

WORLD WAR I

Infiltration Tactics

Action

- Brief but intense artillery bombardment, that includes gas and smoke shell, to disrupt/suppress defenses and obscure the assault.
- Stosstruppen (small teams or squads of thrusttroops each equipped with a light machinegun and mortar) thrust forward close behind rolling artillery barrage, without any "effort to maintain a uniform rate of advance or align formations." Instead, as many irregular swarms spaced in breadth and echeloned in depth, they flow into any gaps or weaknesses they can find in order to drive deep into adversary rear.
- Kampfgruppen (small battlegroups consisting of infantry, machinegunners, mortar teams, artillery observers and field engineers) follow-up to cave-in exposed flanks and mop-up isolated centers of resistance from flank and rear.
- Reserves and stronger follow-on echelons move through newly created breaches to maintain momentum and exploit success, as well as attack flanks and rear to widen penetration and consolidate gains against counterattack.

Idea

- Hurl strength (echeloned in great depth) thru weaknesses along (many) paths of least resistance to gain the opportunity for breakthrough and envelopment.

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Note

- Such classic descriptions, often repeated, create in listeners or readers minds vivid images of the infiltration technique.

Critique

- Unfortunately this depiction does not address how and why infiltration fire and movement schemes work.

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Key Points

- Fire at all levels by artillery, mortars, and machineguns is exploited to hold adversary attention and pin him down hence --
- Fire together with gas and smoke (as well as fog and mist) represents an immediate and ominous threat to capture adversary attention, force heads down and dramatically obscure view, thereby cloak infiltrators movements.
- Irregular character of moving swarms (as opposed to well defined line abreast formations) permit infiltrators to blend against irregular and changing terrain features as they push forward.
- Taken together, the captured attention, obscured view, and indistinct, irregular swarms deny adversary the opportunity to picture what is taking place.

Result

- Infiltration teams appear to suddenly loom-up out of nowhere to blow thru, around, and behind disoriented defenders.

TACTICAL MANEUVER

- Fire and Movement:*

-- Fire can be used to:

- Blow adversary away;
- Disrupt his operations;
- Suppress his fires;
- Tie-up his efforts;
- Obscure his observations;
- Cloak our movements or actions.

-- Movement can be used to:

- Change fire position;
- Penetrate adversary system;
- Seize communications;
- Disrupt his movements;
- Envelop forces and resources;
- Occupy terrain.

- Tactical Maneuver

Can be viewed as any combination of these fire and movement elements.

*You can use your FIRE to create the opportunity to MOVE; your MOVEMENT can be used to reposition your FIRE assets. TACTICAL MANEUVER encompasses all these sorts of things.

Intended as a backup chart

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Essence

- Cloud/distort signature and improve mobility to avoid fire yet focus effort to penetrate, shatter, and envelop adversary system.

Intent

- Gain Tactical success and expand it into a Grand Tactical success.

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- Result
 - Immediate success at platoon/company/battalion level coupled with ultimate failure at corps/army level.
- Why?
 - Ludendorff violated his own concept by his tendency to use strategic reserves to reinforce against hardened resistance -- hence, at the strategic level, he seduced himself into supporting failure not success.
 - Exhaustion of combat teams leading the assault.
 - Logistics too inflexible to support rapid/fluid penetration and deeper exploitation of breakthrough.
 - Communications too immobile to allow command to quickly identify and reinforce successful advances.
 - Elastic Defense, when used, (as developed by the Germans and practiced by Petain) that emphasizes artillery and flank attacks against penetrations when they stretch beyond their own artillery support.