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Achtung - Panzer! (Cassell Military Classics)



Synopsis

A rare, enlightening account by an outstanding soldier reveals his thoughts and theories on armored warfare and motorized land battle--which he then put in action to devastating effect during World War Two. Guderian's treatise on the importance of tank development, and on modern mechanized technology, shows exactly why the Germans dominated land warfare in the early stage of the fighting.

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Customer Reviews

Born in 1888, Heinz Guderian served in World War One, came to Hitler's attention in 1935, was made corps commander of Panzer troops and promoted to General in 1938. His tanks were greatly successful in the invasions of Poland and France and, perceived as pro-Nazi, Guderian was much in favour. However, when the Russian invasion failed in the winter of 1941, Guderian was forced to resign, not to regain his position until 1944, when the war was all but lost. He died in Bavaria in 1954.

Anyone who has studied the history of mobile warfare has been exposed indirectly to Guderian's precepts, but nowhere are they more coherently and simply explained than by the master himself. Most of this book is a history of World War I on the western front, but written in a way to draw conclusions, as sort of a giant debriefing examining where both sides screwed up. He lays out the evidence with hard numbers that destroys the arguments of his contemporaries, who advocated

dispersing tanks and tying them to the pace of the infantry. He examines where the French and British hit on the right formula, and where they made mistakes and failed to exploit their tremendous success with massed tank attacks. Written in 1937, he spells out what Germany must do to exploit modern technology to avoid the stalemate of the Great War, and create a rapid victory. He describes the creation of Germany's Panzer divisions in detail that her enemies would have done well to study. It is rare for a man who was a vigorous, lead-from-the-front combat leader to have also the writing skill to put his well-reasoned studies into interesting form; hence the rare value of this volume. This belongs in your collection.

Heinz Guderian, *Achtung-Panzer: The Development of Tank Warfare* (London: Cassell, 1992). Originally written in 1937, Guderian's analysis of tank warfare would turn out to be seminal. Pointing out the changed nature of warfare with the introduction of poison gas, the airplane and the submarine during World War I, he accentuated the importance of tank warfare with the very crucial addition of motorized infantry, and declared that if panzer forces were "full of verve" and "fanatically committed to progress" they would "restore the offensive power of the army." He was correct and the resulting German blitzkrieg would turn out to be the revolution he had envisioned. Note: Germany may have had its Guderian and Great Britain its Liddel Hart and Fuller, but America had George S. Patton who, writing in the *Cavalry Journal* (May, 1920), wrote a splendid little provocative piece entitled "Tanks in Future Wars" (pp. 342-346) about the need to focus on tanks as an armored force and not scatter them in among infantry and artillery. He concluded, "The tank corps grafted onto infantry, cavalry, artillery, or engineers will be like the third leg of a duck; worthless for control, and for combat impotent." Patton was immediately told to cease and desist by the powers that were if he wished to continue in the U. S. Army. For his part, Captain D. D. Eisenhower, wrote a contemporary piece for the *Infantry Journal* entitled, "A Tank Discussion" (November 1920), pp. 453-458. In it Eisenhower tries to make the case for keeping tanks as part of the equipment of the infantry units. Taken together, these two articles show what thin gruel were the American musings after World War I about an armor revolution in warfare. For Patton's war recollections, see his posthumously published *War As I Knew*.

The correct thinking of a military general who goes into battle with the object of saving as many of his men as possible as opposed to the earlier thought of as much cannon fodder as you have available the better chance you have of winning. Guderian proved fewer men and more tanks was a

better way to go. Like Rommel and Macarthur, he actually cared about his men and saw each of them as human beings to be preserved if possible.

The technical memoirs of a superb military mind. He called the result Blitzkrieg; we call it, today, combined arms operations. This is a work by a German professional soldier, a product of the German General Staff, and a superb field commander. Had Hitler not intervened and ordered a stand down for three days, it is likely that Guderian and von Rundstedt would have captured the entire British army at Dunkirk. This result by the application of Guderian's theories on combined operations and the role of armor (tanks) in modern warfare. If you are a fan of military history and want a better understanding of the changes in warfare wrought in WW II, this is a book for you.

some of it applies to today's warfare and as an Army Officer it was a good read. the only reason it only gets 4 stars is too much of it focused on German unit organization and not applicable to today's US armor units.

I enjoy reading military and conflict history. To get a sense of scope of a world-war or even the small and large scale aspects of the trenches is difficult, to comprehend the experiences either political, strategic, tactical or personal requires a lot of reading. Recommended authors might include Keegan, Wilmott, Sir Alasdair Horne, Ernst Junger, Robert Graves or Guy Sajer (ww2). There is however something different about the style that Guderian uses. Junger and Graves and others like Guy Sajer speak of personal impact and effect and horror of physical in contact battle. Sir Alistair Horne refers to some of this in his excellent book on Verdun whilst also trying to reference all layers of the conflict and flawed thinking of leadership and the costs. There is something of value in the way that Guderian writes with detachment and clinical surgical observation that makes one appreciate tactics at the divisional level. He speaks in 20/20 hindsight of designs in the success and failure of various tactics in numerous battles during WW1. The 'such and such division' were wiped out. The excellence of the British operation at Cambria, the failure of the German response to the new weapon. All written in a clear fashion to help influence the high-command in creation of tank forces in the late 30's. Excellent, and different to the gore and personal cost expressed by Graves in Goodbye to all that or Alasdair Horne's Verdun. Mandatory WWI and WWII reading!

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