

# The Marine Corps Gazette.

---

VOLUME I.

JUNE, 1916.

No. 2.

---

## A PLEA FOR A MISSION AND DOCTRINE.

Major John H. Russell, U. S. M. C.

**A**S INFORMATION from war torn Europe gradually drifts across the Atlantic, we learn of the use of new implements of war and the consequent changes to modern tactics. In all of this intelligence the one point that stands out clearly is the high degree of "Efficiency" of the opposing armies of Germany and France. These forces serve as a "Standard of Efficiency" to which military organizations can and should be trained.

It is therefore but natural that we, of the Marine Corps, should turn to our own organization and compare its "Efficiency", as we know or believe it to be, with the standard set for us. Such a comparison shows that, while in recent years great strides have been made in improving the efficiency of the Corps, there are some factors that go to make efficiency that have been overlooked or a sufficient amount of stress not laid on them. It is for the purpose of succinctly pointing out these deficiencies and suggesting remedies that this article has been undertaken.

### EFFICIENCY.

Efficiency is often defined as "the quality of producing results". It is of high or low standard according to the results produced. To reach its maximum all the factors that enter into it must be developed to their maximum and thoroughly harmonized. Then, and only then, can an organization, either Public or Private, be said to be efficient.

While the necessity for a high degree of efficiency in a Private Organization is great and is usually stimulated by competition and money greed; in a Public Organization, especially in a military or

naval organization, the necessity for the maximum efficiency becomes peremptory, while the suscitating influences which assist the private concern are lost.

To be truly efficient a military or naval organization must be prepared to place at the command of its Government and in the shortest possible time, all its Power.

The governing factors of such "efficiency" may be stated as follows:

- (a) Organization
- (b) Materiel
- (c) Personnel
- (d) Policy
- (e) Leadership
- (f) Discipline
- (g) Morale
- (h) Doctrine.

The value of some of these factors is not as great as the value of others, but each and every factor is important. Lacking anyone the maximum degree of efficiency can never be attained.

It is, accordingly, of the utmost consequence that every military organization carefully develop each factor and include the co-ordination of all. Such an organization then would become a multiple of the factors or an *organic mass*. A healthy, sound organization that is capable, in the shortest possible time, of placing all its *power* behind its blow.

#### ORGANIZATION.

To accomplish the exchange of commodities private business organizations are necessary. The transfer of goods from Producer to Consumer is thus effected. Formerly, it was the custom for business to create the demand for goods but a scientific investigation of the subject induced, in part, by numerous failures, soon established the general principle that the demand or necessity creates business. This is the only logical assumption and, at the present time, no great business is undertaken without a careful and exhaustive study that clearly demonstrates the necessity for its establishment. Such an investigation conducted along modern lines, insures as well as can be insured, a lucrative profit which is the final object of all private enterprises. In other words it may be said that "Business, like Government, is an evolution and grows out of general economic conditions."

The necessity for a certain undertaking having once been shown the next step is to outline, in general terms, the "Task" to be accomplished. For example, wheat raised in the middle west may ultimately be destined for England or some other non-wheat producing area but the definite task of the farmer is to raise the largest possible amount of wheat in the most economical manner. His work is then accomplished. The transporting to the mill, the milling, the storing in elevators and the final shipment form separate and complete tasks with which the farmer is only indirectly concerned. The above principle of the Division of Labor applies, equally well, to nearly every form of human activity.

Public or Governmental Business, like Private Business, is created by demand. It is a fact that the final object is not the same, for while in private business it is financial gain, in public business it is social betterment. The underlying principles, however, are the same and the analogy may be carried to many points of similarity in both organization and methods.

As already stated the determination of the "Task" or "Mission" is the second step. What is to be accomplished must be clearly and definitely understood by everyone charged with the direction of a business, either public or private. In many cases, especially in public undertakings, the "Mission" can only be stated in very general terms and in the accomplishment of it many "Special" or "Sub-Missions" may be found necessary, but the "General Mission" will always be found to stand out clearly above them all. It represents the purpose for which the organization was created and exists and never, for a moment, must it be permitted to become smothered by the introduction of "Minor Missions". The trail once lost is hard to regain.

Organization may be defined as the act of bringing together related or interdependent parts into one *organic* whole so that each part is, at once, end and means. In other words the co-operation between the various units must be *perfect*.

It is generally asserted that the success of certain private undertakings, over others, is due to their more efficient organization. The fact that German business firms have been successful competitors with those of other nations, in all parts of the world, has been stated to be due to their more perfect organization.

The analogy between a Great Business and a Military Organization is especially close. Each has its Mission, each is divided into

various branches or units which must be separately officered and united into a perfectly disciplined, controlled and efficient organization. In each case the organization must be such as will best suit the fulfillment of the "General Mission". This is the prime factor of organization for which all others must be laid aside. Furthermore, it is a fact that a military organization must be perfected in time of "Peace" for after "War" has been decided on it will be too late.

The writer believes that the "General Mission" of the Marine Corps is: To co-operate with the Navy, in Peace and War, to the end that in the event of a war the Marine Corps could be of greatest value to the Navy.

But is this the "General Mission"? How many officers of the Marine Corps, if interrogated separately, would give the same answer? What then is our "Great Work"? No matter how well an organization is organized, if it does not know its "Mission" how can it reach the highest degree of efficiency? It must necessarily lack a concerted action to accomplish its Work.

In performing its "Task" the Marine Corps will, naturally, have many "Special Missions" presented to it, in fact in years of Peace, they are apt to become so numerous that the impression is likely to prevail that such subsidiary work is not at all subsidiary but is, in reality, the Master Work of the Marine Corps. Such an impression is worse than misleading, it is dangerously false, and if allowed to permeate the service would result in its failure to properly prepare itself for the real issue and cause it to fight at an enormous and perhaps decisive disadvantage.

It is believed that the "General Mission" of the Marine Corps should be drawn up by a Board of Marine Officers appointed for that purpose. The result of this Board's work to be submitted to a Conference of the Field Officers of the Corps, or as many as might be available, for discussion, amendment, if necessary, and ratification. The Conference to be presided over by the Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps. Every officer on entering the Corps would be at once instructed in the Mission of the Marine Corps and Commanding Officers would preach it to all their subordinates.

#### PERSONNEL.

The importance of this factor is paramount. With poor personnel, no matter how well organized and equipped, an organization

will, in short order, deteriorate. In fact, in general terms, the efficiency of an organization may be gauged by its personnel.

#### MATERIEL.

This factor depends, to a large extent, on the Organization and Personnel. If the organization is excellent and the personnel alert to its necessities the materiel should, in a well governed nation, be brought to a standard equal to or better than a similar organization belonging to any other Power.

If, on the other hand, the organization is defective and the personnel of poor quality the materiel is certain to be correspondingly in poor condition and obsolete.

#### POLICY.

After the organization of a Public or Private Undertaking has been perfected management begins.

The "Policy" of an organization may be defined as the system of management necessary to accomplish the "Mission". It is the conduct of the affairs of the organization. For governmental organizations, to a great extent, Policy is governed by regulations but nevertheless a great deal is left and must necessarily be left to Commanding Officers permitting them to initiate a Policy of their own covering their particular commands.

#### LEADERSHIP.

The qualities that go to make a Leader of a military organization are: Will Power, Intelligence, Resourcefulness, Health, and last, but not least, professional knowledge and training.

It is a mistaken idea that Leaders are born and not made. It is true that a certain amount of personal magnetism may be of assistance in the making of a leader but if an officer cultivates and develops the factors enumerated above he will necessarily develop into a leader. Of prime importance is a study of psychology and its relation to discipline and morale.

Leadership may be either actual or directive. Actual in the lower grades of the commissioned personnel of a military organization and directive in the higher commands. It is, however, just as important in the one case as the other and the same factors are applicable in each.

While the preparation for "Leadership" must be left to the indi-

vidual the Marine Corps could materially assist its officers by pointing out the road and by establishing and maintaining schools where officers could receive the best theoretical and practical training.

#### DISCIPLINE.

Years ago Kempenfelt wrote: "The men who are the best disciplined, of whatever country they are, will always fight the best."

In some countries the form of government naturally tends to promote discipline among all classes and the recruit, when called to the "colors", enters the service already more or less inculcated with the habit of subordination. In other countries, however, where the method of living is more free, the recruit is not as susceptible to discipline and it is for this very reason that discipline in the military and naval organizations of such a nation assumes great importance.

It may be said that the laxer the rule, order, method of action, or living in a country the stricter should be the discipline in the military and naval organizations of such a country.

A study of the best method to be employed in obtaining excellent military discipline implies a study of the Psychology of Suggestion and its application to military life.

The recruit who has matured under certain free conditions of city or country life is suddenly placed in an entirely new atmosphere and it is to overcome the perhaps bad impressions of such a sudden change of environment and to direct the mental attitude of the recruit along proper lines that psychology must be employed.

The study of this important subject by all commissioned officers of the Marine Corps should be made imperative, a proper course of study being outlined in General Orders.

#### MORALE.

The necessity for maintaining the "Morale" of an organization at a high pitch, during both peace and war, is well recognized. This subject has been dealt with most thoroughly, in recent years, by students of psychology and in the present European war great attention is being devoted, on all sides, to this important factor.

It would therefore seem proper that special attention should be given by the Marine Corps to this subject, such, for example, as the appointing of a Board of Officers to study the subject and draw up a concise Manual outlining a method, applicable to the Marine Corps, for increasing the Morale of this organization and maintain-

ing it at its maximum during peace and war. Such a method if properly enforced would result in the study of this important subject by all officers and tend to greatly strengthen the organization as a whole.

#### DOCTRINE.

During the past few years a number of articles, that have become Classics, have been published on the subject of Doctrine and its relation to war. The writer, therefore, feels a decided hesitancy in even touching on this subject, but he believes its importance to the Marine Corps to be so vital that he cannot refrain from a general discussion of it in the hope that the seed once sown will quickly germinate and develop into the strong branch of action, and that the day is at hand when the Marine Corps will be indoctrinated.

It is well understood by military men of the present time that the Art of War has its theories and its principles, otherwise it would not be an art. It follows that it also has the application of its principles or *Doctrine*.

The common acceptation of the word doctrine makes it synonymous with principle. This is not true. A principle is a fundamental truth. A military principle is a fundamental truth arrived at by a study of the military history of wars and adapted to the circumstances and characteristics not only of the military organization but of the nation it represents. Napoleon has aptly said: "The principles of war are those which have directed the great leaders and of which history has transmitted to us the main facts."

The word "Doctrine", as applied to military life, means a teaching that provides for a "mutual understanding" among the commissioned personnel of a military organization. In plain words "team work".

Military doctrine is born of military principle. It is the application of principle. A principle cannot be wrong, it is a *fact*. A doctrine, on the other hand, may be wrong. As it becomes ripened by experience or to suit new conditions, it is altered. It is thus, at first, tentative and gradually built up by a process of evolution.

The historical study from which we derive certain principles is nothing more or less than an estimate of the Situation. The principles deduced represent our decision. Having once made a decision it becomes necessary to put it into execution, in other words to apply the principles. This is true military Doctrine.

In the preparation of a doctrine the "General Mission" of the organization must never be lost sight of. Let the doctrine be clear, concise and founded on the accomplishment of the General Mission in the shortest possible time. With doctrines covering "Sub-Missions" confusion is certain to arise and we would have some officers indoctrinated for one situation and some for another—a grave error.

Such a work as the formulation of a doctrine, however, is not the task for one man but is rather a labor for a General Staff, or lacking a General Staff for a Conference, a reflective body.

All the Great Powers of the world, except the United States have instilled into their armies and navies doctrines of war which have inspired them with new life.

Without a doctrine all the Drill Regulations, all the Field Service Regulations, all the text books are as one writer puts it: "But dead bones and dry rust."

General Langlois, one of France's most astute generals and foremost military writers, has well said:—

"*Sans doctrine, les textes ne sont rien: a des textes sans doctrine, serait beaucoup preferable une doctrine sans textes, ce qui etait le cas a l'epoque napoleonierne.*"

General Kuropatkin, in his book on the Russian Campaign in Manchuria, tells us: "Although the same drill books and manuals are used by the whole army, there is considerable variety in the way the tactical instruction is imparted, owing to the diverse views held by the District Commanders."

The first phase of the British Campaign in South Africa resulted, as a clever British writer puts it, in "the unforeseen spectacle of a highly trained and well disciplined regular army, whose armament and equipment were abreast of the requirements of modern war, checked at all points by the levies of two insignificant Republics whose forces were but loose gatherings of armed farmers."

During the period of Frederick the Great military forces were maintained in mass formations and manœuvred in combat by commands.

During the Napoleonic age conditions changed, the rigidity of the mass formation was replaced by open and flexible formations resulting in a consequent separation of units. This gain in flexibility and ability to manœuvre was obtained only by a corresponding loss of control or command. No longer could one man directly control the entire force. For example, Napoleon had to depend on

the ability of his subordinates to interpret the meaning of his orders and instructions. But few of these had been trained in the same school of thought. There existed no common bond to assure a unity of mind and action. A link in the Chain of Command was missing, there was nothing to unite command and execution.

When that great German student of the Art of War, Moltke, became Chief of Staff, he at once started to forge the missing link in the chain of command of the Prussian Army.

The successes of the Prussian campaign in Austria were soon followed by the victories of the Franco-Prussian War and clearly demonstrated the wisdom of Moltke's policy. The doctrineless armies of France lost the war but thanks to their many able military students and writers the lessons learned were clearly set forth and at the present moment the indoctrinated armies of France are holding at bay the indoctrinated German troops.

Flexibility of command spells "Initiative". Initiative may be either Reliable or Unreliable. The introduction of doctrine means *Reliable Initiative*.

Moltke, the great exponent of doctrine, required of detachment commanders "a high degree of technical skill with minds trained to work in unison with that of the higher command, even when separated from Headquarters by a distance which made control impossible."

It was the inculcating of doctrine into the Prussian Army which permitted the introduction of the "cult" of the Offensive which now permeates the German Army.

Even with the modern systems of communication which bind together the various units of an organization the need is as great, if not greater, for a unity of thought and action permitting of a reliable initiative.

The usual illustration for the necessity of a doctrine is that of a number of separate columns advancing on a broad front. Each column commander knows that on making contact with the enemy he can boldly take the offensive with the full assurance of the absolute support of the columns to his right and left and the knowledge that their interpretation of the various situations that may arise will be the same as his own.

Consider the well worn simile of the foot-ball team. Let us take two teams, "A" and "B". The first has been indoctrinated; the second has not. When a certain signal is given by the Captain of

"A" team all the members of that team know that the ball is to be kicked, they know that the fullback will fall back, each member of the team on the line knows that he must hold his man at all cost (the strong defensive), the ends know that they must take a strong offensive, break through the opposing line and get down the field as the ball is snapped back.

On the other hand "B" team has no doctrine. There exists no mutual understanding as to what is expected of each and every member of the team. The end knows that he should get down the field but the man next to him does not know it and permits an opponent to block him. The line does not realize the necessity for putting up a strong defensive and consequently "A" team succeeds in breaking through and blocking the kick. On which team would you bet to win?

In this case the units are in touch with each other. How much more difficult is the situation in the case of a military organization where the units, or some of them, are separated.

Let us examine, for a moment, our Field Service Regulations (1914); the sacred book of every officer.

Under Articles I, II, III, IV, V and VI, we find at the beginning of each article certain "General Principles" to which in most cases many pages are devoted. As a matter of fact a casual reading of these pages will show that principles, doctrine, instructions, regulations and customs are all jumbled together in one almost intangible mass which many officers no doubt take at their heading value—General Principles.

Military principles and doctrine should form a *Creed* for every officer but when we obscure them by mixing them in with numerous regulations, instructions, customs of the service and other data, they at once lose all force, if they do not become unrecognizable.

Why not cull out the principles and doctrine. Add to them what is deemed necessary, place all in clear and concise language and make it form the military creed of our officers.

For example, in Article IV, under the heading General Principles, we find the following: "The march is habitually at route order." This is certainly not a military principle, it is essentially a doctrine. There is a *military principle of the Conservation of Energy*. From this principle flows the doctrine: In campaigns the march is habitually at route order.

Other sentences in the above-mentioned article and under the same

heading are: "When possible, ample notice is given so that preparations can be made without haste. Troops are informed of the length of halts so that they can take full advantage of the same. The men are kept under arms no longer than necessary, nor required to carry burdens when transportation is available. As a rule troops on the march pay no compliments; individual salutes, etc." All of this and much more in this paragraph consists of neither principles nor doctrine. It is purely administrative.

Again, the first sentence of Article IV reads: "A successful march, whether in peace or war, is one that places the troops at their destination at the proper moment and in the best possible condition." The first part of this doctrine, for doctrine it is, flows from the principle of the Economy of Forces and the second part from the principle of the Conservation of Energy.

Under Article VI, F. S. R., we find under the heading General Principles no principles but definitions, administration, instructions, etc. The military principle covering all of these, but which is not stated in the text, is the principle of the Conservation of Energy.

Turning to Article I we likewise find no principles.

The second paragraph of Article V under "Combat", placed in the text in the nature of a comment, reads as follows: "Decisive results are obtained only by the offensive. Aggressiveness wins battles. The purely passive defense is adopted only when the mission can be fully accomplished by this method of warfare. In all other cases, if a force be obliged by uncontrollable circumstances to adopt the defensive, it must be considered as a temporary expedient and a change to the offensive with all or part of the forces will be made as soon as conditions warrant such change." The underscoring is not in the text.

If we cut out of this paragraph all except the underscored words we have a military principle, not stated as such in the text, from which naturally would flow the Doctrine of the offensive except when the defensive is adopted as a temporary expedient. As a corollary we would have, the Defensive is a method of creating opportunity for Offensive Action. In the same article under the heading "Combat Principles", we find few if any military principles, much doctrine and instructions. For example, "Avoid putting troops into action in driblets" is not a principle, it is pure doctrine. Again, "Flank protection is the duty of the commanders of all flank units down to the lowest, whether specifically enjoined in orders or

not." This is pure doctrine and cannot in any way be construed as a military principle.

In Article II the Service of Security is covered by the military principle that a command protects itself from observation, annoyance or surprise by an enemy. From this principle springs the doctrine that the "primary duty of an Advance Guard is to insure the safe and uninterrupted advance of the main body." The greater part of the information contained in the paragraphs in this article under the heading General Principles are definitions or instructions.

Turning now to Article III. This article deals with the subject of orders and contained in the paragraphs under the heading General Principles we find definitions, information, instructions, but little doctrine and few military principles.

An examination of our Drill Regulations (1915) shows a similar condition to prevail. We find, for example, "Combat Principles" for the battalion, regiment and brigade (pages 209-218). A careful reading fails to disclose a single principle under these headings.

A military organization to be efficient and powerful must be so indoctrinated as to acquire a uniformity of mind and action on fundamental military truths. Would not a commander in the field be re-assured if he knew that an unsuccessful attack by the enemy would be a signal for a strong counter-attack by all parts of the line attacked or that the offensive, once begun, would be carried on by all parts of the line with great vigor until order to cease? All the German military teaching is based on the "cult" of the Offensive. Their teachings say: "It is not even necessary to delay looking for too many advices about the enemy; the time for research is being wasted from the operations; it allows the adversary to do as he pleases and to impose his plan on us when we should impose our plan on him." This is part of the doctrine with which every German officer is indoctrinated. The offensive, in spite of everything, has permeated their very blood and marrow. But to permit of the placing in the hands of subordinates so powerful a weapon as "initiative" the subordinates must one and all be carefully trained to a uniformity of thought and action. It has been well said: "Initiative is a double edged weapon, dangerous to trust in the hands of subordinates who are liable to misconceive the mind of the Chief and are unable to read a situation as he would read it."

We demand "initiative" of subordinates and yet fail to train them for an intelligent initiative. What then can we expect?

In our Field Orders the first paragraph is the information paragraph. The second contains the General Plan and the third the details of the plan, etc. A subordinate officer of an indoctrinated force serving with a detached command receiving the order reads the information paragraph and "understands the train of thought to which the information paragraph has given rise. The information being so and so, naturally, the Commander wishes to do this, therefore, I must do that. Obedience at once becomes intelligent because the purpose of the superior is understood and unconsciously approved."

Colonel (now General) Foch in his Conference Lectures, at L'Ecole Superieure de Guerre, puts it as follows: "An activity of the mind to comprehend the views of the Superior Commander and to enter into his views. An activity of the mind to find the material means of realizing them. An activity of the mind for realizing, in spite of the methods of the adversary, the conserving of freedom of action."

If an organization is doctrineless a subordinate cannot arrive at an intelligent understanding of orders as now written, in the Moltke style. For a doctrineless force detailed orders are necessary with a consequent absence of initiative and poor results. Since we have gone half way and adopted the modern system of writing orders why should we not adopt the modern method of inculcating a doctrine? The one is dependent on the other.

Our Drill Regulations tell us that "In extended order the *Company* is the largest unit to execute movements by prescribed commands or means" and further "In every disposition of the battalion for combat the orders of the bt. c. should give subordinates sufficient information of the enemy, of the position of supporting and neighboring troops, and of the object sought to enable them to conform intelligently to the General Plan."

How can they conform intelligently if they have no military doctrine, no interpretation of the military principles to act as a guide for them? It is as impossible as the command of the Famous King that all clocks and watches in his kingdom should keep the same time. He established no method of regulating them and yet he ordered that they must all synchronize.

The mind of the subordinate must be "tuned" by the introduction of Doctrine to work in harmony with the mind of the Commander.

The Marine Corps has no Doctrine and the lack of this important factor must necessarily greatly reduce the "Efficiency" of the Corps.

It is possible, some say probable, that the Marine Corps may be called on in the near future to face trained, seasoned, highly disciplined and indoctrinated troops. Lacking a doctrine, no matter how good our organization, equipment, personnel, discipline and morale, we would unquestionably be badly handicapped, perhaps fatally. We have no creed to bind us together, to help us to understand one another, to guide us to assist one another, to concentrate all our effort; we are as helpless as a ship without a rudder.

The formulation of a Doctrine rests with the Marine Corps. It does not require Congressional action or outside advice. It would require but slight expense and little effort.

For the purpose of formulating a Doctrine it is suggested that a similar course be employed as to that suggested for determining on the General Mission. Field Officers of the Marine Corps, or as many as are available, should be assembled, under the direction of the Major General Commandant of the Corps, for a Conference. The result of the work of such an experienced Reflective Body would be a *Tentative Doctrine or Creed* for the Marine Corps, to be preached by every Commanding Officer and taught to young officers on entry. It would thus soon permeate the very blood and marrow of the commissioned personnel.

Such a Doctrine, or at least the results of the first Conference, would only be tentative and might require changes in it as we became more experienced but it would certainly be a start in the right direction and establish a bond of sympathy among the officers of the Corps.

Why should we not, in terse language, lay down certain military principles that we believe are applicable to the Marine Corps? Why should we not formulate a concise and clear Doctrine to bind us together? Why should we not formulate our traditions and incorporate them in our doctrine? Why should we not have a "cult" of the Offensive?

Such action would greatly increase the usefulness, efficiency and prestige of the Marine Corps and tend to unite this organization into one *organic* whole.

Let us remember the words of General Langlois: "Without doctrine, text books amount to nothing; a doctrine without text books would be much better than text books without doctrine, as was the case in the Napoleonic age."

EDITOR'S NOTE:—A discussion of Major Russell's article will be found in closing pages of this number.