of Mainz by the French (1794). A strong armed party of Austrians, endeavouring to escape across the Rhine to Kastel, were refused the use of the ferry boats until the regular payment was made, and actually laid down their arms to the enemy rather than break the law and seize the boats.

The cumulative influence of all these forces of retardation is easily followed. To avoid the cost of innumerable petty cash transactions with the inhabitants the troops were compelled to have recourse to the magazine system, which in turn tied them absolutely to the main roads; and the roads being numerous the army had to be broken up into small detachments to guard them. Thus the so-called “ cordon ” system grew out of its surroundings in a perfectly natural way, and was not due to the imbecility of the generals who employed it, but to the restraints placed upon them by custom and public feeling. Nothing more fortunate for the French could be imagined. Destitute of all the paraphernalia hitherto considered necessary, and com­pelled to fight at any cost in order to live, they found in these accumulated magazines and moving convoys the best possible bait to attract their starving men; relieved of all impedimenta, they could move freely through forests and marshes generally considered impracticable; and since from the magnitude of front covered, and the relatively small number of troops available, the allies could not oppose an unbroken front to their raids, they could swarm around the flanks of the positions and thus compel their evacuation. This struggle to safeguard or turn the flanks of positions led, as before in Marlborough’s time and in our own day in Manchuria and South Africa, to a competition in extension, and at Napoleon’s advent it was common to find armies of 20,000 to 30,000 men fighting desultory actions over a front of 20 to 30 m. This over-extension gave him his first opportunity, when the fire and energy he threw into his work, and the reckless disregard of human life he immediately displayed, stamped him at once as a born leader of men, and laid the foundation of that confidence in his guidance on the part of his troops which to the last proved his truest talisman of victory.

For the details of Napoleon’s evolution the reader is referred to the articles French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic Campaigns, and here it will suffice to point out the leading characteristics of those campaigns. Having swept the Austrians out of Sardinia, he turned against them in eastern Lombardy, and by a series of outflanking attacks threw them back into the Alps, defeating all their attempts to break out again by what is now known as a “ series of operations on interior lines.” All these were successful, not because of the form the operations took, but because the enormous increment of mobility he man­aged to impart to his men deprived his adversary of all accepted data by which to time his own combinations. It cannot with justice be said that the French won because they fought harder; but the rapid sequence of success confirmed both leader and men in a conviction of their combined superiority which led Napoleon in 1800 to the very brink of disaster. In 1796 through­out he was acting fairly in accordance with the teaching he had imbibed from his studies; in 1800 be appears as if seeking to determine how many of the established rules he could afford to neglect. We find him advancing to meet his adversary on a widely extended front without even exploring the country to learn where or in what strength that adversary stood. In 1805 this mistake is not repeated; a cavalry screen covers his advance, and his orders ate based on the intelligence it transmits. But this precaution also proves insufficient. Cavalry can only *see,* they cannot *hold\*,* and only a combination of circumstances which he could not by any possibility have foreseen prevents his enemy from evading the blow at the last moment. What the position of the French would have been had Mack carried out his intention of leaving Ulm and destroying all his accumu­lation of supplies can only be imagined. But contemporary evidence proves beyond doubt that Napoleon had already tried the endurance of his men to the utmost.

In 1806 the mistake of sole reliance on a cavalry screen is no longer repeated. The cavalry now is backed by a strong advanced guard, one quarter of the whole army, following behind it at short distance; and the whole command is now disposed in such a manner that no matter in what direction the enemy may appear it can concentrate in forty-eight hours to meet him. It is another form of the idea, prominent in British campaigns in the Sudan, of the advance in squares through the desert against a mobile enemy, the difference being that Napoleon’s great “bataillon carrée” has the advantage of mobility over its adversary. Concentration within forty- eight hours, however, would in itself be worse than useless unless the enemy stood fast to receive the Intended shock; and it was the special object of the strong advanced guards or flank detachments to secure that he should do so. This could only be attained by a resolute offensive; no mere feeling the enemy’s position would suffice to compel him to stand, and might even frighten him into retreat. Hence the task devolving upon the troops thus selected was essentially distinct from that usually connected with the idea of an advanced or flank guard, and involved the conception of purchasing with their lives and by the vigour of their action the time necessary for the rest of the army to deliver a decisive blow.

This is the true meaning of Napoleon’s maxim: *On ne manœuvre qu’autour d’un point fixe,* a phrase which has been much misunderstood. The troops first engaged fix the enemy by the vigour of their attack, and thus constitute a pivot about which the remainder can manœuvre.

Hitherto, however, the French armies had been operating in a country in which roughly one square mile of area would feed one thousand men for two days. Their freedom from convoys and other impedimenta enabled them to sweep out an area sufficient for their needs from day to day. But events now led them into a region in which this relation between the day’s march and their subsistence no longer obtained. The emperor in fact had formed no conception of the roadlessness and poverty of Poland and East Prussia. His men, no longer able to pick up their day’s food by a day’s march, rapidly fell off in condition and discipline (for short commons with the French always en­tailed marauding). As men and horses lost in condition the day’s march dwindled further, with the result that heavier demands were made on the supply columns; and these being improvised and entrusted to an untrained personnel, the sufferings of the troops became unendurable, while the mobility of the French army sank below that of the enemy. Under these conditions the system of the advanced guard could no longer be trusted to work. Moreover the Russians, though deficient in the dash necessary to win victories in attack, have always taken longer to defeat than any other continental troops, and in the short winter days of the first half of the Polish campaign the emperor had no longer time to beat them into dissolution. The Russians would fight all day and retreat at night. As they fell back along their communications their feeding was easy. The exhausted French could never overtake them, and the emperor was at length compelled to adopt an expectant attitude. Not before Friedland (June 14, 1807), when the days were long and the country dry and everywhere passable, did his calculations of time and space prove realized and the system justified by the results.

When in 1812 he again attempted to apply it at Vilna and Smolensk the Russians successfully repeated their tactics of evasion on every occasion, until, when they had fallen back to Borodino, their enemy had so far diminished that a battle in a selected position promised reasonable chances of success.

Meanwhile a fresh development in the tactics of the three arms added a new weapon to Napoleon’s armoury, rendering the application of his system or any variant of it markedly more certain and efficacious. Whilst the infantry which fought under Napoleon’s eagles had been steadily deteriorating, owing to the exorbitant demands his ceaseless marching campaigns had made upon them, the quality of his enemies had been as steadily improving. The growth of the sentiment of nationality had rendered it possible to throw aside the rigidity and impedi­ments of the old conditions. There was no longer any fear that men would desert if called on to bivouac or if rations failed to