Total War

The Germans have long devoted a large part of their national energies to both the study and the application of the science of war. The German Army which was built up under the Nazi regime and which challenged the world in 1939 was the final product of this study. It represented the fruition of decades of long-range planning, organization, experimentation, and mechanical development directed toward the sole end of creating a military instrument which would be a match for any foreseeable combination of adversaries. Supported by the entire economic, political, and psychological resources of a totalitarian government, it was destined to overrun almost the whole of Europe in a series of victorious campaigns unequaled since the days of Napoleon. The three greatest nations on earth were forced to muster all their human and material power to crush the German military machine by the only possible method—overwhelming superiority of force.

Total war is neither a modern invention nor a German monopoly. But total mobilization, in the sense of the complete and scientific control of all the efforts of the nation for the purposes of war, and total utilization of war as an instrument of national policy have been developed to their highest degree by the German militarists. Central control and careful coordination, by qualified experts, of a military machine which is built with all the best available materials and put together for the highest efficiency of operation have been the secret of such military victories as the Germans have achieved.

It is the purpose of this Handbook to describe this military machine in all its aspects. No one of the supporting pillars of the German Army— its personnel, its High Command, its administrative structure, its unit organization, its weapons, its tactical doctrines—can stand or fall alone. The various chapters and sections which follow must be studied together as various facets of a whole.