵⁷ Baker, *Argonne Days*, 120.

³⁵⁸ Shils and Janowitz, 279., William D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 109.

not tempting fate in the closing hours of the war.³⁵⁹ Similarly, Private George Dongarra admitted that when his truck broke down on 9 November 1918, rumors of a possible armistice led he and his fellow driver “to linger on the troubled motor” for two days until the fighting stopped.³⁶⁰ The remarkable thing is not that many enlisted men in the Meuse-Argonne opted for self-preservation by straggling, but rather those who chose to stay. The difference must have been tied back to good leadership and the ability of junior officers and NCOs to beat the odds by establishing and maintaining cohesive units. However, this is an area that requires much more study.

It is interesting to note that many officers and NCOs blamed the straggler problem on replacements. The AEF Inspector General noted that when the replacements consisted of “men who do not know the rudiments of soldiering [they] soon become either ‘cannon fodder’ or skulkers.” A soldier in the 42nd Division corroborated this observation by noting that most stragglers from his unit “had been replacements newly arrived.”³⁶¹ Nine years after the Armistice, the war correspondent Thomas Johnson wrote in his aptly-titled *Without Censor*, that the war was hardest on those men, usually replacements, who had been shunted off to the front with very little training under the belt. He noted, “We could always recognize them on the roads of the battle area. They were paler, slighter, than the men who had had their proper hardening and had not just come from crowded transports, and they looked about nervously. Who could blame them?”³⁶² Johnson recalled that “Some of the youngest ones, scared boys, drifted to

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 134-5.

³⁶⁰ PVT George Dongarra, 2nd Ammunition Train, 2nd DIV, USAMHI World War I Veterans’ Survey.

³⁶¹ “Notes Made by the Inspector General A. E. F., During the Active Operations from 12th September 1918 to 11th November 1918,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 588, Box 116., Memorandum from Forward Office, Inspector General’s Department, 1st Army, to Inspector General, AEF, Subject: “Report of inspection in sector of 42nd Division,” in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 2.

³⁶² Thomas M. Johnson, *Without Censor* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1927), 315-316.

Y.M.C.A. hotels where they were fed and warmed and often got their nerve and went back to the front.”³⁶³

If replacements did make up the majority of “battle stragglers” (and this point is far from certain), they had good reason to fly from battle. An infantry first sergeant in the 32nd Division mourned the fact that “replacements get the end of dirty things in the Army. They are shoved from pillar to post and back again...They acquire buddies one day to have them leave the next day...Their A[rmy] P[ost] O[ffice] number is changed before they receive mail from the folks at home.”³⁶⁴ If these indignities were not enough, in an army not known for the quality and quantity of its training, replacements were often the worst trained of the lot.

The stories that circulated that some replacements had to be told how to load their rifles just before H Hour, are far from apocryphal. Once the 83rd Division was transformed into the 2nd Depot Division, its intelligence officer began to track the level of training of the replacements that arrived in France in the summer and fall of 1918. These reports provide sad evidence of the breakdown of the stateside training of replacements in the last four months of the war. On 12 August 1918, one of the officer’s agents reported that the 2500 men who just arrived at the division from Camps Gordon and Hancock had “been in the service only a few weeks.” A month later, another agent reported that the 597 draftees that had just arrived from Camps Pike, MacArthur, and Gordon “had all been in the army less than a month and have had little or no training.” The men who reported on 29 October from Camp Pike had only spent one day on the rifle range and had no gas training before being shipped overseas. The men who arrived on the

³⁶³ Ibid., 318.

³⁶⁴ Diary entries for 28 August 1918 in “A Tanglefoot’s Diary.”

same day from Camp MacArthur were little better off. They had spent one or two days on the range and had been given six hours of gas training just before leaving for France.³⁶⁵

One 35th Division replacement had no real training in the 35 days between the time he was inducted to the point at which he sailed for France, and did not even receive his first uniform until he reached the embarkation point at Camp Mills, New York. He recalled,

After we reached France, we were brigaded with English troops and given some training, using our own officers in close order drill. I was on the firing range once. No information or training was given about extended lines or attack tactics. Now here I was, at the bottom of a hill, in a pit of fog and on the attack.

He recalled hearing such commands as “deploy as skirmishers” and “advance in squad column” without understanding what they meant.³⁶⁶ To survive in combat, he simply tried to follow the directions of his squad leader and mimic his actions. Lieutenant Hugh Thompson found that 12 of the replacements assigned to his company just before the St. Mihiel Offensive had never fired their rifles before, and others “were not very sure of their rifles.” The new men’s only training before going into combat was “each man was allowed to fire a clip (five rounds) into the soggy ground at his feet.”³⁶⁷

The commander of the 77th Division’s 307th Infantry, Lieutenant Colonel Eugene Houghton, argued that the cohesion and morale of his unit suffered from the influx of new recruits. Of the 850-900 men he received just before going into the Argonne battle, “90% of

³⁶⁵ Reports from field agents to Captain (later Major) Charles Gentsch, G-2, 83rd Division for the following dates, 12 August 1918., 7 September 1918., 16 September 1918., 3 October 1918., 29 October 1918., 1 November 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 195 (one box), “Reports Related to the Morale of American Troops 1917-1918.” On 12 October 1918, the 89th Division’s Inspector General confirmed that most of the 2000 replacements that his unit had received on 1 October had been drafted in June and had little to no gas or rifle training before being assigned to the division. He also observed that a large number of the 1500 replacements assigned to the division on 12 October were suffering from influenza. Memorandum from Forward Office, Inspector General, AEF, Subject: “Report on 89th Division by Maj. C. H. Rice, I. G.,” dated 12 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

³⁶⁶ Unpublished memoirs in PVT Milton B. Sweningsen, 138th IN, 35th Div, USAMHI WWI Veterans’ Survey, 5-6, 13.

³⁶⁷ Hugh Thompson, 160. For similar examples of the poor training of the AEF’s replacements see, Nell, 69., Gansser, 157-8, 160., Rainsford, 156-7., *A History of the Three Hundred and Twelfth Infantry*, 50.

them had never fired a rifle, nor thrown a grenade, nor had they the ordinary close order drill.”

He went on to note,

Since the action started it has been frequently reported to me by company and battalion commanders that it was practically impossible to handle these men over the present terrain. They had no idea what it meant to extend [formations] and would have to be led around from place to place. They were continually getting lost and straggling, and their officers and N. C. O.'s were practically strangers to them, it made them very difficult to handle them.³⁶⁸

Sadly, there was little that a company's officers and NCOs could do to address the problems caused by this massive influx of ill-trained men. When his company received 30 exceptionally green replacements, 1SG Harold C. Woehl was moved to exclaim, “preparing such untrained men for battle was a nerve-wracking job.”³⁶⁹ After the company was again refilled with replacements during a rest in the Meuse-Argonne, Captain Fred Jankoska tried to solve these problems by placing the new men with “old timers” for training and mentoring while also seeking to keep “as far as possible, Army ‘Buddies’ and Hometown ‘Neighbors’” assigned together.³⁷⁰ In the end, the problem with replacement training was merely only one last straw to the litany of problems that dogged the AEF's small unit leaders throughout the war.

On 18 October 1918 General Du Cane, the senior French liaison officer to the AEF, reported that the disjointed and ill-led American attacks in the Argonne did nothing but “suffer wastage out of all proportion to the results achieved.”³⁷¹ While this criticism seems hypocritical coming from an army that a year previously had descended into mutiny as a result of equally disjointed attacks, Du Cane's observations hit very close to their mark. A more sympathetic, or at least tactful, French officer simply noted, “These young Americans lost a good many of their

³⁶⁸ Testimony of Lt. Col. Eugene H. Houghton in Report of CPT Albert Rich, Asst. Inspector General, 1st Army to Inspector General, 1st Army, Subject: “77th Division cutting off of seven companies and one machine gun company, October 3rd, 1918,” dated 8 October 1918, in NARA RG 120, Entry 590, Box 1.

³⁶⁹ Entry for 20 September 1918 in “A Tenderfoot's Diary.”

³⁷⁰ Ibid., Entry for 25 October 1918.

³⁷¹ Quoted in Robert C. Walton, ed. *Over There: European Reaction to Americans in World War I* (Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1971), 193-195.

illusions in the depths of the Argonne.”³⁷² Even Brigadier General Harold Fiske, Pershing’s Chief of Training, had to admit that in the final analysis,

....It must be remembered that to the end most of our divisions were lacking in skill. Given plenty of time for preparation, they were capable of powerful blows; but their blows were delivered with an awkwardness and lack of resource that made them unduly costly and rendered it impracticable to reap the full fruits of victory.³⁷³

Fiske’s sad confession was also an admission that the U. S. Army had failed to properly train and develop its officers, NCOs and soldiers to meet the challenges that confronted them on the battlefield without enduring soul-numbing casualties. Pershing had intended that the AEF fight like a master swordsman: a fighter able to dispatch his enemies with quick maneuvers and deadly thrusts. The AEF, however, was more like a blind giant: a creature groping to find its opponent, suffering wound after wound in doing so, but finally crushing the enemy with its superior weight when it finally found him.

The changing nature of warfare demanded that the AEF’s junior officers and NCOs be comfortable with employing a host of new weapons and ready to use their initiative on the battlefield. The junior leaders were not only unprepared for this challenge, the AEF seemed to work at times to keep the leaders from rising to the occasion. The AEF’s huge combat formations were too ponderous for the half-trained leaders to adequately command and control. Improper and incomplete training, as well as the failure to instruct junior leaders to act independently, had not prepared the AEF’s junior officers and NCOs for the enemy and the environment that they encountered in combat. Consequently, American operations throughout the war tended to be rather ham-handed, flat-footed, and tragically lethal affairs. These bloodlettings were deadly to unit cohesion, combat effectiveness, and the leaders themselves. As

³⁷² Viereck, 302.

³⁷³ *U.S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 14, *Reports*, 310.

leaders sacrificed themselves while learning at this “school of hard knocks,” it created a deadly cycle of where leaders all too often killed themselves and their soldiers before gaining the critical battlefield wisdom required for survival. In the final analysis, American junior officers and NCOs could not grasp those opportunities on the margins of attritional war that would have allowed them a degree of battlefield success without the unnecessary dead that littered the AEF’s battlefields.

Chapter 13

Conclusions: A Tale of George and Henry

Serving in the Great War had given the two men a shared experience that had helped to grease the wheels of their working relationship. Henry, the elder of the two, had risen to the rank of colonel and commanded an artillery regiment during the war. George was promoted to the rank of temporary colonel and had served as a corps chief of staff. Both men looked upon their military service during World War I as one of the great formative events of their lives. Although the two worked extremely well together over the years, there was one subject that nearly ended their professional relationship.

In March 1941, Secretary of War Henry Stimson was confronted with a number of problems. Henry knew well that the United States was likely to be drawn into a war with Germany or Japan and that the nation was little better prepared for this eventuality than it had been in 1917. A few months before, the Congress had approved the nation's first peace-time draft, and some of the draftees were already in training. However, this growing force still needed officers. While ROTC units across the nation were providing a pool of reserve officers with a better military education than those who had received military training in the land-grant colleges prior to World War I, there were still not enough of the men to lead the growing ranks of the army. To solve this problem, Stimson proposed that the army reestablish the 90 day Officer Training Camp model used in the Great War.

This proposal was abhorrent to the Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall. George was adamant that any future army raised for the approaching war be provided with competent junior leaders more realistically and thoroughly trained than the generation of 1917. For the first and only time in their long and fruitful relationship, George informed Henry that if

the Secretary went forward with his plan on resurrecting the OTC model, he would resign as Chief of Staff.¹

This rare confrontation between Stimson and Marshall was an indication of how deeply some of the army's officers believed that the training and performance of the Great War's junior officers had been flawed. Although the post-war military draw-down and public apathy prevented the army from making good use of its "lessons learned" in the war, the generation of young officers that came of age in World War I still tried to keep the United States from making similar leadership mistakes in the nation's future wars.

Marshall and other AEF veterans understood the price that the American soldier paid for serving under ill-prepared small unit leaders. The AEF's half-trained junior officers and NCOs usually fought bravely, but seldom fought skillfully. At the "tip of the spear" in battle, these infantry leaders lacked the critical experience and the tactical and technical skills to take advantage of the slim opportunities available to the attacker on the margins of the attritional World War I battlefield. This was a major failing because changes in the nature of combat brought about by improved weapons and the expanded breadth of the battlefield now required a decentralization of command and control which placed much greater responsibility upon small unit leaders. As the war progressed, it was increasingly the junior leaders at the "tip of the spear," and not the generals, that ultimately decided whether or not the senior commander's grand plans were properly executed. In the case of the AEF, this spear-point was made of a brittle and un-tempered metal.

¹ Larry Bland, ed., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 511-513., Henry L. Stimson, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 348-350., Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope 1939-1942* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), 102-103.

The failure of the leadership “spear-point” was not due to the poor human material that comprised the weapon. In the majority of cases, the AEF’s junior officers and NCOs were patriotic, adequately educated, dedicated to the cause, and brave to a fault. They were eager to learn and often understood the limitations of their training and experience. These leaders did the best they could under the conditions they faced, but, far too often, sacrificed themselves and their soldiers in mass, clumsy, ill-supported, and often frontal attacks. Their maladroit tactics generally showed an awkward inability to match formations, maneuver and firepower to the terrain and the enemy they encountered. Furthermore, American officers and NCOs also tended to display a fatal lack of initiative which ceded hard-won and short-lived tactical gains or advantages to a more skillful and agile enemy.

Some of these problems were the result of the inherent realities of the Great War’s battlefields that all the major combatants had to contend with during the conflict. Advances in communications and command and control had not kept pace with the changes in weaponry. Without reliable and responsive communications, it was exceedingly difficult for the attacker (a position the AEF was generally fated to play) to gain the reliable and responsive artillery fire he desperately needed to level the playing field between himself and the defender. The lack of an effective system of tactical communications meant that it was also hard for the attacking junior leader to direct his soldiers, inform his superiors of his progress, or change orders in the heat of combat.

Many of the difficulties faced by the AEF’s small unit leaders were due to systemic problems associated with the nation’s lack of preparation to fight a modern war, and to the inherent growing pains associated with building a mass army. The United States was the least prepared of the major combatants: materially, numerically, administratively and intellectually

that entered the war on the Western Front in World War I. From 1914 to mid-1916, the Wilson administration simply did not want to face the political pressure from socialists, old-line Populists, anti-British minority groups, and a host of other anti-war or “isolationist” groups that came with any serious preparations for the nation’s possible entry into the war. Under the pressures of the time, the quantity of soldiers that the United States could ship overseas took precedence over the quality of their junior leadership.

After the United States entered the war, the prodding of the desperate Allies, and the rapidly changing military situation in France that followed the Ludendorff offensives, ultimately forced the army to make compromises or shortcuts with the stateside training of its leaders and soldiers that later had detrimental affects on the battlefield. The United States’ pressing need for officers in the spring of 1917 led the army to adopt the flawed OTC training and commissioning system. Training in the OTCs failed to impart the leadership, tactical, and technical skills needed by the fledging officers in combat. The OTCs, and later COTSs, placed far too much emphasis on close order drill, bayonet training and other skills of questionable importance, and too little stress on teaching their students critical subjects such as map reading, the military aspects of terrain, logistics and administration, and the tactics of combining firepower and maneuver in combat.

The army’s process for selecting and developing NCOs was even more defective. The Regular Army’s prewar ad hoc system of company commanders selecting NCOs from long-service privates was one that could not be readily adapted to the realities of a mass draftee army. Lacking the training and status to set them above the mass of doughboys, the AEF’s NCOs remained “privates with stripes.” This institutional failure to more systematically train and develop NCOs placed additional burdens on the army’s already overtaxed junior officers and

greatly complicated small unit command and control in combat. The overall lack of junior officer and leader “know how,” combined with the systemic problems associated with mass mobilization, hobbled the army’s efforts to build cohesive and effective combat units.

The army itself must also bear its share of blame for its problems with junior leaders. The tactical doctrine promulgated by the Regular Army from 1914 to 1917 (and sometimes well into 1918) continued to exult the power of the rifleman and downplay the effectiveness of modern artillery and the machine gun despite all evidence to the contrary from the European fighting. The U. S. Army’s attempt to close the intellectual/doctrinal gap between itself and the European combatants in 1917 and 1918, as well as Pershing’s effort to craft a uniquely American “open warfare” doctrine, led to such a mixing of “American,” “French,” and “British” “methods” that that the AEF never had a uniform doctrine during the war. Faced with a deluge of often conflicting doctrinal publications, new support weapons, and evolving tactical techniques, the AEF’s small units tended to “freelance” their own doctrines or slavishly adhere to the formations presented in *Offensive Combat of Small Units*. Both of these approaches had their own problems and contributed to the AEF’s flat-footed and ham-fisted performance at the tactical level of war. Through trial and error, some leaders and soldiers also picked up workable tactical methods and techniques from the unsparing “school of hard knocks.” However, this method of learning through hard experience was also problematic. The AEF’s small units experienced such a vast and rapid turn over of leaders and soldiers due to casualties, schools, and other removals, that their ability to “learn lessons” from their combat experience was stunted. This massive loss in the ranks of infantry and machine gun junior leaders led to an unbreakable cycle of ineffectiveness as half-trained leaders were supplanted by even less trained and experienced replacement officers and NCOs. Although commanders and staffs at the regimental level and

above were able to puzzle-out some of the AEF's tactical problems such as the effective employment of planned artillery fires, at the battalion level and below rapid changes in leaders often prevented these units from being effective learning organizations. Too many junior leaders simply did not survive their first tactical missteps, mistakes, or blunders to get second chances to improve.

The U. S. Army further handicapped the ability of its junior leaders to succeed in combat by instituting short-sighted and self-inflicted personnel policies that undercut unit cohesion and morale. The large-scale levying of personnel from American units training in the United States and France broke or disrupted the bonds that tied units together and wed the leader to the led. Pershing's efforts to overcome his army's inability to wage a modern war by establishing an expansive school system ironically hindered its combat effectiveness by further removing essential leaders from their units, to serve as instructors or students, at key times in their unit's training and operations. The AEF's senior officers were either unaware or indifferent to the havoc that these policies wrought in the army's companies and platoons. When combined with other factors that undermined unit morale, such as heavy casualties, the loss of leaders, and the inability of junior officers to live up to their end of the social contract with their soldiers, these flawed policies led to small combat units with very fragile cohesion. The end result was an explosion of stragglers in the last months of the war that further dulled the AEF's combat effectiveness by depriving its units of large swaths of its manpower at the front.

Furthermore, unexpected changes in the military situation in the spring and summer of 1918, and the high American casualties that resulted, threw the army's system for training officers and NCOs in such disarray that the quality and quantity of leader training actually decreased as the war went on. The press of events in 1918 added another burden on junior

leaders by filling the ranks of their units with replacements who were often so ill-trained as to be a greater threat to themselves and their comrades as they were to the Germans.

Lastly, the inability of the Regular Army officer corps to reconcile its demands for obedience with the need for its junior leaders to exercise initiative in combat hobbled the effectiveness of its units throughout the war. The regular officers' prewar assumptions about the discipline required of leaders and men to "cross the fire swept ground," combined with their negative opinion of citizen soldiers, led commanders at the regimental level and above to demand an exacting degree of compliance to their orders by their subordinates. This degree of obedience and micro-management by senior officers reflected conceptions of combat that were increasingly obsolete on the modern battlefield. The micro-management by senior officers of their subordinates was further exacerbated by the command climate that Pershing instilled in the AEF. Pershing's willingness to sack senior officers who he believed lacked aggressiveness or ability created a climate of fear that permeated all levels of the AEF. Regimental and brigade commanders, fearful that the mistakes of their subordinates would reflect poorly upon their command, made little effort to develop their wayward junior officers, and instead purged them from their units by sending the errant lieutenants and captains to the Reclassification Center at Blois. These actions sapped the initiative of junior officers who were already hindered by the knowledge of their own inadequate training and the weight of being responsible for the lives of their soldiers.

The inability of the AEF's junior leaders to live up to Pershing's "open warfare" hype and gain tactical success without long casualty lists left an ambiguous legacy in the post-World War I American military. George Marshall, for one, understood the Americans' failings and worked during the interwar period to head off future leadership problems. While serving as the

Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School, Marshall had tried to pass on some of the army's hard-won battlefield wisdom to new generations of its junior leaders.

In 1934, the Infantry School at Fort Benning published its classic *Infantry in Battle* to give “peace-trained officers something of the viewpoint of the veteran.”² The work contained vignettes on minor tactics and leadership, mostly drawn from American actions in the Great War, to better prepare a new generation of junior leaders for the realities of combat. Marshall, the driving force behind the publication, understood all too well the limitations of America's wartime leadership and its flawed training. In the work's introduction Marshall noted, “In our schools we generally assume that organizations are well-trained and at full strength, that subordinates are competent, that supply arrangements function, that communications work, that orders are carried out. In war many or all of these conditions may be absent.”³ In stating this realistic view of combat, Marshall wanted his students to understand the nature of fighting modern wars and the skills required by officers to meet its challenges.

There was also a darker legacy from World War I that Marshall brought to his subsequent military endeavors. Historian Daniel Bolger has noted that the lessons of the war and the approach to tactics that Marshall attempted to convey in *Infantry in Battle* were too mired in the “infantry-centric” views of the World War. He also argued that as the Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School, Marshall inculcated a generation of the school's students with his own rigid ideas of tactics, discipline and leadership. These men, most notably Omar Bradley, Courtney Hodges and J. Lawton Collins, later rose to senior command positions in World War II and placed Marshall's narrow doctrinal views into practice. As such, the operations of Bradley's 1st Army were characterized by a cautious set-piece approach to warfare and a tendency of

² U.S. Army Infantry School, *Infantry in Battle* (Washington D.C.: Infantry Journal, 1939), first page of the Introduction.

³ Ibid.

Hodges and Collins to micromanage and dampen the initiative of their subordinates.⁴

Bolger maintained that the stern and forbidding Marshall also passed on to his Benning disciples a rather harsh view of how to deal with subordinates who failed to perform in combat. Those who failed had to be cut out of the unit like a cancer. As a commander in Western Europe in 1944 and 1945, Bradley placed this merciless vision into practice and between June 1944 and May 1945, relieved two corps commanders, eight division commanders, and numerous brigade and regimental commanders.⁵ The result of these sackings created a “zero defect” command climate in the 1st Army that left its subordinate commanders fearful and unwilling to question the decisions of their superiors.

What Bolger failed to discuss was that this willingness to relieve officers at the drop of a hat, and the poor command climate this practice created, was also a legacy of World War I. It is sometime said that children who are abused grow up to be abusers themselves as adults. As a senior AEF staff officer, Marshall saw first hand Pershing’s ruthlessness in ridding himself of those who failed to please him. This experience left an indelible impression on Marshall; one that he later passed on to his Benning students. One passage in *Infantry in Battle* even advises commanders to “relieve all unreliable junior officers.”⁶ As Bradley and his senior commanders sacked their subordinates with pitiless abandon, the ghost of Blois stalked in the shadows.

Not all of the AEF’s legacy was negative or unproductive when it came to junior leadership. Behind the American boasting about the power and skill of the AEF in the immediate aftermath of the Armistice, many officers looked past the period’s jingoism to admit that the army’s failure to properly train and develop its junior leaders had blunted the combat

⁴ Daniel Bolger, “Zero Defects: Command Climate in the First U. S. Army 1944-1945,” in *Military Review*, 71 (May 1991), 61-73.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Infantry in Battle*, 199.

effectiveness of the AEF. While officially adhering to the “party line” that superior American manpower and “know how” had decisively contributed to the Allied victory, many of the AEF’s senior leaders later admitted that the army had done a poor job of preparing for combat. In April 1919, the AEF GHQ convened an officer board headed by Major General Edward M. Lewis to “consider the lessons to be gained from the experiences of the present war in so far as they affect the tactics and organization of the Infantry.”⁷ A number of the board’s participants were critical of the leadership exhibited by the AEF’s junior officers and NCOs during the war. Although the board’s recommendations regarding leadership were of a general nature, the board’s findings still indicated that the AEF’s infantry officers were cognizant of the problem and searching for a solution.

The Great War experience also encouraged the army to expand its schools system and institutionally promoted professional development to counter flaws uncovered by the war in the Regular officer corps.⁸ Although it was bitter medicine, the Regulars had to admit that many of their ranks who rose to senior command and staff positions in the AEF were no better prepared for the shocks of modern war and the duties and requirements of their elevated positions than had been their “90-day-wonder” junior officers. Eisenhower, Bradley and other future World War II commanders benefited from this renaissance of the “cult of professionalism.” Recognizing the nation’s glaring wartime problems with equipping a mass industrial army, the War Department went so far as to create the Army Industrial College to encourage cooperation and an exchange of ideas between military and industrial leaders.

The army and the nation also took steps to correct the problems of junior leadership that became apparent during the war. As Superintendent of the Military Academy from 1919-1922,

⁷ General Headquarters American Expeditionary Force, *Report of Officers Convened By Special Orders No.98, GHQ AEF 09 April 1919*, 9-10. (Here after cited as the Lewis Board) in USAMHI Library , 1.

⁸ Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 361-362.

Douglas MacArthur changed the curriculum for the Corps of Cadets to address some of the conspicuous deficiencies in junior officer leadership that he had observed in France. For the first time in the academy's history, its curriculum included formal classes on military leadership.⁹ While opposition from the Academy's entrenched and conservative faculty meant that few of MacArthur's reforms survived his departure from West Point, his actions still forced an examination of the cadets' leadership and tactical training.

After the war, the army did not allow the ROTC program to languish due to a lack of attention and direction as had its Land Grant College predecessor. The National Defense Act of 1920 strengthened the army's commitment to the ROTC and provided for a more rational and regulated system for maintaining a trained Officer's Reserve Corps.¹⁰ By 1922 even Pershing, the strongest guardian of the AEF's reputation, tacitly admitted that leadership had been lacking in his army and that reform was necessary. In a keynote address to the Reserve Officer Association, "Black Jack" stated, "A resolve has gone forth, embodied in the law of 1920, that never again shall our untrained boys be compelled to serve their country on the battlefield under the leadership of new officers with practically no conception of their duties and responsibilities."¹¹ Efforts to improve the quality of junior leaders in the 1920s and 1930s later bore fruit in World War II. In fact, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall wrote in 1941,

⁹ D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, Vol I. 1880-1941 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 264-265, 270-271, 275., Geoffrey Perret, *A Country Made By War* (New York: Random House, 1989), 351-352.

¹⁰ *National Defense Act of 1916, with Amendments to July 1924*, 21-28., Michael S. Neiberg, *Making Citizen Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 22-34.

¹¹ John T. Carlton and John F. Slinkman, *The ROA Story* (Washington D.C.: Reserve Officer Association 1982), 20.

“without these [reserve] officers the successful rapid expansion of our Army . . . would have been impossible.”¹²

Ultimately, the World War II officer corps would be composed mainly of ROTC and Officer Candidate School (OCS) graduates, with the majority coming from the candidate schools. Unlike their World War One predecessors, these officers were commissioned after having proven themselves as competent enlisted men for a minimum of four-to-six months and after having demonstrated tactical and leadership abilities during their 17 week long OCS course. Most of these OCS officers went on to attend an additional two-to-three month branch advanced or company commander’s course for more intensive technical, tactical, and leadership training.¹³ Although the World War II army also faced some of the same systemic problems with its mass mobilization (frequent levying of personnel from existing units for cadres or replacements, shortages of qualified instructors, etc) as had the World War I generation, it did a much better job of developing competent officers than did the army of the Great War.¹⁴

Unlike their Great War predecessors, the officers and NCOs of World War II were generally given that most precious of wartime resources to hone their skills and leadership abilities: time. The peacetime draft of 1940, and the fact that most of the army’s units did not see combat until after the late fall of 1942, allowed for a degree of training and experience that would have been the envy of the doughboys. The Louisiana Maneuvers and other large-scale exercises allowed the army to work out some of the tactical and logistical bugs that had so

¹² Quoted in Gene M. Lyons and John W. Massland, “The Origins of the ROTC,” *Military Affairs* Vol. XXIII, no. 1 (Spring 1959), 12.

¹³ Robert R. Palmer, et al., *The Army Ground Forces: The Procurement and Training of Combat Ground Troops* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 93-95, 264-273, 335-345.

¹⁴ Leonard L. Lerwill, ed., *The Personnel Replacement System in the United States Army* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 319-328., Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 11-15, 20-21, 24-28, 40-46. Mansoor, Geoffrey Perret and Michael Doubler have all recently re-examined the American army’s combat effectiveness in World War II. All of these historians have noted the army’s ability to select and develop good junior leaders to have an ability to adapt to changing battlefield situations.

plagued the army of 1918. Furthermore, developments in tactical communications and increases in infantry, armor, artillery, and air mobile firepower during the interwar period and World War II, also eased many of the problems that had been faced by junior combat leaders in World War I. Although the army's system for procuring and training leaders and units in World War II was far from perfect, on the whole, it was a vast improvement over what had been done in the Great War.

Unfortunately, "lessons learned" are sometimes forgotten in the heat of a new crisis. The army in Vietnam faced problems with junior leadership that often resembled those of the Great War. Vietnam also showed that the army's problems with properly selecting and training junior leaders were not just limited to wars requiring mass mobilization. Lyndon Johnson's refusal to expand mobilization for the war and the army's own flawed individual rotation policy created a constant drain of junior leaders from American combat units. As an institution, the army was ill-prepared to fight a protracted attritional war without a call-out of the National Guard and Reserves. As such, it had to scramble to adapt its system for identifying, training, and developing junior combat leaders. The growing unpopularity of the war complicated this task and further hindered army efforts to recruit suitable men for officers and NCOs. As with their Great War predecessors, officers in Vietnam resorted to rapidly promoting privates and specialists to the NCO ranks. These so-called "shake and bake sergeants" lacked specialized training for their jobs and usually owed their positions to their length of time "in country."

The officer situation was equally bad. The widespread granting of educational deferments, the declining enrollment in ROTC programs, and the incessant demand for platoon leaders forced the army to turn to the OCS to obtain officers.¹⁵ By 1967 over half of the army's lieutenants were the products of a four-month long OCS course. Given the strains of "supply and

¹⁵ Neiberg, 112-150.

demand” the army could not afford to be very selective in the officers that it commissioned. As was the case with the World War I OTCs, the press of time forced the OCS programs to skimp on leadership and tactical training. Thus the OCS programs often commissioned officers lacking the leadership ability and competency to lead soldiers in combat.

Lieutenant William Calley, the infamous leader of the My Lai Massacre, was one such officer. Calley, a college dropout and unemployed misanthrope, left OCS for Vietnam in 1968 ill-trained and unfit for the position that he held. But, in a larger sense, it was the army’s failure to properly screen, train, and develop its junior leaders that was one of the root causes of its morale and discipline problems from 1969 to the end of the war. As one colonel noted at the time, “we have at least two or three thousand Calleys in the army just waiting for the next calamity.”¹⁶ While the American armies of the Great War and Vietnam had difficulty fielding competent junior leaders for different reasons, the end result was the same. In both cases, ill-trained and unprepared leaders caused unnecessary casualties and eroded unit morale and cohesion.

For all of its problems, in the end, the AEF accomplished its strategic goal. At a time when its allies were experiencing a flagging of their strength and morale, the promise of fresh, numerous and young Americans gave heart and hope to the Allied cause. The Allies’ combined weight of numbers and materiel slowly but surely ground the German army under the millstone of attritional war. Unfortunately, the AEF was an army of 1914 thrust into 1918. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, in the clashes of 1914, the European powers were all “green alike,” and thus

¹⁶ Quoted in, Samuel Lipsman and Edward Doyle, *Fighting for Time* (Boston: Boston Publishing Company, 1983), 112, and 96-101. For the army’s difficulty in procuring and retaining qualified officers and NCOs also see, Perret, 530-532., Shelby Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S. Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 271-272.

developed at a pace that gave none a marked or lasting advantage when it came to the evolution of tactical thought or weapons. From the time that the first American soldier stepped foot in France, the AEF suffered from having to play catch-up with armies that had been matriculating at the school of hard knocks for four years. Although few American soldiers at the time would have agreed, the AEF was in fact fortunate that the German Army it faced in the summer and fall of 1918 was not the German Army of 1916, or the army of 1917, or even the army of March 1918. While the Germans remained tough school masters for the Americans to the very end of the war, the doughboys' rather unskillful and costly attacks still wore down the strength and willpower of their Teutonic foes.¹⁷ Sadly, the difficulty that the AEF's junior infantry officers and NCOs had in learning how to control their units while attempting to combine firepower with maneuver had caused the Americans a degree of casualties that outweighed the tactical gains that resulted from the sacrifice. Despite the AEF's blunt and costly approach to war, the doughboys and their leaders still bled Woodrow Wilson to a seat at the peace table.

Unfortunately, the AEF's success at the strategic level was a cold consolation to those who slogged out the war in the army's small units. In 1924, Laurence Stallings and Maxwell Anderson wrote and produced the play *What Price Glory?*. In the play, Stallings, who had served as a captain in World War I, told the story of Captain Flagg and his infantry company's experience during the war. Although the story was about Marines, it still realistically depicted some of the leadership challenges faced by the war's army officers. In one scene, an American soldier confronts Flagg after the officer's costly attacks failed to breach a German stronghold in a French town. The distraught young doughboy demands of his officer,

¹⁷ Donald Scott Stephenson, "Frontschwene and Revolution: The Role of Front-Line Soldiers in the German Revolution of 1918," PhD. Dissertation, University of Kansas, 2007. Stephenson provides an excellent examination of the condition of the German Army in the last months of the war.

What price glory now? Why in God's name can't we go home? Who gives a damn about this lousy, stinking little town but the poor French bastards that live here?... I won't have the platoon asking me every minute of the livelong night when they are going to be relieved...Flagg, I tell you, you can shoot me, but I won't stand for it...I'll take 'em out to-night and kill you if you get in my way.¹⁸

These words reflect the soldier's exasperation with a leader unable to deal with a battlefield situation or cognizant of the limitations of his soldiers. The fictional Captain Flagg had risen too far too fast and was unprepared for the weighty responsibilities of command in battle. The ranks of the AEF's junior leaders were chocked full of "Captain Flaggs"; brave officers who wanted to do right and well, yet somehow fell short of their goals. In the end, it was the army's failure to properly train and develop these junior officers that prevented the AEF from truly achieving its full tactical and operational potential. In the end, the "price of glory" was all too often the American dead and wounded who littered the AEF's battlefields from Seicheprey to the Meuse-Argonne due to shortcomings in the leadership and tactical skills of their officers and NCOs.

¹⁸ Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings, "What Price Glory?," {1924} in *Twenty-Five Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre*, ed. John Gassner (New York: Crown Publishers, 1952), 78. Laurence Stallings served as infantry captain in the Marine Brigade of the 2nd Division. His leg was amputated as a result of a serious wound he suffered at Belleau Wood. His nonfiction work *The Doughboys* (1963) remains one of the best histories of the AEF.

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Appendix A: NG and NA Infantry officers sent to Blois for reclassification by Month and DIV

	JAN 1918	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	1-11 NOV	ALL AFTER 11 NOV
1 DIV			1x LT					1x LT	2x LT			1x LT
2 DIV	1x LT						1x CPT	1x LT		1x MAJ	1x LT	8x LT
3 DIV					1x CPT	1x CPT 2x LT	1x LT					6x LT
4 DIV								2x LT	2x LT	1x LT	1x LT	1x MAJ 3x LT
5 DIV								2x LT			2x CPT	4x CPT 3x LT
6 DIV										4x LT		1x LT
7 DIV								1x CPT	1x LT			3x LT

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	1-11 Nov/	After
26 DIV	1x LT	1x LT	2x LT		2x MAJ	2x MAJ 2x CPT 2x LT	4x CPT	2x MAJ 1x CPT 2x LT		3x LT	2x MAJ	1x MAJ 2x LT
27 DIV						1x CPT		2x CPT	2x MAJ 1x CPT	1x MAJ 1x LT		1x LT
28 DIV							3x CPT 2x LT	1x CPT 2x LT				1x MAJ 1x CPT
29 DIV							1x MAJ 1x LT	3x MAJ 2x CPT 8x LT	1x MAJ 4x CPT 3x LT	2x MAJ 1x LT	2x CPT	1x CPT 1x LT
30 DIV							2x LT	2x MAJ 6x CPT 7x LT	2x CPT	1x LT		
32 DIV				1x LT	1x MAJ	2x LT	2x MAJ	2x MAJ 1x LT	1x LT	1x MAJ 2x CPT 1x LT	1x MAJ 1x CPT	1x MAJ 3x CPT 1x LT
33 DIV								2x CPT 1x LT	2x CPT 1x LT	2x MAJ 2x CPT		1x CPT

	JAN 1918	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	1-11 NOV	ALL AFTER 11NOV
35 DIV							1x CPT	5x CPT 4x LT	1x CPT	1x MAJ		
36 DIV								2x MAJ 9x CPT 12x LT	2x CPT 2x LT	2x MAJ 1x CPT	1x CPT 1x LT	
37 DIV							1x LT	2x MAJ 3x CPT 14x LT	1x MAJ 5x CPT 5x LT	6x MAJ 4x CPT 9x LT		1x CPT 2x LT
42 DIV		1x CPT 1x LT	2x LT	1x CPT		1x LT		1x MAJ 1x LT	2x CPT			1x CPT 1x LT
77 DIV					1x CPT		1x MAJ 1x LT	1x MAJ 2x CPT	1x CPT 1x LT	1x MAJ		2x LT
78 DIV							1x LT	1x CPT 3x LT		1x CPT 2x LT		
79 DIV								1x CPT 1x LT		3x CPT 5x LT		1x MAJ
80 DIV							1x LT	1x MAJ 4x CPT 5x LT	1x MAJ 1x LT		1x MAJ	1x CPT

	JAN 1918	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	1-11 NOV	ALL AFTER 11 NOV
81 DIV										1x MAJ 1x CPT 2x LT		
82 DIV							1x CPT			1x MAJ		1x CPT
88 DIV									1x LT			1x LT
89 DIV								1x MAJ 3x CPT	1x MAJ 2x LT	4x LT		1x CPT 3x LT
90 DIV								1x MAJ 1x CPT	3x CPT	1x MAJ	1x LT	
91 DIV								2x MAJ 3x CPT 2x LT		2x MAJ 2x CPT 6x LT		
92 DIV							1x LT	1x CPT 1x LT	2x LT	2x CPT 5x LT	2x CPT 6x LT	4x CPT 4x LT
93 DIV						1x MAJ 1x LT	2x CPT 2x LT	1x CPT 3x LT	1x MAJ 1x CPT 1x LT	1x CPT 1x LT		4x CPT 2x LT

Appendix B: NG and NA Infantry officers sent to Blois for reclassification by DIV and REGT

1 DIVISION – arrived in France June 1917 (All arrival dates based on Div HQ and Infantry Regts)

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
16 IN				2
18 IN				
26 IN				1
28 IN			1	1
1 MG				
2 MG				
3 MG				

2 DIVISION- arrived in France Sept-Oct 1917

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
9 IN			2	8
23 IN	1			
5 USMC				
6 USMC				
4 MG				1
5 MG				
6 MG (USMC)				
Other		2 Am Tn-1		

3 DIVISION- arrived in France March-April 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
4 IN				
7 IN			1	1
30 IN		1		
38 IN			4	2
7 MG				
8 MG				
9 MG		1		
Other			Div QM-1 3 Sup Tn- 1	Unk-1

4 DIVISION- arrived in France April-May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
39 IN			3	5
47 IN	1			
58 IN				
59 IN			1	
10 MG				
11 MG				
12 MG				
Other		4 Am Tn-1		

5 DIVISION- arrived in France April-May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
6 IN				
11 IN		2	1	
60 IN		3	2	1
61 IN				
13 MG				
14 MG			1	
15 MG				
Other		Unk-1	Unk-1	

6 DIVISION – arrived in France July 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
51 IN				
52 IN				
53 IN			1	
54 IN			2	1
16 MG				
17 MG				
18 MG				
Other			6 Sig Bn-1 Unk-1	

7 DIVISION- arrived in France August 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
34 IN		1		
55 IN				1
56 IN				2
64 IN				
18 MG				
20 MG				
21 MG				1

26 Division- arrives in France Sept-Oct 1917

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
101 IN	2	1	2	
102 IN	1	1	1	2
103 IN	2	1	1	
104 IN	3	3	3	1
101 MG			1	1
102 MG				2
103 MG				
Other	101 Am Tn-1 Unk-1	Unk-1	102 Am Tn-1	

27 Division- arrives in France May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
105 IN		1		
106 IN	1	2	2	
107 IN				
108 IN	2			
104 MG				
105 MG				
106 MG				
Other		Unk-1	Unk-1	

28 Division- arrives in France May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
109 IN		2		
110 IN				
111 IN		1	1	
112 IN				
107 MG			2	
108 MG				
109 MG		2	1	
Other	56 Bde-1			

29 Division- arrives in France June 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
113 IN	3	4	2	1
114 IN	2	2	4	2
115 IN				
116 IN	2			
110 MG			1	2
111 MG		1		1
112 MG		1		
		104 Am Tn-1	Unk-1	

30 Division- arrives in France May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
117 IN		1	2	
118 IN	1			1
119 IN		1	1	2
120 IN	1	5	2	1
113 MG				
114 MG				
115 MG		1		

32 Division- arrives in France February 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
125 IN	3			
126 IN	1	1	1	
127 IN	1	2	1	1
128 IN	2	3	1	
119 MG			1	
120 MG				1
121 MG				
Other	Unk- 1			107 Am Tn -1

33 Division - arrives in France May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
129 IN		3		
130 IN	1	2		1
131 IN	1			
132 IN		2	1	
122 MG		1		
123 MG				
124 MG				
Other	Unk-1	Div MP-1		

35 Division - arrives in France May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
137 IN			2	
138 IN	1	1		
139 IN		3		
140 IN		3	2	
128 MG				
129 MG				
130 MG				

36 Division - arrives in France July 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
141 IN		2		
142 IN	1	2	1	1
143 IN		3	7	
144 IN	1	3		
131 MG				1
132 MG		1	2	2
133 MG		1		1
Other	Unk-2	Unk-1	Unk-1	

37 Division- arrives in France June-July 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
145 IN	2	2	10	3
146 IN	3	1	1	
147 IN	1	4	3	3
148 IN	1	2	1	1
134 MG				
135 MG		1	3	4
136 MG	1			1
Other	Unk-1	Unk-1 112 Am Tn-2	Unk-3	Unk-2

41 Division (Designated I Corp Depot Division and later 1 Depot Division, 8 Dec 1917- 23 Jan 1919)

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
161 IN				
162 IN				
163 IN				
164 IN		1		
146 MG		1		
147 MG				
148 MG				
Other	1 st Depot Div-1		1 st Depot Div-2	

42 Division- arrives in France November 1917

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
165 IN		1	1	4
166 IN	1			
167 IN		1		
168 IN				
149 MG		1		1
150 MG				
151 MG		1		
Other		Unk-2		

77 Division- arrives in France April 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
305 IN				
306 IN		1		
307 IN	1			
308 IN	2	2		
304 MG				
305 MG				1
306 MG		1		
Other			302 Am Tn- 1 302 Sup Tn- 1	Unk-1

78 Division- arrives in France June 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
309 IN				
310 IN		1		
311 IN				
312 IN			1	1
307 MG				
308 MG				
309 MG			1	
Other		303 Am Tn- 1	Unk- 1 303 Am Tn- 1	303 Am Tn- 1

79 Division- arrives in France July 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
313 IN		2	1	1
314 IN		1	2	1
315 IN		1		1
316 IN	1			
310 MG				
311 MG				
312 MG				
Other	304 Am Tn- 1			

80 Division- arrives in France May-June 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
317 IN			2	
318 IN			1	
319 IN		1		2
320 IN		3	1	1
313 MG				
314 MG	1			
315 MG		1		1
Other	Unk-2			

81 Division- arrives in France August 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
321 IN				
322 IN	1	1	1	1
323 IN				
324 IN				
316 MG				
317 MG				
318 MG				

82 Division- arrives in France May 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
325 IN				
326 IN				
327 IN		1		
328 IN				
319 MG				
320 MG				
321 MG				
	307 MP- 1	Unk- 1		

83 Division (Designated 2 Depot Division 27 June-31 Dec 1918) - arrives in France June 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
329 IN			2	1
330 IN			1	
331 IN				
332 IN (Sent to Italy 25 July 1918)	1	1	1	
322 MG				
323 MG				
324 MG				
	Unk-1		2 nd Depot Div- 1	

88 Division- arrives in France August 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
349 IN				2
350 IN				
351 IN				
352 IN				
337 MG				
338 MG				
339 MG				

89 Division- arrives in France June 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
353 IN			1	
354 IN			2	3
355 IN	1			
356 IN		1		
340 MG				
341 MG		1	1	2
342 MG		1		
	Unk-1	Unk-1		

90 Division- arrives in France June-July 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
357 IN		1		
358 IN		2		
359 IN	1	1		
360 IN				
343 MG				
344 MG				
345 MG	1			
Other				315 Am Tn- 1

91 Division- arrives in France July 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
361 IN			1	1
362 IN	2			1
363 IN		1		1
364 IN	1	3	1	
346 MG			2	
347 MG				
348 MG			1	
Other	181 In Bde- 1	Div MP- 1	316 Sup Tn-1	

92 Division- arrives in France June 1918

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
365 IN		1		1
366 IN			1	
367 IN		4	4	1
368 IN		1	6	3
349 MG				
350 MG			1	1
351 MG		3		1

93 Division (Never organized as a division and lacked machine gun, artillery, and support battalions. As the infantry regiments units arrived in France between Dec 1917 and April 1918, the AEF GHQ assigned them to the French Army.

Unit / Rank	MAJOR	CAPTAIN	1 LT	2 LT
369 IN Arrived Dec 1917	1			
370 IN Arrived Apr 1918	1	6	3	3
371 IN Arrived Apr 1918		1		
372 IN Arrived Apr 1918		4	3	3

Divisions not shown:

8th Division- arrived in France in early Nov. 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

31st Division- ordered skeletonized 17 Oct. 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

34th Division- ordered skeletonized 17 Oct. 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

38th Division- ordered skeletonized 17 Oct. 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

39th Division- designated 5th Depot Div on 14 Aug. 1918, was skeletonized on 29 Oct and sent no officers to Blois

40th Division- designated 6th Depot Div on 26 July 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

76th Division- designated 3rd Depot Div on 3 Aug 1918. One captain from the 301st Ammunition Train sent to Blois.

84th Division- ordered skeletonized 3 Oct 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

85th Division- designated 4th Depot Div 28 July 1918 and sent no officers to Blois

86th Division- ordered skeletonized 3 Oct 1918. One captain from the residual cadre of the 342nd Infantry sent to Blois.

87th Division- assigned to SOS as labor/construction troops on 6 Sept 1918. One captain from the 347th Infantry sent to Blois while serving in the SOS.

National Guard and National Army/Reserve infantry officers sent to the Reclassification Center at Blois from non-divisional organizations and units...

Majors:

1st Base Section 1- 1

Captains:

813 Pioneer Infantry- 1
895 Pioneer Infantry-1
War Risk Insurance Section- 1
1st Base Section MP- 1
2nd Base Section- 1
1st Motor Mechanic BN- 1
VII Corps MP- 1
304 Motor Supply Train- 1
IV Corps- 1
IV Corps MP- 1

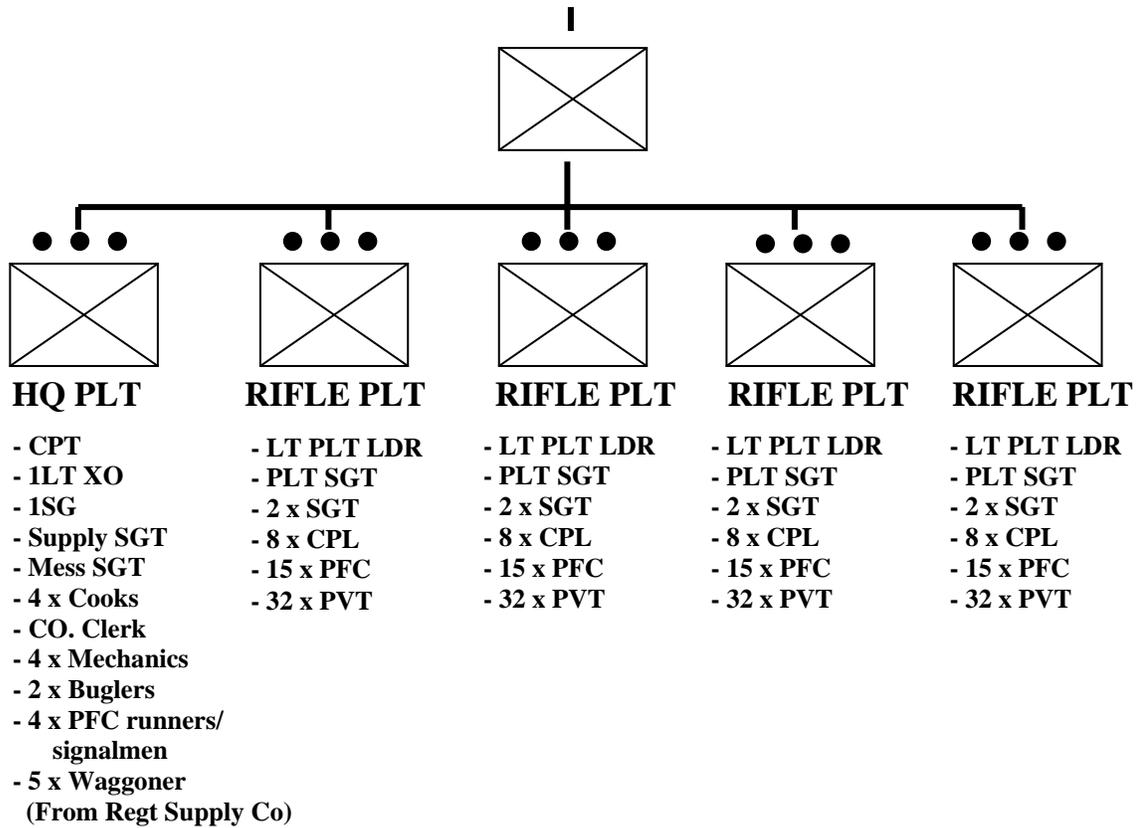
First Lieutenants:

Unknown-1
Paris Depot QM- 1
II Corps Graves Registration- 1
AEF Camouflage Section- 1
Infantry Specialist Course- 1
Base Section G2- 1

Second Lieutenants:

Unknown-2
Remount Depot- 1
AEF Liaison Detachment- 1
AEF Postal Service- 1
5th Base Section- 1
Paris Base Censor Section- 1
Air Service- 1
3rd Army MP-1
1st Replacement - 1

Appendix C- 1: Infantry Rifle Company from 26 June 1918 AEF Table of Organization

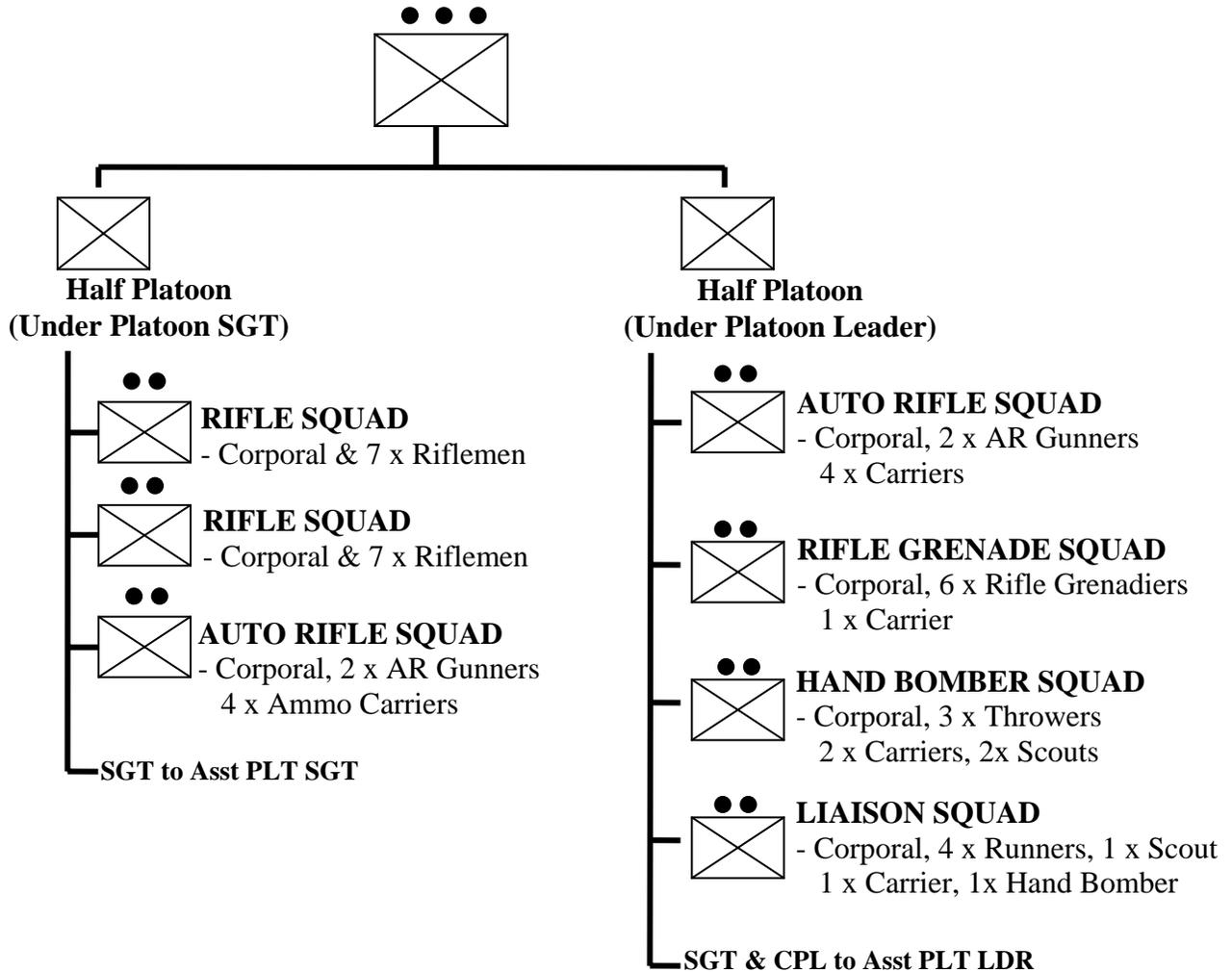


TOTAL STRENGTH & EQUIPMENT
6 Officers, 48 NCOs, 207 Soldiers
 - 219 x Rifles
 - 16 x Automatic Rifles
 - 30 x Rifle Grenade Dischargers*
 * Includes 6 spares held in company supply

Information in table drawn from War Department, *U. S. Army in the World War*, Vol. 1, *Organization*, 347.

Appendix C-2: Infantry Rifle Platoon, 26 June 1918 AEF TO&E- Formed as Half-Platoons

Platoon Leader commands the Platoon and directs a Half-Platoon

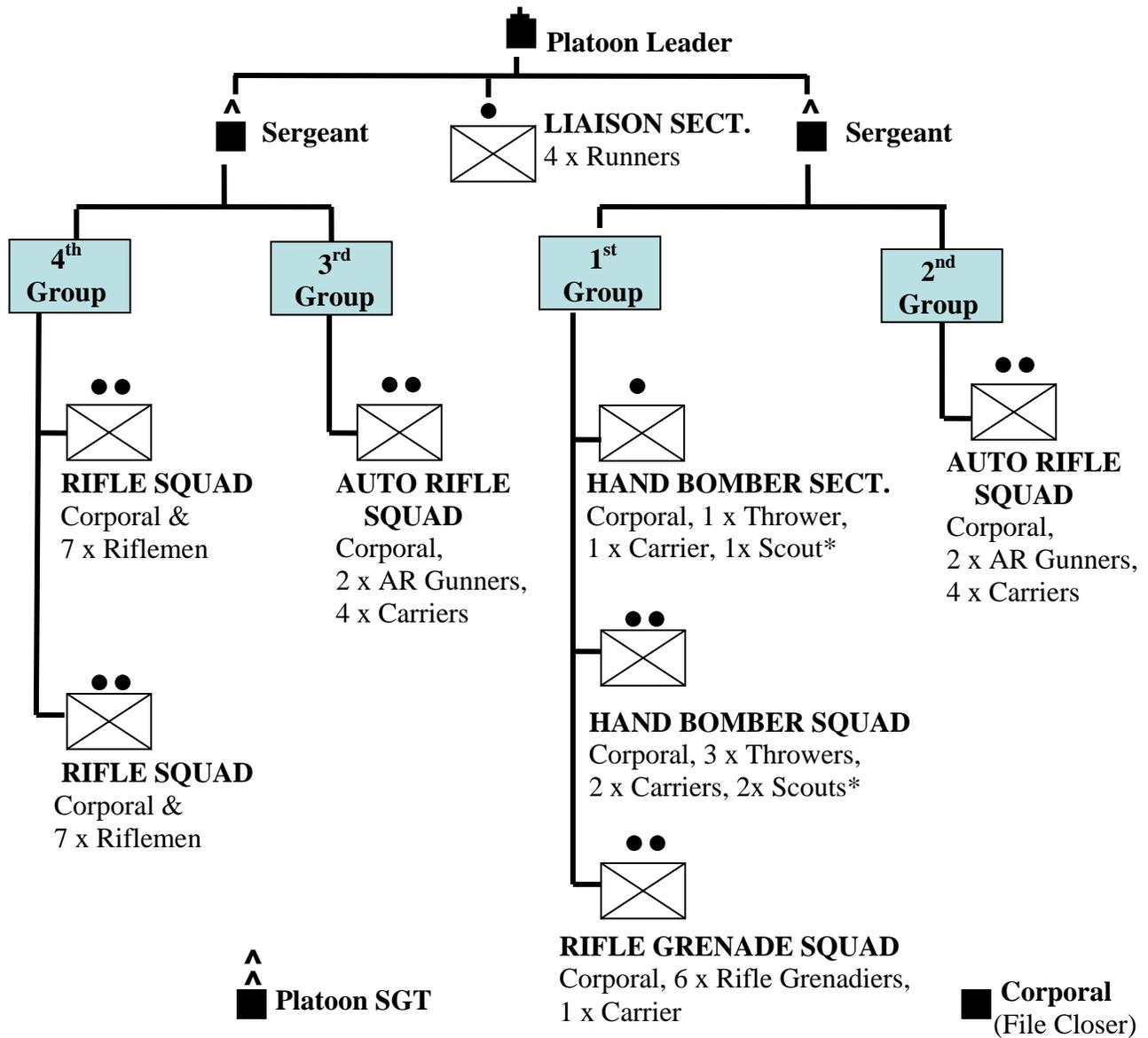


TOTAL MEN & EQUIPMENT

1x Lieutenant , 3x Sergeants, 8x Corporals, 47x Privates
- 48 x Rifles
- 4 x Automatic Rifles
- 6 x Rifle Grenade Dischargers

From Plate 1, "Supplement to Instructions," *Offensive Combat of Small Units*

Appendix C-3: Infantry Rifle Platoon, 26 June 1918 AEF TO&E- Formed as Combat Groups



TOTAL MEN & EQUIPMENT

1x Lieutenant , 3x Sergeants, 8x Corporals, 47x Privates

- 48 x Rifles
- 4 x Automatic Rifles
- 6 x Rifle Grenade Dischargers

* Scouts would lead each combat group in combat.
 From Plates 1, 4, and 5, "Supplement to Instructions," *Offensive Combat of Small Units*.