



Two young officers, exhausted from studying Frederick's military instructions and plans. (A. Menzel, *Illustration zu die Werke Friedrichs des Grossen*, Berlin, 1886.)

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Frederick the Great
on the
Art of War

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IV

The Army on Campaign

No understanding of eighteenth-century warfare is possible without some knowledge of the problems involved in feeding and moving armies. Frederick wrote a special treatise on the subject, "Des marches d'armée, et de ce qu'il faut observer à cet égard," the most important sections of which are reproduced below, along with observations from his other military writings to illustrate how the army lived in camp and in the field.

THE WARS I have conducted have provided the opportunity for deep reflection about the principles of the great art that has raised or destroyed so many kingdoms. . . . I have therefore considered it necessary to pass along my observations to you. After me, you have the greatest interest in the command; to you, by this time, an indication of my thoughts must suffice; finally, you in my absence have to act according to my principles.

In this work I have blended my own observations with those I found in the writings of the greatest generals, and the resulting synthesis I have used for the training of our troops.

I write only for my officers. I speak only of that which is applicable for the Prussian service, and I have no other enemy in mind than our neighbors [the Austrians]—the two words unfortunately have come to mean the same thing. I hope that my generals will become more convinced through reading this work than through anything that I could say to them orally, and that they recognize that the discipline of our army is the

foundation for the fame and maintenance of our state. If they have this point of view, then they will be more diligent about maintaining on every occasion the regulations among the troops, in full force and vigor, so that it cannot be said of us that we let the weapon of our fame become blunt in our hands. . . .

With all of the following observations I am assuming that my rules for the army are virtually the catechism of my officers, and in this work I treat only that which concerns the army commander and is the greatest and most difficult in the art of war.¹

WHAT MUST BE OBSERVED FOR THE MARCHES OF AN ARMY

YOU WISH TO KNOW what principles must be followed to regulate properly the marches of armies. This is an extensive subject and one that consequently requires knowledge of an infinite number of details, depending upon the objective of the march, the nature of the country where war is waged, the relative position of the two armies, and the season when the operations are undertaken. There are marches by cantonments,* marches by columns, night marches, day marches, movements of the entire army, or movements of detached corps. Each situation requires different considerations.

The essential thing for the proper regulation of marches is to have as extensive and accurate knowledge of the country as possible, because the clever man, the skillful warrior, makes his dispositions according to the terrain. He must adapt his dispositions to the locale, because the terrain will never be bent to any dispositions unsuited to it. This knowledge therefore is the basis of everything that one can undertake in war: without it, chance decides everything. . . .

MARCHES BY CANTONMENTS

After war is declared between belligerent powers each assembles its troops into armies, and this union is made by marches of cantonments. Troops that move after a long rest are ruined if

required to make too difficult marches at first. In the initial days they must cover at most only about fifteen miles.² Form the columns from troops of the different provinces and have them march on as broad a front as possible so that each battalion or regiment can have its own village or small town in which to bed down for the night. You must know the size of the villages in order to billet the troops according to the individual houses. If these marches occur in the spring or before the harvest, the soldiers can be billeted in barns, in which case a modest size village can contain a battalion without any difficulty. After three days on the march one day of rest must be taken.

As soon as you enter enemy country you must form an advance guard that camps and precedes the army by a day's march, in order to send back news about everything and, in the event the enemy is assembled, to give you time to reunite your forces. If you are far from the enemy, you can continue to be cantoned, but you must draw the troops closer together and canton them by lines and in order of battle. When you are within three days' march from the enemy you must camp according to the rules and march in the accustomed order.

You take too great a risk in separating your forces. The enemy could capitalize on this negligence, fall on your troops, seize your quarters, and perhaps, if he acts energetically, defeat you in detail and from the beginning of the campaign force you to take flight ignominiously. Thus you would lose your affairs entirely.

WHAT MUST BE OBSERVED IN MARCHES MADE IN ADVANCE OF THE ARMY

The general must have a fixed plan of his operations. He will therefore pick an advantageous spot where he wishes to advance to make his camp. It is necessary then to know all the roads in order to regulate the columns. The number of columns should never exceed the number of roads leading to the new camp, because you create confusion and scarcely save time

whenever one column is forced to leave a road and crowd the tail of another.

Avoid especially marching through villages; no column should pass there unless marshes absolutely prevent you from taking other roads, or unless the bridges that you must cross are to be found there. If it is level country the army will be able to march in eight columns, two of cavalry on the wings and six of infantry in the center.

The army must always be preceded by a considerable advance guard, which is stronger in cavalry if the terrain is smooth, and comprised predominantly of infantry if the ground is rugged. This advance guard must precede the army by a mile or two so that it can notify it of everything that goes on, and investigate and clear the terrain through which the columns must pass.

The baggage must be distributed equally behind the six infantry columns, covered by the rear guard following the cavalry columns and by a body of troops left behind to follow the equipment.

Such are the ordinary rules that are generally followed in the great movements of armies.

Marches made in the vicinity of the enemy are the most difficult and demand the most precaution because, in assuming that an active opponent should wish to take advantage of your decampment,* it is necessary to foresee everything so as not to be beaten on the march. . . .

FLANK MARCHES

Before undertaking a march by either enemy flank you must send officers of the quartermaster's corps with small patrols to reconnoiter the places and roads as well as the camp that you wish to occupy. This will help to determine the number of columns you will use and especially the posts that you will have occupied on the march, assuming that the enemy moves to attack your army. It is on these elements, very accurately detailed, that the disposition must be made.

You will send the heavy baggage to the rear, ten miles be-

hind the camp that you will want to take. This baggage must march in as many columns as the terrain will permit. Let us assume, now, that you should want to occupy a position toward the enemy's right.

On the evening before the march, just as soon as it is dark, you must send detachments to occupy the most important places—posts that could be taken on the march in the event you are attacked. These detachments must be formed there according to the rules, and the places should be abandoned only when the army has passed by. They will therefore all be placed upon the right, between the enemy and the columns for which they constitute the rear guard, if everything occurs peacefully.

No matter how many roads there are, the army will march in two lines only, by the left. All other roads lying to the left will be for the light baggage and the pack horses, which are placed on the side in order to get rid of this encumbrance, which could lead to confusion if the army should be forced to fight.

If the enemy wishes to engage in battle, the first line [i.e. the right-hand column] moves at first sight to occupy the post held by the covering detachments and is followed by the second line. The entire army is formed, with the cavalry on the wings where you can either leave them or have them form a third line, according to events. The detached corps form the reserves or are placed on the flanks of the army or behind the second line on either side, wherever you judge that you will need them. As soon as you are in this position you have nothing to fear from the enemy and you might possibly even win a victory over him. If nothing interrupts the march, these detached corps then form the rear guard, the troops enter their camp, and the heavy baggage is brought up in safety. Manifestly the same procedure must be observed if you march to the left of the enemy.

RETREATS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY

If you want to withdraw before the enemy this is what you must observe. Get rid of all the heavy baggage beforehand by sending it to the rear, in the camp that you want to

take. This must be done at an early hour in order to clear the road for the columns so that the troops find no obstacles in their march. If you fear that the enemy wishes to engage in a rear-guard action, you must make as many columns as possible so that the army leaves its camp *en masse* and by its swiftness prevents the enemy from catching up. Even when two columns should be forced to reunite at some point during the course of the march you should not worry, for the main thing is to get away quickly to avoid any engagement.

The army will form a large rear guard which will be so located that it can cover the march of the columns. You can even decamp before daybreak, so that at dawn even the rear guard is already far from camp. Some battalions and squadrons of the tail end of the columns must be designated to form behind defiles, on heights, or near woods to protect the rear guard and safeguard its retreat. These precautions slow up the march considerably, but they do guarantee safety. If the Prince of Orange had followed this method when he retreated from Seneffe [1674], he would not have been beaten by the Prince de Condé. This teaches us never to deviate from the rules and to follow them rigorously on all occasions, to be sure not to be taken unawares.

If the enemy makes a vigorous attack upon the rear guard the army must halt and if necessary even take a position to support and pull back this rear guard, if the latter finds itself in need of such assistance. If nothing troubles it, the army pursues its way and goes into camp at the indicated place.

MARCHES TO ATTACK AN ENEMY

The first thing you must reflect upon is the enemy position. The disposition of the attack must have been made after having reconnoitered the location of the enemy's camp and his defensive arrangements. The order of the march must be based upon the plan that you have to form your attacks, and upon the wing with which you propose to act and that which you wish to refuse. The heavy baggage must have been sent to

to the rear beforehand in order to get rid of this encumbrance, and the light baggage must follow the army covered by a light escort if it is not practical to leave it in camp, which would be preferable.

If the enemy camp is so situated that to attack it requires a flank march, your army must form three columns only, one comprising the first line, another, the second, and the third, the reserve. The pack horses form the fourth and fifth columns.

If you must advance straight ahead against the spot you desire to attack, you should have a strong advance guard that precedes the army by a mile or two. You will form yourself into as many columns as there are roads leading to the places where you wish to form your line of battle. The adjutants, having laid out the distances, could take up the positions themselves according to the disposition that the general will have given for the attack.

If you defeat the enemy you do not need prepared roads for the pursuit: you have only to follow by the roads that his flight indicates. If you are repulsed, having attacked with only one wing, you must cover the retreat with the other wing, which is still intact and thus serves as a rear guard, and you can return to your former camp by the same routes that you came.³

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MARCH

IN . . . CANTONMENTS a noncommissioned officer or at least a lance-corporal must be placed in charge of each house where soldiers are billeted, and the following day, when the battalion marches, it must leave all of its lodgings simultaneously. This is a good precaution against desertion.

On the march, the battalion commander will take care to go neither too fast nor too slow with the head of the column, so that the battalion is always together and in good order. . . . When the army encamps he will continually look after the punctuality of the guards and sentinels, . . . the cleanliness of the camp, and the cuisine of the soldier so that nothing is lacking. . . .

He must never leave his troops when the army is marching, and if the heat on the road is excessive, he can mix a little vinegar with water to give to the soldier, which will do him no harm as long as he stays on the move. But if the soldier should drink during a halt this could be fatal, and the officer must prevent it rigorously.⁴

THE . . . COLUMNS WILL BE LED by the chasseurs who have reconnoitered the roads. A detachment of carpenters with wagons laden with beams, joists, and planks will march at the head of each column to throw bridges over the small rivers.

The heads of the columns must take care not to outstrip each other during the march, and the generals should make sure that the battalions march closed up and without leaving any intervals. Officers commanding the divisions will carefully preserve their distances.

When passing through a defile⁵ the heads of the columns will march slowly, or will halt to give the column time to get back to the proper distances. . . . When you cross defiles, woods, or mountains, you should divide your columns, with infantry at the head of each, and cavalry to bring up the rear.

If there is a plain in the middle of your line of march, then assign the center to the cavalry, and the infantry forming the two outside columns will cross through the woods. But this applies only to a march that is not made too near the enemy. If the enemy is near at hand you will be content to place some grenadier battalions at the head of each cavalry column so as not to break up your battle order.⁶

ARTILLERY GIVES the most trouble on the march. When you are near the enemy you have no choice but to drag the heavy guns along with their assigned brigades. If you march at a distance from the enemy, then you must detach some battalions to protect the artillery, especially in the event of a forced march. For nothing tires the infantry as much as having to make continuous halts in order to extricate guns stuck fast in the deep ruts or to raise up a gun carriage that had tipped over.

We have followed the practice of using servants attached to the train, incapable men who cannot be relied upon, to look after the horses. In the last war these men were placed under inspectors. Old officers no longer capable of further service in the field led the brigades and they had old noncommissioned officers as subalterns. This measure is absolutely necessary if the machine is to run, for if the horses die through the negligence of the train servants, then it is good-by artillery.⁷

SUPPLIES AND PROVISIONS

IN ADDITION to the regimental wagons that carry an eight-day supply of bread, the commissariat has wagons fixed to carry provisions enough for a month. . . . The wagons should be drawn by horses. We have also made use of oxen, but to our disadvantage. The wagon masters must take very good care of their horses and it is up to the general of the army to keep the situation well in hand, because through the loss of these horses the number of wagons will be diminished, and with that the quantity of provisions. Moreover, unless these horses are properly nourished they do not have strength enough to bear up under the necessary fatigue.

¶ In addition to the provision wagons, the army always carries iron ovens, the number of which, being insufficient, has been increased. At each stop those must be set up to bake bread; on all expeditions you must be provided with enough bread or biscuit to last ten days. The latter is very good, but our soldiers like biscuits only in soup and do not know how to use them to best advantage.

When you march in enemy territory, make a depot of flour in an occupied town near the army. During the campaign of 1745 our depot originally was at Neustadt, then at Jaromircz, and finally at Trautenau. Had we advanced further we could not have found a safe depot beyond Pardubitz.

I have had hand mills made for each company, which will find them exceedingly useful. You will use soldiers for these

mills who will carry the grain to the depot and receive bread in return. With this meal you will be able not only to save your magazines but also to subsist for a long time in camps which otherwise you would be forced to leave. Moreover, you will not find it necessary to make as many convoys, and fewer escorts will be needed.

I must enlarge a little on the subject of convoys. The strength of escorts depends upon the fear that you have of the enemy. Infantry detachments are sent into the towns through which the convoys pass in order to give them a *point d'appui*.^{*} Often large detachments to cover the convoys are sent out, as was the case in Bohemia. In all treacherous countries you must use infantry to escort the convoys and have these joined by a few hussars to reconnoiter the march and provide information of places where the enemy could be lying in ambush. Even on the plain I prefer infantry to cavalry as escorts and I have been well satisfied with them. For the minutiae of escort duty I refer you to my military regulations. An army commander can never take too many precautions to safeguard his convoys. One good rule for covering convoys is to send troops in front to occupy the defiles through which the convoy will pass and to push the escort a league⁸ in front, on the side of the enemy. This maneuver will secure the convoy and mask it.

OF SUTLERS,^{*} BEER, AND BRANDY

If you contemplate some enterprise against the enemy, the commissary must scrape together all of the beer and brandy that can be found *en route* so that the army does not lack either, at least during the first days. As soon as the army enters enemy territory all of the brewers and distillers, especially of brandy, must be seized so that the soldier does not lack a drink, which he cannot do without. As for the sutlers, these must be protected, especially in a country where the inhabitants have fled and abandoned their houses so that articles of food can not be had even for payment. At such times one is justified in not treating the peasants with too much kindness.

Sutlers and the soldiers' wives must be sent in search of cattle and all kinds of vegetables. But at the same time you must be sure that the provisions are sold at a reasonable price so that the soldier is in a position to pay for them and the sutler makes an honest profit. I should add here that the soldier is issued two pounds of bread daily and two pounds of meat per week gratis while he is on campaign. This is an indulgence which the poor fellow richly deserves, especially in Bohemia, where one wages war in a desert. When you have convoys brought to the army, have them followed by several herds of cattle reserved for the nourishment of the troops.⁹

IN WAR THE MAGAZINES last only for the first year. As soon as hostilities commence one must think of additional supplies. Then it is up to the commissariat to make arrangements for laying out provisions. In Silesia we draw grain partly from Poland, and the Elbe army is supplied from Saxony. The managers of the field war-commissariats must keep a strong hold on their subordinates, for they are the greatest swindlers around. Even with the eyes of Argus one cannot discover their tricks. They have a hundred ways to conceal their thefts. . . . They must therefore be watched over by spies, soldiers, and civil officials.¹⁰

DRY AND GREEN FORAGE

BY DRY FORAGE we mean oats, barley, hay, chopped straw, and the like. Have it transported to the magazine. The oats must be neither musty nor mouldy, otherwise the horses will develop mange and farcy and become so weakened that they are not serviceable even at the start of the campaign. Chopped straw, which is given to the horses because it is the custom, only fills the belly—it provides no nourishment.

The primary reason for having forage collected and carried to the magazine is to get the jump on the enemy at the start of the campaign or when you wish to make some distant enterprise. But rarely can an army venture far from its magazines while it is forced to give dry forage to its horses, because the

transport is too cumbersome. An entire province often cannot furnish the requisite number of vehicles, and generally such vehicles are not used in an offensive war unless there are no rivers that one can utilize in transporting forage. During the Silesian campaign all of my cavalry lived on dry forage, but then we only marched from Strehla to Schweidnitz, where there was a magazine, and thence to Grottkau, where we were in the vicinity of the Brier and the Oder.

When you have worked out a plan for a winter campaign, have enough hay to last five days tied in bundles for the cavalry to carry on their horses. If you wish to wage war in Bohemia or Moravia you must wait until spring, otherwise you will ruin all of your cavalry. Forage in the fields for grass and wheat, and when the harvest is in you can forage in the villages.

When you are encamped where you plan to remain for some time, have a reconnaissance made of the forage and after evaluating the amount, make the distribution for the number of days you wish to remain.

Large foraging parties are always escorted by a body of cavalry, the size of which is determined by the proximity and the potential threat of the enemy. Forages are made by the entire army or by the wings.

Foragers are always assembled on the road you want to take, sometimes on the flanks and occasionally at the head or rear of the army. Hussars form the advance guard. If the country is flat the foragers are followed by cavalry; if it is uneven the infantry marches first. The advance guard will precede the march of a fourth of the foragers, followed by a detachment of the escort which is always part infantry and part cavalry, then another segment of foragers, after which comes a detachment of troops, and then the others in the same order. An hussar troop will close the march of the rear guard and bring up the rear of the entire column. In all escorts the infantry will be accompanied by its artillery and the foragers will always be armed with their carbines and swords.

When you arrive at the place for forage, form a chain and

place the infantry near the villages, behind the hedges and sunken roads [*les chemins creux*]. You will mix cavalry and infantry to form a reserve, which you will place in the center to give help wherever the enemy should attempt to penetrate. The hussars will skirmish with the enemy to keep them occupied and away from the forage. When the encircling chain of troops is placed, divide the field among the foragers by regiments. Great care must be taken by the commanding officers that the trusses be made large and be well bound together.

When the horses are laden, the foragers are to return to camp by troops protected by small escorts, and when they have all departed, the troops of the chain are to assemble and form the rear guard, followed by the hussars.

The rules for foraging in villages are nearly the same except for the single difference that the infantry will be placed around the village and the cavalry, to the rear on ground suitable for mounted action. Forage only in one village at a time, and then another, so that the troops forming the chain are not over-extended. . . .

When you occupy a camp near the enemy where you wish to remain for some time, attempt to seize the forage lying between your camp and that of the enemy. Then forage for five miles around the camp, beginning with the most distant fields and saving the nearest for the last. But if it is a temporary camp, forage in the camp and the immediate vicinity.

CAMPS

In order to know if you have made a good selection for your camp, see whether a slight movement on your part will force the enemy to make a more extensive one or if, after one march, he will find it necessary to make still more. Those which will involve the fewest movements will be the better camps. An army commander must choose his camp himself, since the success of his enterprises depends upon it and often it must become his battlefield.

Since there is much to be observed about this aspect of war,

I shall go into the subject in detail without saying how the troops ought to be placed in their camp, which I have already covered in previous military regulations. I will confine my remarks here to great measures and matters concerning the general himself.

All camps are designed to answer two purposes—the defensive and the offensive. Camps where an army assembles belong to the first category; here you are concerned only with the accommodations for the troops. They must be encamped in small bodies near the magazine but so situated that they can form a line of battle quickly. And since this kind of camp ordinarily is far from the enemy you have nothing to fear on that score. . . .

The first rule that must be observed in all camps . . . is to select ground where the troops are near woods and water. We Prussians intrench our camps as the Romans did earlier to avoid not only the enterprises of the enemy light troops, which are very numerous, but also to prevent desertion. For I have always observed that when our redans* are linked together by lines all around the camp there is less desertion than when this precaution is neglected. No matter how ridiculous this fact may appear, it is nonetheless true. One expects to find grass in a rest camp, which is designed to watch the enemy who has not yet made his movements so that you can be guided by his maneuvers. Since you seek only rest in such a camp, you pitch it so that the front is covered either by a river or a marsh, or any other means that renders the front of the camp unapproachable. The camp of Strehla was of this type. If the rivers and streams in front of the camp do not contain enough water, make dams in order to deepen them.

The army commander must never remain idle in such a camp where he has little to fear from the enemy. He can and must devote all of his attention to the soldiers and take advantage of this rest to re-establish discipline with vigor. He will make sure that the duty is performed strictly and according to the book, that the officers on guard are vigilant and sufficiently instructed in the duties of their post, and that the cav-

alry and infantry guards are placed according to the rules that I have issued.

The infantry in rest camps will perform their drills three times a week and the recruits, every day. On some occasions the entire corps will go through its maneuvers. The cavalry also must perform its evolutions if not engaged in foraging. The general will see to it that the young horses and new recruits are well trained. He must know the complete condition of each unit and he must also visit the horses, commending those officers who have taken care of them and severely rebuking those who have been negligent. For it is not to be believed that a large army runs itself. It contains many people who are indolent, idle, and slothful, and it is the business of the general to get them moving and force them to do their duty.

If this kind of rest camp is employed in the manner that I have indicated it will be of very great utility. Once order and uniformity have been re-established in the service with the aid of these camps, they will be retained throughout the entire campaign.

Camps are formed wherever you forage, no matter how near or far away the enemy. . . . Forage camps must be difficult of access when located in the vicinity of the enemy because foragers are regarded only as detachments that one sends against the enemy. Sometimes one-sixth of the army goes on forage; sometimes as much as one half. This gives the enemy a beautiful opportunity to attack you at your disadvantage, provided the favorable situation of your camp does not prevent him.

But even assuming that your post is excellent and that you obviously have nothing to fear from the enemy, there are other precautions that you must never neglect. You must carefully conceal the time and place you want to forage and not give the general who will command the foraging party his orders until very late on the preceding evening. You must send out as many detachments as possible, to be informed of any movements that the enemy may make, and unless very important considerations prevent you, you must forage on the same day as the enemy because then you risk less. But you must not depend too much

upon this, for the enemy, observing that you send foraging parties out at the same time as his own army, might well order a forage and then have his foragers recalled to fall upon you with his entire army.

¶ Intrench your camp when you want to besiege a fortress, defend a difficult passage, and compensate for weaknesses in the terrain with fortifications. . . . The rules that a general must follow in the construction of all intrenchments are to choose a position carefully and to take advantage of all swamps and rivers, inundations and abatis* by which you can render the extent of the intrenchments difficult. It would be better to make them too small rather than too large, for it is not intrenchments that stop the enemy, but the troops defending them. I would avoid making intrenchments if I could not line them with a chain of battalions and have an infantry reserve to move to any point needed. Abatis are good only while they are defended by infantry.

If you besiege a fortress and sit down behind the lines you must be abundantly provided with provisions. . . . But to cover a siege I would always prefer an army of observation to an intrenched camp, the reason being that experience has taught us that the old method of intrenchment is subject to caution. . . .

Bohemia is a country where a number of these camps are found. Often one is forced to occupy one against his will, because this kingdom by its very nature is a land of treachery.

I will repeat again that a general must guard against making any irreparable mistakes by the poor selection of his posts either by letting himself get trapped in a *cul-de-sac* or by occupying terrain that he can evacuate only by passing through a defile. For if his enemy is skillful he will be surrounded there, and since he will not be in condition to fight because of the nature of the ground, he will submit to the greatest indignity for a soldier—he will lay down arms without being able to defend himself.

In camps that are intended to protect a country, make your selection not on the strength of the place itself, but to strengthen vulnerable points where the enemy might break through. You

need not occupy all the openings through which the enemy can come upon you, but only those that lead to his objective, where you can maintain your position without having to fear him, and where perhaps you might cause him to grow uneasy. In brief, you must occupy the post that forces the enemy to make a lengthy detour and that places you in a position to defeat all his plans by small movements.

¶ The front and flanks of an offensive camp must be closed, for you can hope for nothing on the part of the troops if you do not take the precaution of covering the flanks, which constitute the weakest part of an army. Our camp at Czaslau before the battle of [Chotusitz in] 1742 had this fault. We always occupy the villages on our wings or in front of our camp with troops we can withdraw on the day of the battle. Since the houses in our villages and those of our neighbors are of wood and are poorly constructed, the troops would be lost if the enemy set fire to them. An exception to this rule occurs when there are stone houses in these villages or cemeteries which do not touch the wooden structures. But since it is our principle always to attack and not to hold ourselves on the defensive, you must never occupy such posts unless they are at the head or in front of the wings of your army, in which case they protect the attack of your troops and cause the enemy much annoyance during the battle.

It is still essential to have the small rivers and the marshes in front or on the flanks of your camp sounded for depth so that you do not take a false *point d'appui* in case the rivers are fordable and the marshes accessible. Villars was beaten at Malplaquet because he believed that the marsh on his right was impassable, and it proved to be only a dry meadow that our troops crossed to take him in flank. You must examine everything with your own eyes. . . .

HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR CAMP¹¹

The infantry regiments will guard the front of the first line. If there is a river the pickets must be placed on the bank. The pickets of the second line will guard the rear of the camp.

Pickets will be protected by redans which are joined to light intrenchments, by means of which your camp will be intrenched in the manner of the Romans. You will occupy the villages on the wings or those that defend other passages within a mile or two from there.

The cavalry guards will be posted according to regulations. Of eighty squadrons we usually have had only three hundred on watch except when we have been near the enemy, as before the battle of Hohenfriedberg, when we marched to Schweidnitz, and again when we marched into Lusatia on the way to Naumbourg.

These advance guards must be a mixed force of all kinds of soldiers—2,000 hussars, 1,500 dragoons, and 2,000 grenadiers, for example. Every time you send such a body forward, the general who commands it must be a resourceful man, and since he is detached not to fight but rather to inform, he must know how to select his camps carefully . . . and send out frequent patrols to obtain intelligence, so that he is informed at every moment of what is going on in the enemy camp. Meanwhile, the hussars that you have retained will make patrols in the rear and on the wings of the camp. Finally, you will take every precaution that can guard you against enemy enterprises. Should a considerable body of troops slip between you and your rear guard you must go to its support, for it means that the enemy has formed a plan against it.

To include everything that there is to say on this subject I would add that generals in cantonments will occupy only those villages which lie between the [first and second?] lines: then they have nothing to fear.

DETACHMENTS

It is an old rule of war, which I only repeat here, that he who divides his forces will be beaten in detail. If you desire to give battle, try to concentrate all of your forces—you can never make better use of them. This rule is so well founded that every general who has neglected it nearly always finds himself in trouble. I deserved to have been defeated at Sohr, if the skill

of my generals and the valor of my troops had not rescued me from this misfortune. You will ask, then, if detachments ought never to be made, to which I will reply: sometimes it is necessary, but always it is a very touchy maneuver which you must risk only for very important considerations. Detachments must be proportionate to the circumstances.

Never make detachments when you are acting offensively. If you are in open country and master of some fortified cities, make only those detachments necessary for the protection of your convoys. Whenever you wage war in Bohemia or Moravia you will be absolutely compelled to detach a corps to insure the arrival of provisions. The mountain chain that the convoys have to cross requires you to send troops that will remain encamped on the spot until you have provisions enough to last several months and have made yourself master of a fort in enemy territory, where you can establish your depot.

While these troops are detached you will occupy advantageous camps where you can await their return. I do not consider the advance guard in any sense a detachment, because it must be within range of the army and never venture too near the enemy.

When you are forced to adhere to the defensive you often find yourself reduced to the necessity of making detachments. Those which I had in Upper Silesia were safe enough there, since they kept themselves in the vicinity of fortified strongholds.

¶ Officers commanding detachments must be steady, fearless, and prudent. The commander gives them general instructions but it is for them to decide whether to advance on the enemy or to retire before him, as circumstances dictate. They must always fall back before superior forces, but they must also know how to take advantage of numbers when superiority is on their side. Sometimes they will withdraw at night upon the approach of the enemy, and when the latter believes that they have taken flight they will return briskly to the charge and repulse them. They must have absolute contempt for light troops.

An officer commanding a detachment must think first for

his own safety and then, if he is able, he can make plans against the enemy. If he wishes to sleep in peace he must never allow his enemy to sleep, but must always form enterprises against him. Then if he succeeds two or three times he will force the enemy to remain on the defensive. . . .

Defensive warfare naturally leads us to make detachments. Generals with little experience wish to save everything: those who are wise consider only the principal point, seeking to ward off large blows and patiently suffering minor misfortunes in order to avoid large ones. He who attempts to defend too much defends nothing.

The enemy's army is the most essential object to keep in view. You must divine its plans and oppose it with all of your forces. We abandoned Upper Silesia to the pillage of the Hungarians in 1745 in order to be able to resist more vigorously the plans of Prince Charles of Lorraine, and we made detachments only after we had defeated his army. Then General Nassau chased the Hungarians out of the whole of Upper Silesia in fifteen days.

There are generals who detach troops when they are about to attack the enemy in order to take him in the rear when the battle is in progress, but this is a very dangerous movement since these detachments ordinarily lose their way and arrive either too early or too late. The detachment made by Charles XII on the eve of the battle of Pultawa lost its way and his army was defeated.¹² Prince Eugene failed in his stroke when he wished to surprise Crémone: the Prince de Vaudement's detachment, which was designed to attack the gate of the Po, arrived too late.

You must never make detachments on the day of battle unless you are in a situation comparable to that of Turenne near Colmar, where he presented his first line to the army of the Elector Frederick William while waiting for his second to move through defiles to attack and rout the Prince's flanks. . . . You must detach troops only after a victory to protect your convoys, and even then the detachments must remain within a mile or two of the army.

I will end this subject by stating that detachments that weaken the army by as much as one-third or one-half are very dangerous and therefore to be condemned.

¶ One of the most essential duties of generals commanding armies or detachments is to prevent desertion. This is how it is done:

1. By not encamping too near a wood or forest unless military considerations require it.
2. By calling the roll several times daily.
3. By sending out frequent hussar patrols to scour the country around the camp.
4. By placing chasseurs in the wheat fields during the night and doubling the cavalry posts at dusk to strengthen the chain.
5. By not allowing the soldiers to wander about and taking care that the officers conduct their troops to water and forage in formation.
6. By punishing marauding severely, since this is the source of all disorders.
7. By not drawing in the guards placed in the villages on marching days until the troops are under arms.
8. By forbidding, under rigorous punishment, the soldier to leave his rank or division on days of march.
9. By avoiding night marches unless there is absolute necessity for them.
10. By sending hussar patrols forward on both flanks while the infantry pass through a woods.
11. By placing officers at both ends of a defile to force the soldiers to return to the ranks.
12. By concealing from the soldier any retrograde marches you are forced to make, or by making use of some specious pretext that would flatter him.
13. By always seeing to it that the necessary subsistence is not lacking, and taking care that the troops are supplied with bread, meat, brandy, beer, and the like.
14. By examining desertion as soon as it creeps into a regiment or company. Inquire whether the soldier has had his bounty, if he has been given the other customary indulgences, and if the captain is guilty of any misconduct. On no account,

however, should there be any relaxation of strict discipline. Perhaps you will say that the colonel will give it his attention, but this is not enough. In an army everything must lead to perfection, to make it appear that all that is done is the work of a single man.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

If you know the enemy's plans beforehand you will always be more than a match for him, even with inferior numbers. All generals who command armies try to procure this advantage, but there are few who succeed in it.

There are several kinds of spies: (1) ordinary people who become involved in this profession; (2) double spies; (3) spies of consequence; and (4) those whom you force into this unpleasant business.

Ordinary people like peasants, townsmen, and so forth, whom you send into the enemy camp can only be employed to discover the whereabouts of the enemy. Most of their reports are so incongruous and obscure that they only add to the uncertainties. . . . The statement of deserters for the most part is no better. The soldier has a good knowledge of what is happening in his regiment and where it is located, but nothing further. Hussars, being absent from the army most of the time and often detached in front, do not know on which side the army is encamped. In spite of these shortcomings you should have their reports written down: this is the only way to derive any advantage from them.

Double spies are used to convey false information to the enemy. There was an Italian at Schmiedeberg who spied for the Austrians. When we led him to believe that we would retreat to Breslau upon the approach of the enemy, he passed the word on to Prince Charles of Lorraine, who was taken in by it. For a long time Prince Eugene had the postmaster at Versailles in his pay. This wretch opened the letters and orders that the Court despatched to the generals and sent copies to Prince Eugene, who usually received them sooner than the French commanders. And Luxembourg won over a secretary

of the English King who informed him of everything that was going on. The King discovered him and turned the delicate affair to his advantage by forcing the traitor to write Luxembourg and let him know that the allied army would make a large forage the following day. The French were nearly caught by surprise at Steinkirke [1692] and would have been entirely defeated if they had not fought with extraordinary valor.

It would be very difficult to find such spies in a war against the Austrians, not that they are less susceptible to bribery than any other people, but because their light troops, covering the army like a cloud, let nobody pass without being searched. This has given me the idea that it would be necessary to win over some of their hussar officers, who could be contacted during those moments of informal truce which have become customary with hussars who have skirmished with each other.

When you want to send misleading information to the enemy, or want to obtain intelligence about him, send a trustworthy soldier into his camp and have him report what you wish the enemy to believe. You can also have him carry handbills encouraging the enemy soldiers to desert. Then the emissary returns to your camp by a roundabout route.

If you can find no other way to obtain intelligence in enemy territory, there is another expedient, albeit harsh and cruel. Select some rich citizen with a large estate, wife, and children, and assign him an individual disguised as a domestic servant who knows the local language. Then force the citizen to go to the enemy's camp taking this man with him as his valet or coachman, under the pretext of having to complain of injuries committed against him. Threaten him at the same time very severely that if he fails to return with his "valet" after remaining a long while in camp, his wife and children will be hacked to pieces and his houses burned. I was forced to resort to this method when we were encamped at Chlum, and it worked.

I will add further that you must be generous and even lavish in the payment of spies. A man who risks his neck for your service deserves to be well rewarded.

The best way to discover the enemy's intentions before the

opening of a campaign is to discover where he has established his provision depot. If the Austrians, for example, made their magazines at Olmütz you could be sure that they planned to attack Upper Silesia, and if they established a magazine at Königgrätz, the Schweidnitz area would be threatened. When the Saxons wanted to invade the Elector Mark their magazines would indicate the road that they would take because their depots were at Zittau, Görlitz, and Guben, which are on the way to Krossen. The first thing that you must learn, therefore, is on what side and in what places the enemy will establish his magazines. The French made a double line of magazines, some on the Meuse and others on the Escaut, to prevent the enemy from discovering their intentions.¹³

When the Austrians are encamped you will be able to predict the days that they plan to march because it is their custom to have the soldiers cook on marching days. So if you notice much smoke between five and eight o'clock in the morning, you can safely assume that they will make a movement that day. Whenever the Austrians intend to fight they recall all large detachments of light troops to the camp. When this comes to your attention you should be on your guard. If you attack a post of their Hungarian troops and they stand unshaken, you can be sure that their main army is within supporting distance.

It must be added that if your opponent is always the same general, you can learn his mannerisms and penetrate his intentions by the way he acts. . . .¹⁴

PLANNING THE MARCH

THE GENERAL'S PLAN must determine the dispositions to be used. When you are in your own country you have every possible assistance—detailed maps as well as inhabitants who can give you all of the necessary information. Then the task becomes easy. You have your order of battle. If you march by cantonments you merely follow this order and place each brigade as near as it is possible to assemble, and each line in its

order. If you are far from the enemy each regiment should have the route that it should take and the brigade commander should be given not only the route of his regiments but even the list of villages where he must be cantoned.

In enemy country this becomes more difficult. You do not always have sufficiently detailed maps of the country and your knowledge of the villages is imperfect. Thus to compensate for these shortcomings the advance guard must assemble the inhabitants of the towns, boroughs, and hamlets and send them to the quartermaster general, so that he rectifies by means of the information they provide the rough draft of the march dispositions that he has drawn up from a simple scanning of the map. If the army encamps, you must have a reconnaissance made of all roads leading to the camp as soon as you have entered it. If you remain there you must send quartermasters and draftsmen, with the aid of patrols, to sketch the roads and the situations, so that you never act blindly and can procure in advance all of the facts you will need. In this way you can even have the camps reconnoitered in advance and . . . with the help of these sketches, draw up in advance the position that you desire to take. . . . It is true that when the armies are close to each other reconnaissance becomes more difficult, for the enemy likewise has detachments and light troops in the field, which prevent you from moving to the places you wish to reconnoiter.

Often you must conceal your plan, which makes these small expeditions more difficult still. Then you have no choice but to put pressure on the enemy simultaneously at different points and even to have places indicated where you have no desire to go, in order to hide your plan. Since you chase the enemy from different posts, you must employ the best quartermasters at the place where you seriously intend to act, for the wise man will never leave to chance what he can carry off with prudence. Above all, a general must never move his army without being instructed about the place where he leads it and without knowing how he will safely get it to the ground where he wants to execute his plans.

**PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE IN ENEMY COUNTRY
IN PROCURING GUIDES**

We had need of guides in 1760, while crossing Lusatia to march on Silesia. We sought them in the Wendish villages and when they were brought before us they let on that they could not speak German, which greatly distressed us. But on being informed that they would be beaten they spoke German like parrots. You must therefore always be on your guard with respect to guides taken in enemy country. Far from trusting them, you must bind those who lead the troops, promising them payment if they take you by the best and shortest road to the place you wish to go but assuring them also that you will hang them without pardon should they lead you astray. Only with severity and force can you compel the Moravians and Bohemians to fulfill this kind of duty. In these provinces you find inhabitants in the towns, but the villages are deserted because the peasants escape with their cattle and best effects into the forests or mountain valleys and leave their houses empty.

Their desertion causes considerable difficulty, because where does one obtain guides if not from one village to another? You must then resort to the towns, attempt to find some messengers or, lacking these, some itinerant butchers who know the roads. You must, moreover, force the burgomasters to furnish guides under penalty of burning the towns if they do not acquit themselves well. You can even resort to gamekeepers who are in the service of the nobles, and who know the environs. But whoever serve as guides, you must bridle them by fear and threaten them with the most severe treatment if they perform their commission poorly.

There is still a surer way of procuring this kind of knowledge, and that is to engage during peacetime some of the inhabitants who have a complete knowledge of the country. Such agents are trustworthy and through them, when you enter this province, you can win over others who will assist you and

lighten the labor by providing knowledge of the details of the locality. As a rule maps are accurate enough for level ground, although it is often noted that they omit some village or hamlet. But the knowledge that matters most is that concerning woods, defiles, mountains, fordable streams or marshes, and river fords. It is of these, as well as the regions where there are only meadows or marshes, that one must have the best knowledge. In this connection it is necessary further to keep in mind the seasons of the year, which change the nature of the terrain through drought or rainfall, for it is often highly important for a general not to misinterpret his information.

The quartermasters must be cautioned, moreover, against evidence provided by common people. Sometimes even when they act in good faith they deceive you through ignorance, because they can only judge roads and places by the use they make of them and, lacking all knowledge of military affairs, they ignore the use that a soldier can make of terrain. In 1745, when the Prussian army wanted to withdraw into Silesia after the battle of Sohr, I had the people of Trautenau and Schatzlar brought before me for interrogation about the roads where I wanted to send my columns. They told me candidly that the roads were admirable and that they had no difficulty at all traveling there with their carts, and that many wagoners likewise used them. A few days later the army made this march. I was forced to make my dispositions for the retreat in these places. Our rear guard was vigorously attacked, but thanks to the precautions that I took, we lost nobody. These roads, from a military point of view, were very poor, but those who had given me the information understood nothing about it and . . . acted in good faith and without intention to deceive. You must therefore not rely upon the reports of ignorant civilians but, map in hand, consult them as to each type of terrain, note down what they say, and see from that if there is a way to sketch something on paper that gives a more accurate idea of the road than what is indicated on the map.¹⁵

*HOW TO CONDUCT YOURSELF
WITH THE CIVIL POPULATION*

WAR IS WAGED in three kinds of countries—your own, that of neutral powers, and enemy territory.

If my sole object were glory, I would never wage war anywhere except in my own country because of all of the advantages I would find there. For every man is a spy and the enemy cannot stir a foot without being betrayed. You can send out large detachments boldly and have them play all the tricks of which war is capable. If the enemy has just been defeated, each peasant becomes a soldier and proceeds to harass him. Frederick William the Elector had this experience after the battle of Fehrbellin, when the peasants killed more Swedes than had been lost in battle. For my part, I have seen the Silesian mountaineers bring us many Austrian fugitives after the battle of Hohenfriedberg.

When you wage war in a neutral country neither belligerent seems to have an advantage, and it then becomes a question of seeing which side will be able to win over the friendship and confidence of the inhabitants. To succeed in this you will observe the strictest discipline, prohibit marauding and all kinds of pillage, and punish such crimes with severity. Accuse the enemy of having pernicious plans against the country.

If the country is Protestant, like Saxony, play the role of protector of the Lutheran religion and seek to inspire fanaticism in the hearts of the lower classes, whose simplicity makes them easy prey. If the country is Catholic, speak only of tolerance, preach moderation, and blame the priests for all the causes of animosity between the Christian sects which, despite their arguments, are in basic agreement on the principal articles of faith.

As for the detachments you may wish to make, these must be based upon the support of the inhabitants. In our country you may run any risk, but in a neutral country you must be more circumspect—at least until you are assured of the inclina-

tion of all the peasants, or of the majority. In enemy country such as Bohemia and Moravia you must play it safe and for the reasons mentioned above, never risk making detachments. You must keep your eyes open. Most of the light troops will then be employed to escort convoys, for you must never expect to gain the affection of these people. In the Circle of Königrätz the Hussites are the only people who can be of any use to you. The lords there are traitors, although they would have it appear that they are kindly disposed toward us, and the same is true of the priests and magistrates. Their interest is tied to that of the house of Austria, and since this interest does not coincide with ours, you cannot, nor should you ever trust them.

The only subject left to discuss is fanaticism, that is, when you can arouse a nation on behalf of religious freedom and adroitly give the people the notion that they are oppressed by priests and lords. This may be said to be moving heaven and earth in your own interests.

Since the time these comments have been written the Empress Queen has considerably augmented the taxes in Bohemia and Moravia. You should take advantage of this fact to win over the affection of the subjects, especially if you lead them to believe that they will be treated with greater kindness if you were to conquer the country.¹⁶

MARCHES DURING THE SPRING AND FALL

TWO CONDITIONS force an army to shorten its marches during these seasons—bad roads rutted and filled with mud and fewer hours of daylight. An army can travel only fifteen miles a day. Dragging the artillery and baggage through the mire absorbs considerable time, and you would fatigue too many men and horses if you wanted to make larger stages. If you find that the best roads take you a little out of the way, you must choose them in preference to the direct route and distribute the artillery behind the column that traverses the firmest ground. If you should send out detachments at any distance

from the army . . . have the foresight not to give them twelve-pounder guns: six-pounders will be sufficient, and even so they will have plenty of trouble dragging them along with their ammunition and all the essential gear.

WINTER QUARTERS

When the season is so far advanced that you can no longer continue the campaign, you must think of giving rest to the troops in winter quarters. Begin by setting up the cordon that must cover these quarters, where you place the number of troops designated for this function.¹⁷

THE CHAINS ARE FORMED in three ways, either behind a river, or by means of posts defending mountains, or under the protection of some fortified cities. In the winter of 1741-42, my troops, who were in winter quarters in Bohemia, took up their position behind the Elbe; the outpost line that covered them began on the right at Brandeis and extended through Nimburg, Kolin, Podiebrad, and Pardubitz to Königgrätz. I should add here that you must never depend upon rivers, since they can be crossed at any point when frozen over. . . . Nor should you place your trust in mountains: remember always the proverb: "Wherever a goat can cross, so can a soldier." As for the chains of quarters supported by fortresses, I would refer you to Marshal Saxe's winter quarters. They are the best. But you do not have the freedom of choice: you must make the chain according to the terrain that you occupy.

I will lay it down as a maxim that you must never cling stubbornly to any particular town or post in winter quarters if the enemy actively opposes you at that point, for you must devote all of your attention to making winter quarters tranquil. You should take care to place hussars at every link in the chain to observe all enemy movements.

For a second maxim, I would add that the best method to distribute the regiments in their winter quarters is by brigade, so that they are always under the attention of the generals. Our service requires also that the regiments be placed with their own generals, if it is possible. But there are exceptions to this

rule, which will be made at the discretion of the commanding general.

Here now are the rules for the maintenance of the troops in winter quarters.¹⁸

WHEN THE ARMY moves into winter quarters, the first thought of the commander—if the campaign has lasted until the end of autumn—is to have all of his corps successively cleansed upon entering the quarters. Next he must have it bled, not all at once, but by companies, and as the surgeon general finds it necessary for the constitution of each soldier.

During the first days that the troops leave the tents and live indoors the commander will see to it that the windows are open so that the change between the raw air and the heat of the furnaces is not too abrupt. Without this precaution inflammatory maladies occur, and it is necessary to protect the veteran soldier as much as possible because it requires three years to produce a trained infantryman.

Those who constitute the chain of the winter quarters must above all take precautions against surprises, because that is what they have to fear most. If their battalions are in villages the commander must first build a closed palisade and erect some *flèches** in front of the entrances. This is why the King recommends so highly that his infantry officers study fortifications, because they cannot do without it during the course of a campaign.

If you occupy mountains you should construct redoubts* there at different points, according to the terrain, with block-houses inside them. These redoubts must be surrounded with palisades, the stakes alternated with long shafts . . . [as on plate 1], so that it would be impossible for the enemy to climb over them. . . . If you are behind a river, you must break the ice in the winter to prevent the enemy from crossing. I do not speak of cavalry patrols, which you must have in the field day and night to furnish news of the slightest enemy movement, nor of spies, of which you must have a number so that if one fails you the other can give news.

If the chain is not too uneasy and the service is not too

Note.
 Ces sortes de redoutes peuvent se faire de deux façons; Ou vous placez les palissades sur le chemin couvert, ou vous les placez au rempart capital. Cette sorte de redoute est bonne sur les hauteurs et les montagnes où le canon ne saurait endommager les palissades, mais elles ne feront pas le même effet dans la plaine où les palissades seraient ruinées bien vite.

Plan d'une redoute palissadée d'une nouvelle manière

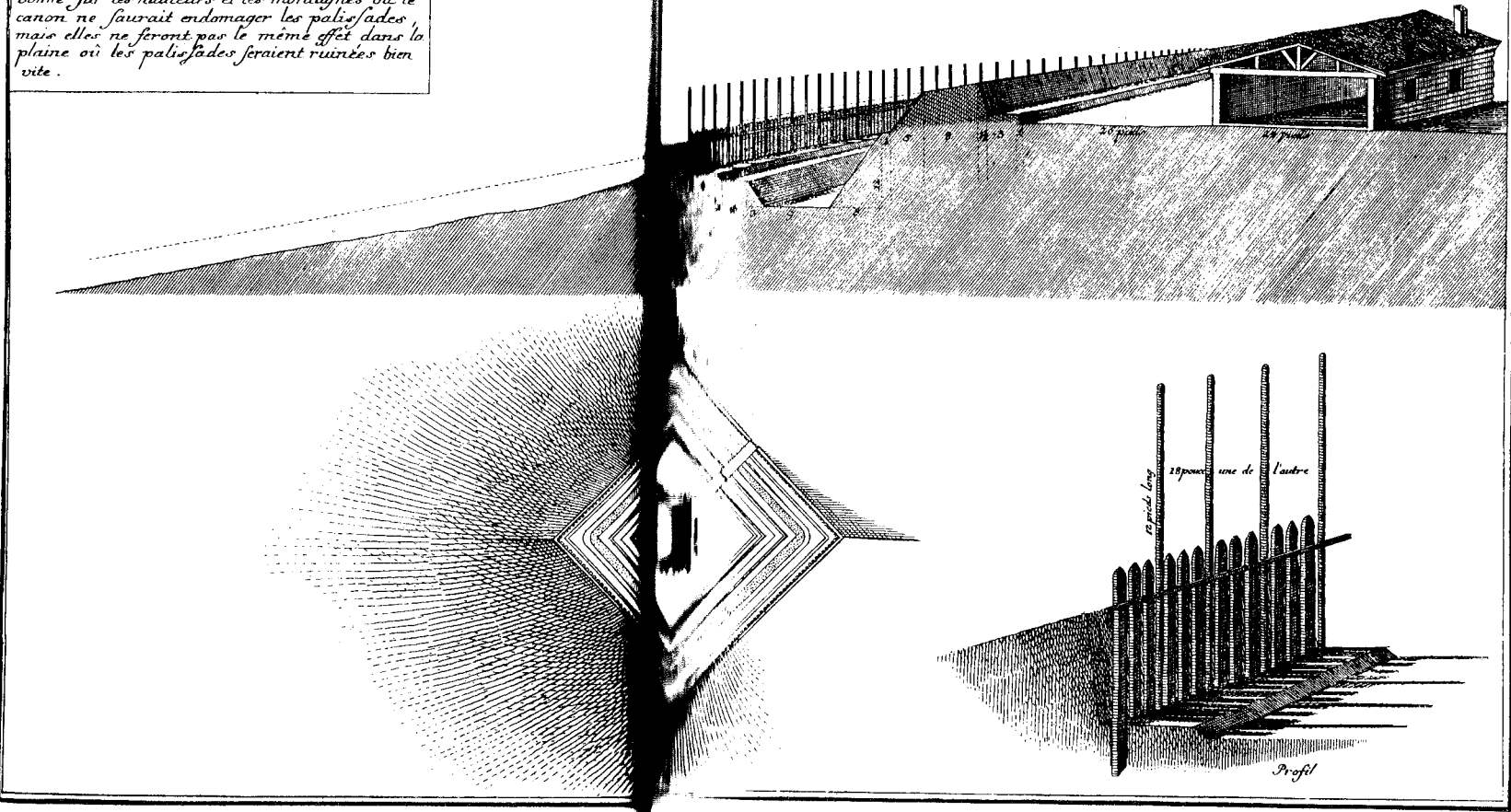


PLATE I. Plan of a palisaded redoubt. This type of construction was designed particularly for heights and mountains, where enemy artillery could not easily destroy the palisades, or pointed stakes, located on the covered way. (*Atlas to the Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand, Plan 9.*)

harsh the commander must drill his troops as much as circumstances permit. His glory is tied to the quality of his soldiers, and the sounder he keeps them, the better assured is his reputation.¹⁹

IF CIRCUMSTANCES absolutely require you to take up winter quarters in your own country, then the captains and subordinate officers should receive a gratuity in proportion to the ordinary allowance that they are given in winter quarters. The soldier will receive bread and meat gratis. But if winter quarters are in enemy territory, the general commanding the troops will receive 15,000 florins, the generals commanding the cavalry and infantry 10,000 each, lieutenant generals 7,000, and major generals 5,000. Cavalry captains each will receive 2,000, infantry captains 1,800, and the subalterns 100 ducates or 400-500 florins. The soldier will receive free issues of bread, meat, and beer furnished by the country, but he is not to be given money, since this encourages desertion. The commanding general will see to it that this is done in an orderly fashion and will permit no pillage. But he will not take issue with the officer over some petty profit that the latter is able to make.

If the army is in winter quarters in enemy territory the general of the army must take care that the necessary recruits are provided. He will distribute the districts so that, for example, three regiments are assigned to one and four to another. Each district will be subdivided into regiments as is done in the Prussian military cantons. If the states of the country wish to provide the recruits themselves, so much the better; otherwise you will use force. The recruits must arrive early enough for the officer to drill them and get them in condition to perform duty the next spring, but this should not prevent the captains from sending out recruiting officers.

Since the general in chief must become involved in all of this management, he should take care that the artillery horses and provisions that are obtained in the country as tribute are either furnished in kind or equalled in hard cash. Nor will he fail to be sure that the contributions are paid to the army treas-

ury to the last florin. The enemy country also has to bear the expense of repairing all the baggage wagons and everything required for the outfitting of an army.

The general will give all his attention to see to it that the cavalry officers have the saddles, bridles, stirrups, and boots repaired and that the infantry officers provide their men with shoes, stockings, shirts, and gaiters for the coming campaign. They must, moreover, have the soldiers' blankets and tents mended, the cavalry swords filed, the infantry arms placed in good condition, and must have the artillery personnel prepare the necessary quantity of cartridges for the infantry. It still remains for the general to take care that the troops forming the chain are sufficiently provided with powder and ball and that nothing is lacking in the entire army.

Time permitting, it would not be a bad idea for the general to visit some of these quarters to examine the state of the troops and to be assured that the officers drill them and perform this duty uniformly, for he must have not only the recruits but also the old soldiers drilled to keep them in practice.

At the beginning of the campaign you will change the quarters of cantonments, distributing them according to the order of battle with the cavalry on the wings and the infantry in the center. These cantonments ordinarily have a frontage of twenty to twenty-five miles and are ten miles in depth. When the time comes for you to encamp, you contract them a little. I find that it is very convenient to distribute the troops in the cantonments under the command of the six senior generals. For example, one commands all the cavalry of the right wing and another, that of the left wing in the first line, and two others command that of the second; in this way the orders will be expedited most promptly and the troops will be most easily formed into columns to enter the camp.²⁰

WINTER MARCHES AND CAMPAIGNS

THIS KIND of expedition must be executed with a great deal of prudence; otherwise you risk seeing your army destroyed

almost without a fight. Winter campaigns are made either to take possession of a country where the enemy does not have many troops or else to fall upon his quarters. Our campaigns in 1740-41 in Silesia and Moravia belong to the first category. We marched into Silesia in two columns, one skirting the mountains and the other extending along the Oder to clear the country and blockade those fortresses that it was not possible to take. . . . The fortresses remained blockaded until spring. Glogau was surprised, Breslau soon shared the same fate, Brieg was taken after the battle of Mollwitz, and Neisse fell at the end of the campaign. We entered Moravia in one column in 1741, capturing Olmütz. We were content to blockade Brünn, which the Saxons had to besiege in the spring of 1742. But this campaign was upset by the retreat of the Saxons and the inactivity of our French allies. We evacuated Moravia after having penetrated into Austria as far as Stockerau and after having seized a body of insurgents in Hungary which the court [of Vienna] wished to employ against our rear.

Such expeditions require a general to exercise all possible vigilance to avoid being surprised. For this reason we had a detachment constantly in front of the troops, another on the right, and a third on the left, whose patrols informed us of all enemy movements. With that the cantonments were contracted: two or three battalions of necessity had to be content with a single village and their baggage was parked outside, defended by a redoubt. Thus no accident happened to us.

At the end of the year 1745 the Prince of Lorraine undertook a similar expedition. In the month of December he decided to invade Brandenburg from Bohemia by crossing Lusatia. Here are the mistakes he committed:

1. He marched without an advance guard and without cavalry which would skirt Silesia to give him news of the Prussians.
2. He saddled himself with too much baggage.
3. His cantonments occupied a frontage of fifteen miles and a depth of the same distance because his troops were not sufficiently concentrated. He would have been better off thinking of their security than their comfort.

4. Being near our frontiers, he formed neither columns nor order of march. We took advantage of his mistake, of course, and crossing the Queis we fell upon his quarters at Catholisch-Hennersdorff and captured 4,000 men. Our army camped on the place and Prince Charles who risked being taken in the rear, was forced to retire into Bohemia at a pace resembling flight rather than a retreat, losing his baggage and about twenty cannon.

Marshal Saxe's expedition on Brussels was made in the month of March. He fell on the allied quarters, dispersed them, and undertook the siege of Brussels, which he captured. He had most of his troops encamp and did not neglect to place large detachments between him and the enemy in order to receive word of the slightest enemy movement in good time.

Thus it is true that every general who does not neglect foresight nor deviate from the maxims of prudence must nearly always succeed. Thoughtless enterprises can enjoy success only with the greatest chances, because as a rule the foolhardy man perishes where the wise man prospers.²¹

NOTES: CHAPTER IV

1. Frederick, "Forward" to *Die Generalprinzipien des Krieges und ihre Anwendung auf die Taktik und Disziplin der preussischen Truppen*, in *Die Werke Friedrichs des Grossen* (Berlin, 1913), VI, 3-4. This forward is not contained in the French edition from which the other selections from this work have been translated [*Werke*].

2. Frederick here uses the German mile, which is the equivalent of about five American miles. Hereafter all distances will be reduced to American measurements, unless otherwise indicated.

3. Frederick, "Des marches d'armée, et de ce qu'il faut observer à cet égard," *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand* (Berlin, 1846-56), XXIX, 97-103 [*Marches d'armée*].

4. Frederick, "Règles de ce qu'on exige d'un bon commandeur de bataillon en temps de guerre," *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

5. Evidently the "defiles" that Frederick mentions so frequently in his writings often "were something entirely different than what is meant by the word today: a narrow place of about one hundred meters width between two woods which forced a battalion advancing

- in line to break up and subsequently to deploy again passed for a defeat not so much because of the danger of passing through, but because it necessitated an unwelcome change in the formation. "Friedrich des Grossen Anschauungen vom Kriege in ihrer Entwicklung von 1740 bis 1756," in Prussia, Grossen Generalstabe, *Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften*, XXVII (Berlin, 1899), 248. See Plate 26.
6. Frederick, *Instruction militaire du Roi de Prusse pour ses généraux* (Frankfort, 1761), pp. 93-95 [*Instruction militaire*].
 7. Frederick, "Das militärische Testament von 1768," *Werke*, VI, 229 [*Testament von 1768*].
 8. About two and one half miles.
 9. Frederick, *Instruction militaire*, pp. 15-20.
 10. Frederick, *Testament von 1768*, pp. 223-24.
 11. Further details on field fortifications and the defense of a camp are contained in Chapters V and VII.
 12. See Chapter IX.
 13. The reference is to the war of the Austrian Succession, in which France was opposed by Austria, England, and Holland and allied to Prussia. (1740-48).
 14. Frederick, *Instruction militaire*, pp. 3-6, 20-26, 39-69, 77-86.
 15. Frederick, *Marches d'armée*, pp. 113-15.
 16. Frederick, *Instruction militaire*, pp. 86-90.
 17. Frederick, *Marches d'armée*, p. 109.
 18. Frederick, *Instruction militaire*, pp. 184-89.
 19. Frederick, *Règles de ce qu'on exige d'un bon commandeur de bataillon en temps de guerre*, pp. 60-61. [*Règles d'un bon commandeur*].
 20. Frederick, *Instruction militaire*, pp. 189-94.
 21. Frederick, *Marches d'armée*, pp. 110-12.

The Anatomy of Battle

The attitude toward battle in the eighteenth century differed sharply from the conventional view, after the Napoleonic wars, that all planning and maneuvers were directed toward the climactic destruction of the enemy in a decisive engagement. In Frederick's day the battle was not necessarily the "payoff." Losses were difficult to make good, much time was required to produce an effective and disciplined soldier, and armies cost money. Maneuver therefore was often regarded as a desirable alternative to battle, and the difficulty in supplying armies further reduced the frequency of battles. The following passages are selected to show Frederick's concept of battle, which is more aggressive than the prevailing view among his contemporaries, and to illustrate the role and the limitations of the three arms (infantry, cavalry, and artillery) in a typical eighteenth-century action. Subsequent chapters reveal how Frederick's concept of the nature and mechanics of battle changed as a result of the Seven Years' War.

BATTLES DECIDE the fate of a nation. In war it is absolutely necessary to come to decisive actions either to get out of the distress of war or to place the enemy in that position, or even to settle a quarrel which otherwise perhaps would never be finished. A wise man will make no movement without good reason, and a general of an army will never give battle if it does not serve some important purpose. When he is forced by his enemy into a battle it is surely because he will have