

# Truppenführung

## Part I

- I. Order of Battle and Task Organization**
- II. Command**
- III. Reconnaissance**
- IV. Security**
- V. Marches**
- VI. Attack**
- VII. Pursuit**
- VIII. The Defensive**
- IX. Disengagement and Withdrawal**
- X. Delaying Action**
- XI. Combat under Special Conditions**
- XII. Quartering**
- XIII. Cavalry**

## Part II

- XIV. Armored Combat Vehicles**
- XV. Air Forces**
- XVI. Air Defense Units**
- XVII. Communications**
- XVIII. Chemical Warfare**
- XIX. Smoke**
- XX. Obstacles**
- XXI. Armored Trains**
- XXII. Transport**
- XXIII. Logistical Support**

ISBN 978-0-8117-3552-0



**STACKPOLE  
BOOKS**

[www.stackpolebooks.com](http://www.stackpolebooks.com)

\$21.95 U.S.  
Higher in Canada  
Printed in U.S.A.

# INTRODUCTION

---

✓ 1. War is an art, a free and creative activity founded on scientific principles. It makes the very highest demands on the human personality.

✓ 2. The conduct of war is subject to continual development. New weapons dictate ever-changing forms. Their appearance must be anticipated and their influence evaluated. Then they must be placed into service quickly.

3. Combat situations are of an unlimited variety. They change frequently and suddenly and can seldom be assessed in advance. Incalculable elements often have a decisive influence. One's own will is pitted against the independent will of the enemy.\* Friction (*Reibung*)† and errors are daily occurrences.

4. Lessons in the conduct of war cannot be exhaustively compiled in the form of regulations. The principles enunciated must be applied in accordance with the situation.

Simple actions, logically carried out, will lead most surely to the objective.

5. War subjects the individual to the most severe tests of his spiritual and physical endurance. For this reason, character counts more in war than does intellect.†† Many who distinguish themselves on the battlefield remain unnoticed in peacetime.

✓ 6. The command of an army and its subordinate units requires leaders capable of judgement, with clear vision and foresight, and the ability to make independent and decisive decisions and carry them out unwaveringly

---

\*In *On War*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Clausewitz noted, "War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."

†Clausewitz introduced the concept of friction on military operations in *On War*, Book 1, Chapter 7. "Friction is the only concept that more or less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper."

††In explaining the selection criteria for the *Kriegsakademie*, Hartness wrote, "And here let me emphasize that strength of character, will, is the attribute most highly valued" [*Hartness Report*, p. 3].

and positively. Such leaders must be impervious to the changes in the fortunes of war and possess full awareness of the high degree of responsibility placed on their shoulders.

✓ 7. An officer is in every sense a leader and a teacher. In addition to his knowledge of men and his sense of justice, he must be distinguished by superior knowledge and experience, by moral excellence, by self-discipline, and by high courage.

✓ 8. The example and personal bearing of officers and other soldiers who are responsible for leadership has a decisive effect on the troops. The officer, who in the face of the enemy displays coolness, decisiveness, and courage, carries his troops with him. He also must win their affections and earn their trust through his understanding of their feelings, their way of thinking, and through his selfless care for them.

Mutual trust is the surest foundation for discipline in times of need and danger.

9. Every leader in every situation must exert himself totally and not avoid responsibility. Willingness to accept responsibility is the most important quality of a leader. It should not, however, be based upon individualism without consideration of the whole, nor used as a justification for failure to carry out orders where seeming to know better may affect obedience. Independence of spirit must not become arbitrariness. By contrast, independence of action within acceptable boundaries is the key to great success.

10. The decisive factor, despite technology and weaponry, is the value of the individual soldier. The wider his experience in combat, the greater his importance.

The emptiness of the battlefield (*die Leere des Gefechtsfelds*) requires soldiers who can think and act independently, who can make calculated, decisive, and daring use of every situation, and who understand that victory depends on each individual.

Training, physical fitness, selflessness, determination, self-confidence, and daring equip a man to master the most difficult situations.

11. The caliber of a leader and of the men determines the combat power (*Kampfkraft*) of a unit, which is augmented by the quantity, care, and maintenance of their weapons and equipment.

Superior combat power can compensate for inferior numbers. The greater this quality, the greater the force and mobility in war.

Superior leadership and superior unit readiness are guaranteed conditions for victory.

✓ 12. Leaders must live with their troops and share in their dangers and deprivations, their joys and sorrows. Only thus can they acquire a first-hand knowledge of the combat capabilities and needs of their soldiers.

The individual is a part of the whole and is not only responsible for himself alone, but also for his comrades. He who is capable of more than

the others, who can achieve more, must guide and lead the inexperienced and the weak.

Out of such a foundation grows genuine comradeship, which is as important between the leaders and the men as it is among the men themselves.

13. Units that are only superficially held together, not bonded by long training and discipline, easily fail in moments of grave danger and under the pressure of unexpected events. From the very beginning of a war, therefore, great importance must be attached to creating and maintaining inner strength and to the discipline and training of units.

It is the duty of every officer to act immediately and with any means at his disposal—even the most severe—against a breakdown in discipline or acts of mutiny, looting, panic, or other negative influences.

Discipline is the backbone of an army, and its maintenance is in the best interests of all.

14. The readiness and strength of units must be capable of meeting the highest demands in decisive moments. The commander who needlessly tires his unit jeopardizes success and is responsible for the consequences.

The forces deployed in battle must be committed in proportion to the objective. Orders that are impossible to execute will reduce confidence in the leadership and damage morale.

15. Every man, from the youngest soldier upward, must be required at all times and in all situations to commit his whole mental, spiritual, and physical strength. Only in this way will the full force of a unit be brought to bear in decisive action. Only thus will men develop, who will in the hour of danger maintain their courage and decisiveness and carry their weaker comrades with them to achieve deeds of daring.

*The first criterion in war remains decisive action. Everyone, from the highest commander down to the youngest soldier, must constantly be aware that inaction and neglect incriminate him more severely than any error in the choice of means.\**

---

\*Emphasis in the original.

## II

# COMMAND

---

✓ 27. Great success requires boldness and daring, but good judgement must take precedence.

✓ 28. One can never be strong enough at the decisive point. The commander who tries to be secure everywhere, or who wastes his forces on secondary missions, acts contrary to this basic rule.\*

The weaker force can become the stronger at the decisive point through speed, mobility, great march capability, and the use of darkness, terrain, surprise, and deception.

29. Space and time must be correctly calculated. Favorable situations must be quickly recognized and decisively exploited. Every advantage over the enemy increases one's own freedom of action.

30. Rapidity of action can be facilitated or hindered by the route and by terrain conditions. The season, the weather, and the condition of the troops are also important influences.

31. The duration of operational and tactical engagements cannot always be estimated in advance. Even successful combat often develops slowly. Frequently the success of a day's fighting can only be determined on the following day.

32. Surprise is a decisive factor in success. Actions based on surprise are only successful if the enemy is given no time to take effective counter measures.†

The enemy also will attempt surprise. This must be taken into account.

33. Knowledge of the enemy's methods of leadership and combat can

---

\*In *On War*, Book 3, Chapter 11, Clausewitz noted, "The best strategy is *to be very strong*, first in general, then at the decisive point. Apart from the effort needed to create military strength, which does not always emanate from the general, there is no higher and simpler law of strategy than that of *keeping one's forces concentrated*. No force should ever be detached from the main body unless the need is definite and *urgent*."

†In *On War*, Book 3, Chapter 9, Clausewitz noted, "The two factors that produce surprise are secrecy and speed."

influence one's own decision and support mission execution, but should not lead to preconceptions.

34. Account must be taken of conditions that facilitate the conduct of war in one's own country, but make it more difficult in enemy territory.

35. In periods of strenuous combat, heavy demands exhaust units quickly. They must promptly be provided with replacement officers, men, horses, weapons, and any necessary equipment.

36. The mission and the situation define the course of action (*Grundlage für die Führung*).

The mission dictates the objective. The responsible commander must not lose sight of it. A mission that consists of multiple tasks can easily distract attention from the main objective.

Uncertainty always will be present. It rarely is possible to obtain exact information on the enemy situation. Clarification of the enemy situation is an obvious necessity, but waiting for information in a tense situation is seldom the sign of strong leadership—more often of weakness.\*

37. The mission (*Auftrag*) and the situation (*Lage*) lead to the decision (*Entschluss*) of the course of action. If the assigned mission no longer suffices as the basis for action, or if it is overtaken by events, the course of action must take these circumstances into account. An officer who changes a mission or does not carry it out must report his actions immediately, and he assumes responsibility for the consequences. He always must act within the overall framework of the situation.

The course of action must designate a clear objective that will be pursued with all determination. It must be executed with the full will of the commander. Victory often is won by the stronger will.

Once a course of action has been initiated it must not be abandoned without overriding reason. In the changing situations of combat, however, inflexibly clinging to a course of action can lead to failure. The art of leadership consists of the timely recognition of circumstances and of the moment when a new decision is required.†

The commander must allow his subordinates freedom of action, so long as it does not adversely affect his overall intent (*Absicht*). He may not,

---

\*Wedemeyer noted: "Better a faulty plan or decision permeated with boldness, daring, and decisiveness, than a perfect plan enmeshed in uncertainty." [*Wedemeyer Report*, p. 18]

†Prior to World War I, it was standard practice in the Germany Army for higher commanders to assign missions solely for the purpose of developing a situation, and then change assigned missions accordingly in mid-action. Based on World War I experience, changes in assigned missions became the exception. [*Hartness Report*, p. 27]

however, surrender to his subordinates decisions for which he alone is responsible.

38. An engagement (*Gefecht*)—which when it involves larger units is called a battle (*Schlacht*)—is the forceful armed struggle arising from an encounter with the enemy.

39. The attack is launched on the enemy in order to defeat him. The attacker has the initiative. Superior fighting qualities of leaders and units provide the best advantage in an attack. Numerical superiority does not always guarantee victory.

In special situations the objective of an attack may be limited.

The possibility that an attack might fail should never justify limitations on the leadership effort with which it is executed.\*

40. Pursuit (*Verfolgung*) guarantees the culmination of victory.† The purpose is to annihilate the enemy†† when such action was not possible in the preceding engagement. Only a relentless pursuit, one that does not allow the enemy the chance to regroup and make a stand, will prevent additional friendly casualties in follow-on actions.

41. The defense waits for the enemy. The aim is to prescribe the terrain of battle.

The defense is adopted when one's own inferiority leaves no other choice, or for other reasons when it seems advantageous.

Its purpose is to break up the enemy's attack. In such cases the attack is met on selected terrain, which is held to the end.

The commander may set a time limit on the defense.

A decisive victory can only be achieved through judicious resumption of the offense.

A delaying action has the objective of inflicting the highest possible loss on the enemy, while at the same time avoiding decisive engagement. To accomplish this it is necessary to disengage from the enemy at the appropriate time, and to trade space for time.

42. An engagement is broken off to terminate a battle, or to yield a

\*“The German sees the solution of his tactical problem in the attack, for it is through the attack that the unclarified situation can be best clarified, and a basis reached upon which the commander can best estimate his future action. It may be said almost without danger of contradiction that in a nebulous situation the average German commander will attack.” [*Hartness Report*, p. 27]

†Clausewitz discussed the culminating point of victory in Book 7, Chapter 22 of *On War*.

††Many post-World War II military historians have criticized German doctrine as focusing too exclusively on attempting to annihilate the enemy with a single decisive battle. While such an approach generally works at the tactical level, it is the antithesis of sequencing, which is the heart of the operational level of war.

position so as to continue the engagement from a more favorable position. In the latter case, a delaying action often is employed.

43. The withdrawal is employed to avoid further combat. The fight must be broken off and security must be provided for the withdrawing units.

44. The changing situation of combat often requires transition from one type of engagement to another.

The transition from attack to defense can occur when holding a position that has been taken, or when necessary, under enemy pressure. Units are reorganized and disposable forces are withdrawn from the line.

In the transition from the defensive to the attack, strong forces must be assembled at the decisive points in a timely manner.

45. Decision is avoided in a delaying action. The objective is to gain time, to keep the enemy occupied, and to confuse him.

Deception can be achieved through feint attacks (*Scheingefechte*).

46. The width of battle zone depends on the intent, on the disposition of adjacent support, and on the terrain. It is influenced by the breadth and conduct of the enemy and on whether or not one or both flanks are open. The width of zones and sectors is different. Greater width can be allowed in favorable terrain, especially if it had been fortified. It also can be used through the employment of battle groups. Great width can bring the effect of weapons into full play at an early stage, but it also can bring one's own forces to a premature standstill. Too great a width produces the danger of penetration. If the width is too small, especially if there is not enough depth, there is a danger of being outflanked or enveloped. An attack having width superior to the enemy's can result in great success.

Organization in depth ensures the commander's freedom of movement in uncertain situations. Initially, it is always appropriate in the face of a quicker or more mobile opponent. The follow-through of a battle usually requires depth of formation at the decisive point.

The commander must distribute his forces before contact with the enemy, and in battle distribute them according to the width and depth required by the situation.

47. During the course of a battle the commander influences the action most directly by the increase and concentration of fire and the commitment of his reserve.

Keeping ammunition supplies mobile will allow him, at the decisive point and at the decisive moment, to increase his firepower to the maximum and to continue to influence the course of the fighting, even if the reserve is already committed.

Assessing the strength of the reserve, constituting the reserve, and



committing the reserve requires careful consideration. Mobility increases the opportunities for its commitment.

Allowing units already committed to the battle to weaken, while protecting the reserve, often leads to failure and increases the danger of defeat in detail. There are instances where it is better not to retain a reserve. Combined arms units are particularly effective as reserves because they are capable of independent action. One should avoid dispersing such units or any piecemeal commitment of the reserve.

The position of the reserve depends on its intended use and on the terrain. The reserve must be committed in a timely manner. Usually it is positioned behind a wing. The distance and interval from the wing increase with the strength of the reserve.

Holding back the reserve protects it and makes it easier to commit in different directions. Holding the reserve farther forward accelerates its commitment. The surer the commander becomes about its commitment and the more imminent this becomes, the farther forward he brings it. An operational reserve must be held well back as long as its commitment is not required.

By committing his reserve, the commander plays his last card regarding the shock elements at his disposal. He must not be led into doing this too early. On the other hand, he must not hesitate if committing the reserve means achieving a decision or if the battlefield situation requires it.

Once the reserve is committed, the rapid formation of a new reserve is critically important.

## **Communications, Dispatches, Reports, and Situation Maps**

48. Communications and reports concerning the enemy provide one of the most important bases for the estimate of the situation, for the commander's decision, and for its execution.

The initial elements of intelligence about the enemy usually are obtained from general knowledge of enemy methods or from special information sources. Knowledge of the enemy takes on a more solid form through aerial and ground reconnaissance, through establishing contact with the enemy and keeping him under constant observation, and through information secured by special means. Apart from accurate information and reports, one also must reckon with incomplete and inaccurate information. Drawing on the entirety of information from different sources, the commander will be able to reach the appropriate conclusions. Apparently unimportant details take on significance in the context of other information.