



# The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform

*James S. Corum*

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Following Germany's defeat in World War I, the Germans signed the Versailles Treaty, superficially agreeing to limit their war powers. The Allies envisioned the future German army as a lightly armed border guard and international security force. The Germans had other plans.

As early as 1919, James Corum contends, the tactical foundations were being laid for the Nazi Blitzkrieg. Between 1919 and 1933, German military leaders created and nurtured the Reichswehr, a new military organization built on the wreckage of the old Imperial Army. It was not being groomed for policing purposes.

Focusing on Hans von Seeckt, General Staff Chief and Army Commander, Corum traces the crucial transformations in German military tactical doctrine, organization, and training that laid the foundations for fighting Germany's future wars. In doing so, he restores balance to prior assessment of von Seeckt's influence and demonstrates how the general, along with a few other "visionary" officers—including armor tactician Ernst Volckheim and air tactician Helmut Wilberg—collaborated to develop the core doctrine for what became the Blitzkrieg.

The concepts of mobile war so essential to Germany's strength in World War II, Corum shows, were in place well before the tools became available. As an unforeseen consequence of the Versailles Treaty, the Germans were not saddled with a stockpile of outdated equipment as the Allies were. This, ironically, resulted in an advantage for the Germans, who were able to create doctrine first and design equipment to match it.

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