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Introductory Remarks, Tactics Course

by

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THE AIM OF STRATEGY IS CONCENTRATION OF PURPOSE

THE AIM OF TACTICS IS THE CONCENTRATION OF FORCE

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THE AIM OF STRATEGY IS CONCENTRATION OF PURPOSE

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Gentlemen:

You have just been through a period under the Strategy Section in which the Estimate of the Situation has been thoroughly discussed. It would seem that further discussion is unnecessary. Yet today you are having the Estimate presented from a Tactical viewpoint. Why? Why doesn't the one estimate solve the problem?

As a matter of fact, the Tactical Estimate is an estimate within an estimate, it is an action estimate. Strategy considers the problem as a whole, makes a thorough survey of the various factors operating for and against the successful accomplishment of the Mission, reaches a decision as to what is to be done, how it is to be done and for what purpose. It then assigns certain tasks to certain forces and it is at this point that the Tactical estimate becomes necessary, the plan of action when battle is imminent.

It is true that in order to assign proper forces to accomplish a task in the strategic estimate, a certain amount of consideration must be given to the tactical qualities and capabilities of the forces to be assigned. But the plans for the employment of these forces in battle against the assigned enemy objective, so that all forces will work together at maximum efficiency to accomplish the task assigned is the problem of the tactical or action estimate.

In the Fleet we have the results of such estimates in the forms of standard Cruising, Approach and Deployment dispositions; they are the present plans for our forces in normal engagement, with optional arrangements for other than normal composition of forces. They are a solid foundation upon which to develop a battle plan. However, plans are altered from time to time as

new tactics of types and weapons are developed and that is the reason for the tactical estimate at the War College. The students sitting in this class will have a lot to do in the years to come with the development of types and tactics in the Fleet, will be obliged to consider the best way to employ the various elements of our rapidly changing fleet to the maximum advantage.

In approaching a Tactical Estimate; we must never forget that it cannot be divorced from the Strategic Estimate, that the Tactical Estimate is complementary to the Strategic Estimate. Just because one estimates the how to do things tactically does not relieve one of the necessity of accomplishing one's Strategic Mission.

In the Strategic Estimate, the Mission is that which is to be accomplished by a force for a certain purpose; in the Tactical Estimate, this Strategic Mission must be thoroughly understood in order that the tactical decision will support the Strategic Mission.

In the Strategic Estimate, a decision is reached as to the best way to accomplish one's mission and in this decision certain tactical results are inevitably required. This is the basis of the tactical estimate, an estimate to determine the best way in which to achieve the tactical result or accomplishment required by the Strategic Decision.

The force has not changed its strategic mission, it has not changed its strategic decision; it simply, for the purpose of the tactical estimate, uses for its mission the tactical result required by the Strategic Decision and estimates the situation, from a tactical viewpoint, to determine the best way to accomplish that result. The result of this tactical estimate becomes the plan of tactical action and may well be an annex to the strategic estimate or operation order of the force being considered.

In the Tactical Estimate, the decision again is based on sound and logical reasoning. First, a realization of one's

mission, that is, what task has been assigned and what part that task plays in the general plan; second, what forces and circumstances are operating to oppose the accomplishment of this task; third, what forces you have and what circumstances are in your favor and, fourth, your decision as to what you are going to do, where and how, and for what purpose. Strategical matters have been more or less thoroughly covered in the strategic estimate; however, there are elements of strategy in the tactical estimate such as placing one's self between the enemy and his base before engaging, keeping one's own base in one's lee, forcing the enemy into restricted water while keeping free water for one's self, etc. etc. But, generally speaking, strategy has played its role in bringing about the forthcoming action, tactics deals with the immediate facts of the situation as it is.

As the situation changes, for, in battle, the situation is constantly changing, the tactical estimate must be constantly brought up to date. This does not require a formal estimate each time there is a change, but a commander who has made a thorough pre-battle estimate can better adjust himself to the changed situation and exploit enemy weaknesses while at the same time reinforcing one's own soft spots in the defense.

A thorough pre-battle estimate must contain a complete analysis of own and enemy forces, of their capabilities, of the strength factors of the enemy, the weakness factors, our own strength and weakness factors, weather and geographical conditions, their advantages and disadvantages. Consideration must be given to the various ways in which the enemy may and the probable way, he will use the forces under his command, to take full advantage of his strength factors to overcome us while at the same time protecting his own weak points.

From this background we can intelligently proceed to investigate what we can do with the forces at our disposal, to accomplish the task assigned. How will we break the back of the enemy

resistance? What courses of action are worthy of consideration and, of these, which promises the most hope of success?

Keeping constantly before us the fundamental principles of the Objective and Superiority at the Point of Contact, we evolve a plan of battle, a plan that employs every element of the forces under our command to the maximum capacity and takes advantage of every favorable condition, to destroy enemy resistance. It is not sufficient to have superior forces available; these forces must exercise such superiority. Furthermore, such superiority must be increased by intelligent employment. Various papers have been presented you, or will be presented, which suggest methods of employment of types in action to increase their effectiveness. The Naval Battle suggests the way a fleet as a whole can work together as a team to accomplish the end of war, destruction of the enemy and his resistance. It is hoped that with these as a background, the members of this class will advance the development of effective tactics and team work in naval battle.

Having evolved a plan of battle, the next step is the promulgating of this plan in a battle order. This order must convey to the forces involved, what is to be done, how, when and where it is to be done, and for what purpose. The purpose, of course, is the task assigned. In addition to the plan, the assignment of forces to the roles they are to play constitutes an important part of the order.

It may seem a problem to promulgate a battle order to a fleet in enough detail that subordinates can co-operate effectively, yet it has been done. I invite your attention to Nelson's Memorandum Before Trafalgar. This Memorandum has stood for a century as an ideal pre-battle estimate. Incidentally, if this order was a good one, it should be able to be translated into the order form using in our navy, if the order form is a good form. On page 42 of the blue pamphlet "A Study and Discussion of the Estimate of the Situation", you will find Nelson's

Memorandum. On page 44 of the same pamphlet you will find this memorandum translated into our standard order form. To me, the order form is more readily understood than the Memorandum. Of course, we must remember that Nelson was constantly in conference with his Captains, in doctrinating them in his conception of the forthcoming battle.

Having evolved the battle plan, the next step is to bring your forces to the scene of action ready for battle. This requires that they arrive at their battle stations in an orderly and prompt manner, with as little interference from the enemy as possible while at the same time interfering with the enemy forces and disrupting his dispositions as much as possible. Again, this requires an estimate within an estimate, an estimate which considers what the enemy may and will probably do to gain early information as to your movements, inflict damage on you prior to the main engagement; what you are going to do to deny the enemy information while gaining information of the enemy, how you are going to inflict damage on him prior to the action if such is your plan.

This estimate results in the formation of cruising dispositions, offensive and defensive screens. It has also been found advantageous in large and complex formations to arrange for an intermediate step between the cruising and deployment disposition, known as the approach disposition. This disposition is used once the enemy has been located and before actual deployment for battle; to give more time to the outlying forces to get on station. However, a fleet should be able to pass from its cruising formation into its action stations without going through the approach disposition in case of necessity, as might be the case in a surprise contact.

All of this may seem very complex; yet sound decisions can only be arrived at after sound and logical reasoning. The Estimate of the Situation is a guide to reaching sound decisions.

Not all steps apply to every situation, nor are all steps completely covered in the Estimate. Yet by following the idea of the Estimate a reasonably sound decision may be expected.

Each problem at the College will be different as each problem in battle is different. Each student stands on his own feet as each commander must stand on his own feet. New ideas, if sound, are welcomed; the War College encourages initiative and here we can test ideas which we have had in the back of our minds for years. If they fail to develop as we had hoped, at least we have had our mind satisfied on the subject. And sometimes, real advances in tactics result from the tests at the College.

Coming back to the purpose of this informal talk, the Tactical Estimate, remember, it is an action estimate; your plan must denote action, it must inspire your subordinates with your will, it must give them their roles. As a measure of its completeness, place yourself in the position of a subordinate and see if you would know what to do if you had received such an order.

At Trafalgar, just before action was to begin, Nelson was signalling his fleet on a matter of no particular importance; Collingwood, second in command, remarked to a companion, that he wished Nelson would stop signalling, that everyone knew what they had to do. That is the ideal towards which we should strive; when we go into action, everyone should know what to do. A well thought out battle plan will materially contribute to that end. Hence the importance of the Tactical Estimate.