



TACTICS

GENERAL TACTICAL DOCTRINES

Basic Doctrines

An outstanding characteristic of the German nation is its fondness for everything connected with militarism. This is based not only on traditional sentiment but also on long-range and intense education that glorifies the military spirit. This gives the German military leaders the essential foundation for aggressive military operations.

The Germans believe that only the offensive can achieve success on the field, particularly when combined with the element of surprise. German military literature, for the past century, has emphasized the need for aggressiveness in all military operations.

The Germans have been thoroughly aware of the psychological component in warfare and have developed systematic terrorization to a high degree.

At the same time they have placed considerable reliance on novel and sensational weapons such as the mass use of armor, the robot bomb, and the super-heavy tank. Their principal weaknesses in this regard have been their failure to integrate these new techniques with established arms and tactics—German field artillery, for example, did not maintain pace with German armor—and their devotion to automatic weapons at the expense of accuracy.

A highly trained officer corps and a thoroughly disciplined army are the necessary elements to implement this aggressive philosophy. German tactical doctrines stress the responsibility and the initiative of subordinates. The belief of former years that the German Army was inflexible and lacking in initiative has been completely destroyed in this war, in which aggressive and daring leadership has been responsible for many bold decisions. Yet, while the Germans have many excellent tacticians, they tend to repeat the same type of maneuvers, a fact which has been fully exploited by Allied commanders.

The German specialization in particular types of warfare such as mountain, desert, winter, or the attack on fortified positions, showed thorough preparation and ingenuity. At the same time the Germans had been quite willing to learn from their opponents and on numerous occasions have copied Allied tactics and weapons.

Recent Tactical Trends

From the time when the German Army was forced on the defensive by the Allied armies, German tactical doctrines have undergone modifications such as renunciation (except in unstated instances) of air support, and the substitution of linear defense for elastic offensive defense.

The primary goal of Germany today is to gain time and to achieve victory in a political sense, since the Germans are no longer capable of a military victory. Of necessity their military operations now supplement this effort and have become a large-scale delaying action.