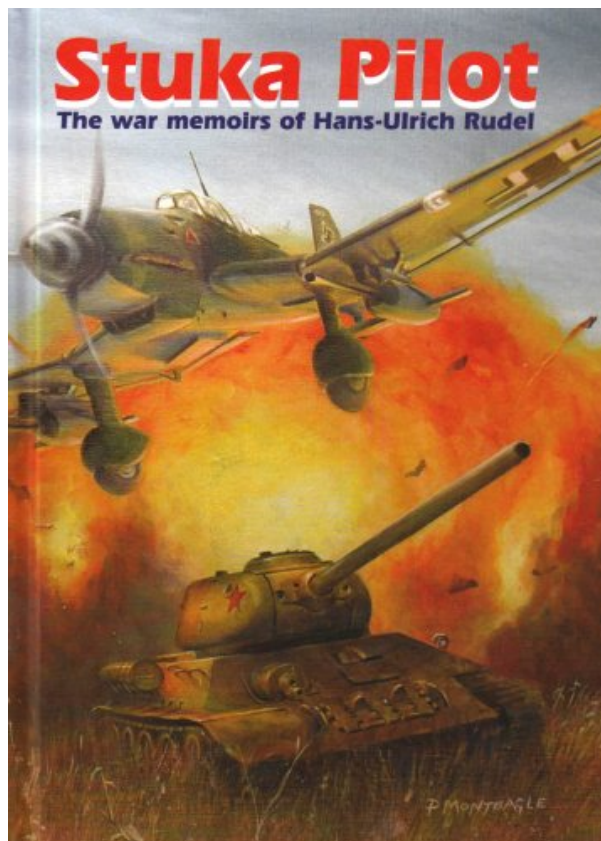
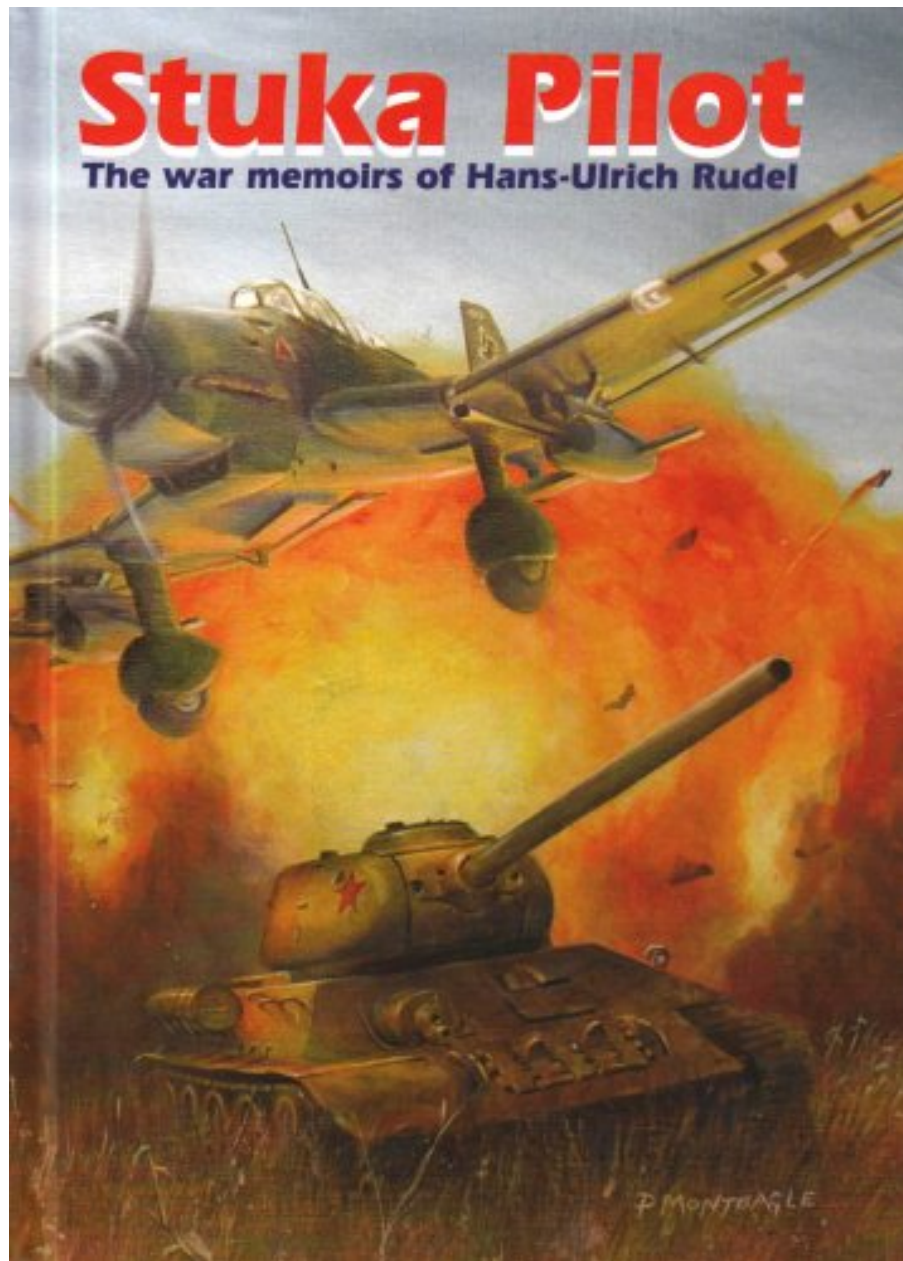


STUKA PILOT: THE WAR MEMOIRS OF HANS-ULRICH RUDEL BY HANS-ULRICH RUDEL



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About the Author

The life story of the highest decorated soldier of the Wehrmacht. Many photos of Rudels aircraft.

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The life story of the highest decorated soldier of the Wehrmacht. Many photos of Rudels aircraft.

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Most helpful customer reviews

29 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

A Must Read For Any Student of History. Compelling, Engrossing, and Educational...

By Dr.M.Lawicki

I had never heard of the pilot Hans Ulrich Rudel until I saw his name mentioned several times while leafing through a few older books about the Luftwaffe. When I noticed his incredible list of wartime exploits, I have to admit I was intrigued enough to learn more about him. His career was meteoric to say the least, yet began in a very unorthodox manner when contrasted with the more widely known Luftwaffe aces of his day. Deemed a slow learner and a pilot of 'mediocre' abilities by his superiors, Rudel was not considered a suitable fighter pilot candidate and was subsequently assigned to observation and reconnaissance missions at the very beginning of the war. His early career in the Luftwaffe seemed to be characterized by bitterness and strife when dealing with his superior officers. The charismatic Rudel was nevertheless determined to make a difference in the war and prove his superiors mistaken in their gross underestimation of his abilities. In the rigidly disciplined Luftwaffe, having an aggressive personality or being an outspoken individual could be detrimental--if not terminal--to a young pilots fledgling career. Fortunately for Rudel, he managed to get himself transferred to dive bombing training in 1940, where he quickly learned to perfect the new military discipline with devastating efficiency. His outspoken nature and stubborn individualism was soon enough overlooked as he began to lead his fellow Stuka pilots and perform exceptionally well on their dangerous missions. Having discovered his true calling at last, Rudel began immediately to make his presence felt in the German war effort. Rudels remarkable accomplishments came in rapid succession, enabling him to develop a legendary name for himself while imprinting fear into the hearts and minds of his Soviet opponents (much like Baron Manfred Von Richtoffen did in the First World War on the Western Front). Although the point is debatable, it is easy to understand how Hans Ulrich Rudel might be considered the most valuable soldier in the Second World War. In all, he flew over 2,500 combat missions, downed 11 enemy aircraft, destroyed:

519 tanks, 4 armored trains, several bridges, over 1000 trucks and transport vehicles, 70 landing craft, two battle cruisers, a destroyer, and the Soviet Battleship Marat. Is it any wonder that Josef Stalin placed the highest bounty on Rudel's head? On several occasions he landed behind enemy lines to rescue downed airmen from his unit, and on one momentous occasion things went disastrously wrong--but I won't spoil the harrowing story for you, the reader. His accomplishments were so impressive that Hitler himself insisted on creating a new award to distinguish Rudel from all other German military and civilian aces and heroes of the day. Thus, Rudel was the only soldier in Germany to earn 'The Knights Cross of the Iron Cross with GOLDEN Oak Leaves, Swords, and Diamonds. The book started out a tad slow for my liking, but became a damned good read once Rudel found his true calling in 1940. What fascinated me the most about this book is the sporadic insight we are given into the nature and inner workings of the German military machine and the German High Command itself. I also enjoyed reading about his interactions with the notable personalities of Hermann Goering and Adolf Hitler in particular. One can gather that Hitler held Rudel in very high esteem, since he allowed very few people to publicly disagree with him or express their true thoughts in his presence-- as Rudel often did. Knowing full well that Germany had lost the war, Rudel had the audacity near the end of the conflict to ask Hitler why Germany couldn't surrender to the Western Allies in order to continue their fight against the Soviet Union unhindered. The fact that Hitler took the time to patiently explain to Rudel why this wasn't an option for Germany further demonstrates the astonishing respect Hitler must have had for him. Any other military officer in Germany mentioning inconvenient truths in front of Hitler at this point in time--hero or no--would have been quickly hauled away and shot for defeatism. To this day, Hans Ulrich Rudel remains the most decorated combat pilot of any nation in the history of warfare. Rudel was, beyond a doubt, one of the toughest, bravest, and most charismatic human beings produced by our species. He was an incredibly skilled pilot supremely successful at what he did, and his incomparable exploits on the Eastern Front make these memoirs a compelling read. It is for these reasons that I recommend this book to all readers regardless of political beliefs, religious affiliation, or any moral reservations due to Rudel's unrepentant allegiance to Nazi Germany and the person of Adolf Hitler.

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

A terse and simply told story of what it was like to fly a Stuka on the Russian Front.

By Fantasyman

A very straight-forward and simply told story. Rudel was Germany's premier Stuka pilot of the war. He flew over 2500 missions, destroyed over 500 Russian tanks, and did this all while flying an outdated, practically obsolete aircraft. Rudel is unapologetic about his support for the German cause, unlike many, he never hid his faith and support of Hitler, during the war or after. Rudel was one of Hitler's favorite heroes, he was awarded his decorations by the Fuhrer himself on numerous occasions. Ordered not to continue flying, he disobeyed the orders and continued to fly combat missions, even after losing a leg!

If you ever wondered how the German army managed to hold out so long on the Eastern Front against the overwhelming superiority of the Russian war machine, you should read this book.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

The incredible but true story of the most highly-decorated combat pilot in history

By Andrew Brennan

A largely unknown story in the west, of the most highly decorated soldier on any side, in any service, in World War Two. Typical style for men of that time, everything is understated, and the most hair-raising stories are related with a self-deprecating brevity that really breathes life into the term "laconic".

Demonized post-war to the point of having an unrecoverable reputation because of his adamant refusal to recant his Nazism, Rudel was essentially unknown outside the ranks of historians and serious aviation buffs until the 1990s. This is especially true in America, where appreciation for the titanic struggle known by the Germans as the "Ostfront" was always overshadowed by events like Normandy and the Bulge.

Rudel's individual story is marked with stunning examples of gallantry and incredible ballsiness. His sense of duty, self-sacrifice and "get it done" is almost incomprehensible in the modern world. His approach to fighting the Soviets would be more fitting for a knight in the Crusades fighting the Saracens. He was a true believer in the idea that allowing Europe to be overrun by the Soviets would be a disaster, and this is what drove his repeated defiance of Hitler during the final year of the war, when he continued to fly combat missions despite repeated orders to stand down and injuries that would've grounded a lesser man.

I won't go into the enormous number of combat missions he flew, the dozens of skin-of-your-teeth escapes from what looked like certain death, or the decimating impact he had on Soviet armor, other than to say this: as Oswald Boelcke largely invented universally-respected combat tactics for fighter aircraft during World War One, so Rudel did during the next war for the world of close air support. He essentially pioneered the concept of hunting tanks from the air, and proved to be the most deadly practitioner of that art in history, with well over 500 tank kills to his credit.

The most important thing for me in this book is that these adventures are conveyed in Rudel's own words. If you can get over the fact that he was a Nazi, then by all means read the book and learn something of the mind-blowing effectiveness of the greatest soldier produced by Germany, and one of the greatest in the history of warfare. If the story of this unassuming man were fiction, it would be dismissed as impossible to believe. But it's reality, and that's the most amazing thing.

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