

**SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL!**

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

**NOT TO BE TAKEN INTO FRONT-LINE TRENCHES**

# The Attack of the British 9th Corps at Messines Ridge

ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
AUGUST, 1917

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
EASTON, MASSACHUSETTS



FROM THE OFFICE of  
CONGRESSMAN  
L. A. FROTHINGHAM

WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1917

WAR DEPARTMENT.

Document No. 653.

Office of The Adjutant General.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
WASHINGTON, August 23, 1917.

The following pamphlet, *The Attack of the British Ninth Corps at Messines Ridge*, is published for the information of all concerned.

[061.1 A. G. O.]

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

H. L. SCOTT,  
*Major General, Chief of Staff.*

OFFICIAL:

H. P. McCAIN,  
*The Adjutant General.*

---

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
Washington, June 19, 1917.

*To all officers of the Army:*

You are advised that this and all subsequent documents of a similar character which may be furnished to you from this office are to be regarded as strictly confidential. They are to be kept at all times in your personal possession and are not to be copied, nor are any parts of their contents to be communicated, either directly or indirectly, to the press, nor to any persons not in the military or naval service of the United States. In Europe these documents are not to be carried into the front-line trenches nor farther to the front than the usual post of the officers to whom issued.

Strict compliance with this injunction is enjoined upon every officer into whose hands any of these confidential documents may come.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

H. P. McCAIN,  
*The Adjutant General.*

## INDEX.

	Page.
Part I. General Staff .....	9
I. May 14, 1917 .....	9
1. Form of issue of instructions.....	9
2. Responsibility of recipients for custody of instructions and communication of extracts.....	9
3. List of recipients.....	10
4. General plan and detail of available forces.....	11
5. Frontage of corps.....	11
6. Objectives of corps.....	11
7. Distribution of divisions to sectors.....	11
8. Distribution of brigades for the attack.....	11
9. Flank divisions of neighboring corps.....	11
10. Boundaries of corps and divisions.....	12
11. Position of corps headquarters.....	12
12. Position of divisional headquarters.....	12
13. Date to which to work.....	12
14. Mines.....	13
15. Defensive flanks.....	13
16. Permanent parties for cable burying.....	13
17. Names of places not mentioned on maps.....	13
18. Use of private codes.....	13
19. Instructions as to model.....	13
20. Road agreement with Second Anzac Corps.....	13
21. List of publications on which plans are to be formed.....	13
22. Plans for employment of extra labor when available.....	14
23. Gas from cylinders.....	14
24. Colors of lines used to show bounds.....	14
25. Times of arrival and departure from lines by flanks of divisions.....	14
26. Arrangement with Tenth Corps regarding flanks of Nineteenth and Forty-first Divisions.....	15
27. Use of the rifle and bayonet.....	16
28. Instructions for raiding prior to night Y/Z.....	16
29. Outposts on night Y/Z.....	16
30. Intelligence officers' conferences.....	16

INDEX.

	Page.
I. 31. Battalion of reserve division for work under A. D. Signals .....	16
32. Systematic destruction of enemy's defenses .....	17
II. May 15, 1917 .....	17
33. Nomenclature of days and hours before or after Zero .....	17
34. Pioneer battalion of reserve division for work on trench tramways .....	17
35. Maps of our own lines .....	17
36. Cross-country tracks .....	17
37. Telephones in front line .....	18
38. Officers and other ranks left behind when unit attacks .....	18
III. May 20, 1917 .....	19
39. Signs + and - .....	19
40. Distinguishing marks .....	19
41. Sending back information .....	19
42. Necessity of pushing forward .....	19
43. Enemy ruses .....	19
44. Liaison with commanders on flanks .....	19
45. Synchronization of watches .....	19
46. Hostile wire .....	19
IV. May 21, 1917 .....	20
47. Allotment of roads in forward area .....	20
48. Cross-country tracks .....	20
49. Portable artillery bridges .....	20
50. Marking of farms, etc., in enemy lines .....	21
51. Extension of scope of operations .....	21
52. Method of carrying out extension of scope of operations .....	22
53. Tanks .....	23
V. May 22, 1917 .....	24
54. Rapidity in launching attack .....	24
55. Advance through our front-line system .....	24
56. Action if troops on flank are held up .....	24
57. Flags for marking positions of infantry .....	25
58. "SOS" signals. (See also instruction No. 70.) .....	25
VI. May 25, 1917 .....	25
59. Secrecy as to hour and date of Zero .....	25
60. Telescopic rifles .....	25
61. Battalions, batteries, etc., on march .....	25
62. Precautions against flashing bayonets .....	25

INDEX.

	Page.
VI. 63. Precautions against enemy aircraft flying low over trenches .....	25
VII. May 27, 1917 .....	25
64. System of communications to be ready for use .....	26
65. Special attention to be paid to wiring .....	26
VIII. May 31, 1917 .....	26
66. Further instructions re bombardment in paragraph 4 (f) .....	26
67. Balloons .....	27
IX. June 2, 1917 .....	27
68. Orders for assembly .....	28
X. June 5, 1917 .....	28
69. Destruction of captured guns .....	28
70. Further instructions to the "SOS" signal .....	28
XI. June 6, 1917 .....	28
71. Zero hour .....	28

APPENDIXES.

APPENDIX I. Machine guns .....	29
II. Gas and smoke from projectors and mortars .....	34
III. Notes and instructions in connection with the firing of mines .....	36
IV. Information concerning the enemy and his territory .....	39
V. Scale of ammunition, grenades, etc. ....	63
VI. A guide to the form in which narrative of operations should be forwarded to corps headquarters .....	67
VII. Signal communication .....	68
VIII. Contact patrols .....	76
IX. Trench tramways .....	78
X. Intelligence arrangements .....	80
XI. Employment of tunneling companies on dugouts and roads .....	84
A. List of headquarters .....	122
B. Billeting accommodation .....	123
C. Schaexken area—reserve division, Ninth Corps .....	124
D. Artillery units extra to divisional artilleries, etc. ....	129
E. Supply circuits .....	130
F. Reserve rations dumped at .....	131
G. Motor ambulance circuits .....	133

## INDEX.

## APPENDIX XI—Continued.

	Page.
H. Schedule of drinking-water stations in Ninth Corps area.....	134
K. 1. Personal.....	135
2. Traffic control posts.....	136
L. Battle straggler posts.....	142
N. Instructions regarding the division.....	145
MAPS.	
G. 1. Army front.....	146
G. 2. Corps front and boundaries.....	146
G. 3. Mines (to divisional commanders only).....	146
G. 4. Information of enemy country (in Appendix IV).....	146
G. 5. Wytshaete defenses (in Appendix IV).....	146
G. 6. Machine-gun barrage lines and approximate positions (in Appendix I).....	146

## NINTH CORPS INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE OFFENSIVE.

### PART I. GENERAL STAFF.

#### I. May 14, 1917.

1. All orders and instructions concerning the offensive which it may be necessary to issue up to and including the day before Zero will be issued in the form of "Ninth Corps Instructions for the Offensive." These instructions will be divided into three parts, the orders or instructions in each part being numbered consecutively from No. 1 onward:

Part I. General Staff (maps marked "G").

II. Artillery (maps marked "A").

III. Administrative (maps marked "Q").

2. Particular attention will be paid to maintaining strict secrecy with regard to impending operations.

The recipient of "Ninth Corps Instructions for the Offensive" is responsible for the custody of the documents and maps, and that only such portions of their contents as may be necessary are communicated to their subordinates from time to time as the situation demands.

On the other hand, information should be given to other officers that instructions have been received from G. H. Q. for preparations to be pushed forward for active operations to be carried out at short notice on this army front, but that the Arras-Vimy battle front remains the main battle front, and that any attack on this front is for the purpose of drawing the enemy's reserves away from the main battle front.

3. Copies of "Ninth Corps Instructions for the Offensive" will be issued to—

	Copy No.		Copy No.
Second army.....	1	Fifty-third Squadron, R.	5
Eighth Corps.....	2	F. C.....	6
Tenth Corps.....	3	No. 5 balloon company ---	7
Second Anzac Corps.....	4	O. C. tanks.....	8