

The Employment and Tactics of Artillery in Delaying Action.

by

Generalleutnant Josef Prinner

Place written: GARMISCH (Germany)

Date completed: 14 April 1948

Sources:

a) Personal None. Written from Memory

b) Documentary None. Written from Memory

Sketches and overlays: One diagrammatic sketch (not to scale)

Abbreviations: Artl. - artillery

Remarks: This paper is to be used as an appendix to Generalmajor Ulich's paper "Special Conditions in Sicily Require a Special Type of Defense."*

*Editor's note: Reference is to MD #D-004

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In regard to the employment and tactics of artillery in delaying action the following may be said:

1.) Artillery occupying lines of resistance took the approaching enemy under fire at maximum ranges. The enemy was to be forced to develop and deploy as soon as possible. For this purpose it went into position well up toward the front in the zone of resistance, deployed on a broad front. Good observation posts were of great importance in this connection. They afforded visibility into the terrain over which the enemy would have to make his approach march, thus enabling us to take him under early observation. We also had a predilection for putting into the foremost lines individual pieces of the batteries that were in action, usually with the outposts. These pieces acted in the closest cooperation with the foremost infantry units. In order to carry out their mission, these individual pieces were highly mobile. Consequently they were also known as roving guns. In tactics of this type, the forward observers of the batteries proved especially valuable and rendered excellent service in the transmission of intelligence. The employment of these observers, too, was of a highly mobile order. Thanks to their radio equipment, they were not permanently tied down to any special place. To be sure, the use of individual pieces in the very front line involved the inherent risk that they would not be able to escape if the enemy pursued sharply. However if they fulfilled their task completely, there was no necessity for shrinking from losing them. In such cases, they were blown up at the last minute.

2.) As always in the employment of artillery, well-functioning communications were of decisive importance. Long wire lines could not be laid under these combat conditions, therefore more use had to be made of radio equipment. Withdrawal movements usually proceeded very rapidly. There was rarely time to reel in the wire properly. Wire lines were

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2.) As always in the employment of artillery, well-functioning communications were of decisive importance. Long wire lines could not be laid under these combat conditions, therefore more use had to be made of radio equipment. Withdrawal movements usually proceeded very rapidly. There was rarely time to reel in the wire properly. Wire lines were abandoned and lost as a result. The best solution was to set up the pieces as closely as possible to their observation posts so that a relay of calls

p. 68 was sufficient in an emergency. It was very helpful if an artillery plane was available. It was especially able to observe the approach of enemy forces in ample time, and their movement into assembly areas. It could also call for fire on them and adjust the fire.

p. 69 The radio to receive these directions was set up in the firing position of the so-called plane control battery,* usually 100-mm guns, so that a quick opening of fire was assured. The fire concentration of all batteries could then be directed by the battalion by means of the fire control map.

3.) The distribution of ammunition was based on the following considerations: The advanced guns were to fire as much as possible to simulate a powerful artillery. It was necessary, therefore, that a great amount of ammunition be laid down near them. The batteries were supplied with sufficient ammunition at the guns. Ammunition trucks which were no longer needed were immediately sent to the rear in order to supply ammunition to positions being prepared farther in rear. In this way the transportation of ammunition to the front was avoided. After that it did not enter into consideration. The dumped ammunition was fired. If the enemy situation was so dangerous as to preclude doing so, it was blown up.

4.) The reconnaissance of the roads leading back from the first line of resistance to the next was likewise of great importance. It was necessary at any time of the day or night to be able quickly to leave the position occupied at the moment, and, if possible, to do so unseen by the enemy. This was especially true in the case of single pieces that had been set up all the way to the front as far as the outposts. For this reason it was also necessary to have the gun limbers in close proximity to the guns, in contrast to their usual positions. In order not to give rise to

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p. 69 nervousness, which might have caused too early a withdrawal from the position, the order for its abandonment was usually given very late. By then time was getting short. The preparations, therefore, could not be carried out thoroughly enough. The roads had to be reconnoitered back to the second line of resistance. In the marking of these routes, it has been found advantageous to use previously prepared paper strips with definite signs known only to the troops concerned (luminous paint, if possible).

5.) The execution of the change of position necessitated a precise time schedule. Horse-drawn and motorized units were routed over separate roads, if possible. Precise regulation of traffic and perfect march discipline were essential. The horse-drawn batteries were assigned positions in the rear from the very start. Those guns remaining in contact with the enemy longest were motorized. If this was not possible, horse-drawn guns were at least temporarily provided with extemporized prime movers.

p. 70 6.) In the same way that the road conditions back to the next line of resistance had to be carefully reconnoitered, so the fire positions of the batteries themselves had to be selected. The basic conditions for artillery action had to be established. As a matter of course, the extent to which this was possible in each individual case depended on the amount of time available. In any case, the so-called "advance party" always had to be where it could be reached and had to be immediately available. This advance party had the mission to take care of all these preparatory measures in the new firing position and, so to speak, had to "make the bed." The artillery survey detachment in particular had to perform its chief task here; it was the most important part of the advance party.

Part of the preparations also consisted in designating targets in the future enemy area and making up a range-deflection fan, from which the range and deflection of any enemy target appearing could be obtained at once. Only in this way was it later possible to conduct the fire

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In conclusion, it should be said that artillery tactics in delaying action was one of the most difficult tasks. It necessitated that orders be issued in such a manner as to ensure rigid control and adherence to a precise time table. Otherwise, the danger existed that the troops would get scattered and all contact with neighboring units would be lost. This danger increased, the more sharply the enemy pursued.

[signed:] Josef Prinner

Translated by:

Richard Straus

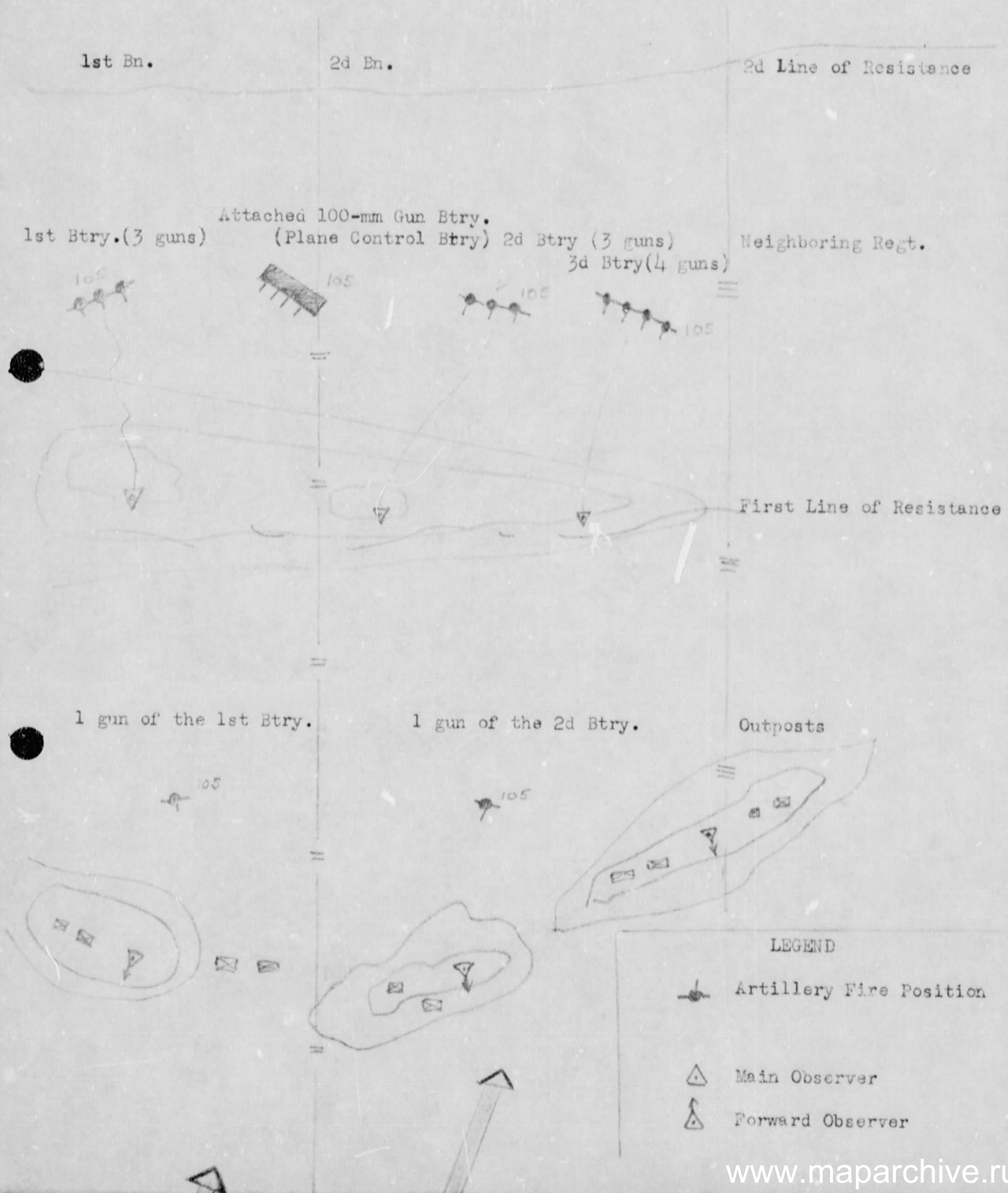
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Schematic Representation of the Employment of an Artillery Battalion and an

Attached Battery Operating with an Infantry Regiment

(Not to Scale)



Attached Battery Operating with an Infantry Regiment

(Not to Scale)

