

Hitler's Commanders: The German Action In The Field 1939-1945

Adolf Hitler, the infamous dictator of Nazi Germany, was not alone in orchestrating the atrocities of World War II. He commanded a formidable army, led by a group of infamous commanders who played vital roles in executing Hitler's strategies in the field. These commanders possessed unparalleled military prowess, cunning tactics, and unwavering loyalty to the Nazi cause.

From the early successes to the eventual downfall of the Third Reich, these commanders stamped their mark and were often feared by both allies and enemies alike. In this in-depth article, we will delve into the profiles of some of Hitler's most influential and notorious commanders, examining their contributions, strategies, and impact on the German action in the field during the years of 1939 to 1945.

1. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, known for his outstanding tactical skills and leadership abilities, played a crucial role in numerous German victories during the early years of the war. He took charge of several major campaigns, including the invasion of France, where his meticulous planning and calm presence under pressure earned him accolades.

Hitler's Commanders: German Action in the Field, 1939–1945 by James Lucas(Kindle Edition)

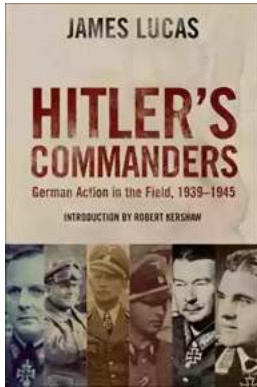
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Von Rundstedt's leadership prowess extended further in his command of Army Group South during Operation Barbarossa, Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. Though ultimately unsuccessful, his brilliant strategic maneuvers inflicted substantial damage on the Red Army, stretching its supply lines and causing confusion among its ranks.

His later years saw him overwhelmed by the immense pressure of waging war on multiple fronts. Nonetheless, von Rundstedt remained a key figure until the very end, participating in the defense of Germany against the Allied forces as they closed in from both the east and the west.

2. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

No discussion about Hitler's commanders would be complete without mentioning Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, also known as the Desert Fox. Known for his tactical brilliance and audacious nature, Rommel played a pivotal role in numerous German victories during the North African campaign.

Rommel's ability to inspire his troops and lead from the front became legendary. His surprising maneuvers, including the swift capture of Tobruk and the

successful defense against superior Allied forces, earned him the respect of both his soldiers and his adversaries.

Rommel's strategic genius was also evident during the invasion of France, where he commanded the 7th Panzer Division, nicknamed the Ghost Division. His lightning-fast armored thrusts caught the French by surprise and contributed significantly to Germany's rapid victory.

However, Rommel's fortunes began to decline as the war progressed. His involvement in the July Plot to assassinate Hitler led to his downfall and forced him to commit suicide to avoid a public trial. Nonetheless, his military legacy lives on as one of Germany's most revered commanders.

3. General Wilhelm Keitel

General Wilhelm Keitel, the Chief of the Armed Forces High Command, played a pivotal role in carrying out Hitler's orders and ensuring the execution of Nazi policies. As one of Hitler's most loyal followers, Keitel supervised the German war effort, coordinating operations and maintaining discipline within the military hierarchy.

Keitel's unquestioning obedience to Hitler earned him the moniker "Lackey of the Führer." Despite lacking significant combat experience, Keitel exerted tremendous influence, especially in matters of planning and strategy. He oversaw the development of Germany's war plans and played a key role in the planning and execution of major offensives, including the invasion of Poland and the Battle of France.

However, Keitel's incompetence, subservience, and involvement in war crimes eventually caught up with him. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, he stood trial at

the Nuremberg Trials, where he was found guilty and sentenced to death for his role in war crimes.

4. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel

Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, another prominent German commander, held a position of immense authority as the head of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces. His loyalty to Hitler was unwavering, and he played a significant role in implementing Hitler's strategic directives.

Keitel's influence extended to all areas of the German military, from the Eastern Front to the Western Front. He oversaw the planning and execution of major operations, including the Battle of Stalingrad and the Ardennes Offensive, commonly known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Keitel's unwavering support for Hitler often clashed with the realities of the war. Despite recognizing the deteriorating situation on the Eastern Front, he relentlessly advocated for Hitler's unreasonable demands, often leading to disastrous consequences.

After Germany's defeat, Keitel, like General Wilhelm Keitel, faced trial at the Nuremberg Trials and was found guilty of war crimes, leading to his subsequent execution.

5. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, a highly decorated commander, exhibited exceptional military leadership throughout his career. He played a crucial role in numerous campaigns, including the invasions of Poland and France.

Kesselring's most notable achievement came with his command of German forces in Italy. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Theater, he

devised strategic plans for the defense of Italy, employing a combination of tenacity and cunning to fend off numerous Allied assaults.

Known for his ability to motivate his troops and exploit weaknesses in the enemy's defenses, Kesselring earned the admiration of both friend and foe. His successful defense of the Gustav Line at Monte Cassino further solidified his reputation as a skilled and formidable commander.

Despite his undeniable military prowess, Kesselring's last years were marred by his association with war crimes, including the infamous massacre at Marzabotto. He was sentenced to death for these crimes but later had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment, ultimately serving only a few years before being released.

The German action in the field from 1939 to 1945 was heavily influenced by the strategic minds of Hitler's commanders. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, General Wilhelm Keitel, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, and Field Marshal Albert Kesselring all left an indelible mark on the military conduct of Nazi Germany during this period.

While their contributions varied from brilliant strategic maneuvers to blind loyalty and involvement in war crimes, there is no denying the significant impact these commanders had on Hitler's reign and the course of World War II. Studying their profiles and actions allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and horrors of this dark chapter in history.

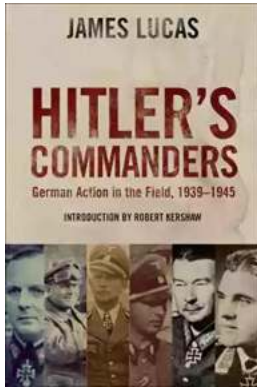
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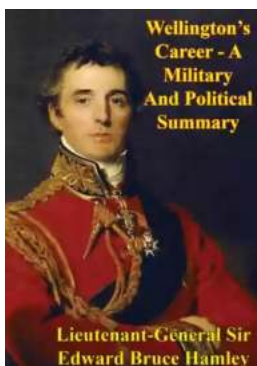
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As absolute as Hitler's control over the German war machine was, it depended on the ability, judgment and unquestioning loyalty of the senior officers charged with putting his ideas, however difficult, into effect. Top military historian James Lucas examines the stories of fourteen of these men: all of different rank, from varied backgrounds, and highly awarded, they exemplify German military prowess at its most dangerous. Among his subjects are Eduard Dietl, the commander of German forces in Norway and Eastern Europe; Werner Kampf, one of the most successful Panzer commanders of the war; and Kurt Meyer, commander of the Hitler Youth Division and one of Germany's youngest general officers. The author, one of the leading experts on all aspects of German military conduct of the Second World War, offers the reader a rare look into the nature of the German Army a curious mix of individual strength, petty officialdom and pragmatic action.



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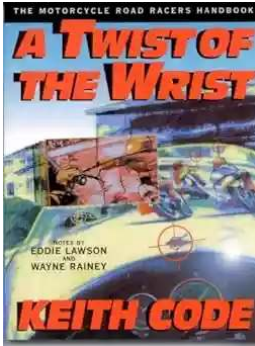
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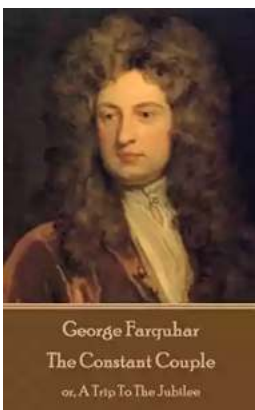
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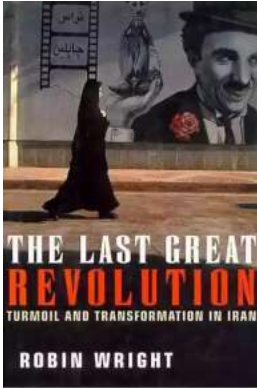
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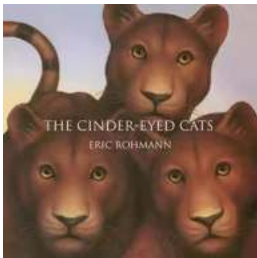
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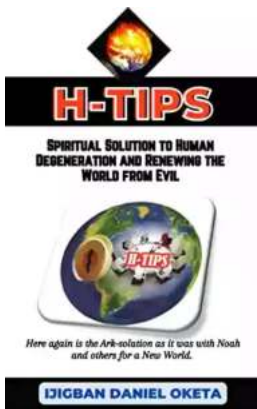
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