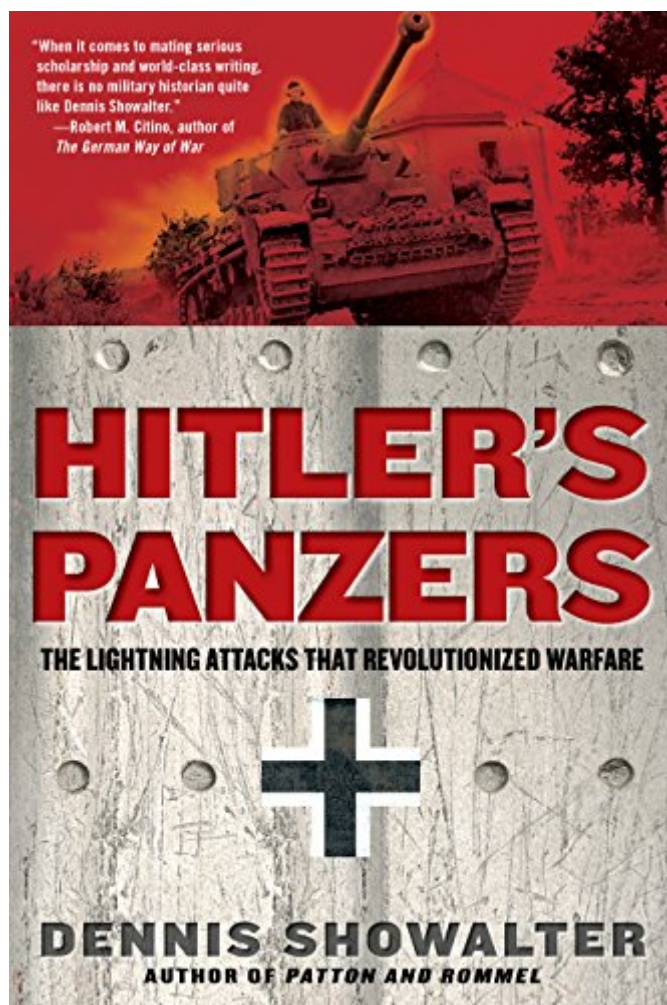


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Hitler's Panzers: The Lightning Attacks That Revolutionized Warfare



Synopsis

A fascinating account of Nazi Germany's armored forces by the author of Patton and Rommel. Determined to secure a quick, decisive victory on the World War II battlefields, Adolf Hitler adopted an attack plan that combined tools with technique- the formidable Panzer divisions. Self-contained armored units able to operate independently, the Panzers became the German army's fighting core as well as its moral focus, establishing an entirely new military doctrine. In Hitler's Panzers, renowned World War II scholar Dennis Showalter presents a comprehensive and unbiased study of Nazi Germany's armored forces. By delving deeply into a detailed history of the theory, strategy, myths, and realities of Germany's technologically innovative approach to warfare, Showalter provides a look at the military lessons of the past, and a speculation on how the Panzer ethos may be implemented in the future of international conflict.

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Customer Reviews

To provide a reader of this assessment with my viewpoint, I read a great deal of history and always have, but am not a proper scholastic historian. I generally have an engineer's personality by both

training and temperament. I have read about the tactics of the Panzers, as well as numerous technical assessment of the various tanks used by all sides in WWII, as have most technical folks interested WWII history. I have deduced some of the more general thinking, beliefs, and attitudes of the German Wehrmacht that produced the tactics, which I have found are rarely directly addressed in most books. This author addresses them directly. It was great fun to read his assessments on the particular German historical circumstances and national character that generated the views and solutions that manifested as the tactics we saw in WW II. He writes in a manner that is easy to read and flows well, unlike some authors whose styles are either too technical (like reading a technical white paper), too touchie-feelie, or simply too fanatical (I don't care if the fanaticism is pro or nay, it makes for tiring reading). I would recommend this book to any one who has read other material on the armament and tactics of WWII, and wants to follow that reading with an informative book on a broader aspect of the tactics used in WWII (but still focused on the particulars of the German experience and the German character). I don't think this book makes a good "stand-alone" book on the subject; too much background knowledge is assumed. However, for folks who have read other histories, especially folks like me that have read books that focus on specific campaigns, battles, or technical aspects of the armor used in WWII, or perhaps more general books on the rise and fall of the Third Reich, I think this book is a very worthwhile adder.

This is a great book! I was, quite frankly, surprised. For the princely price of \$.001, plus shipping of course, I discovered a real treasure. Showalter apparently uses some of his students to help him compile information and then puts this information together with real insight. I have read a host of books about the Panzerwaffe and this is one of the best. This one is a real keeper.

In the Introduction to this book, the author claims that he is putting together three narratives regarding the panzers: "the development of mechanized war and armored technology; their influence on the role of the army in German culture and society; and their role in the Third Reich's conduct of World War II - militarily and morally." As you can see from my rating - three stars - I think that the author achieved some of his goals and that this book is an OK book, but not great. In structure, this is a historical volume that handles armored warfare as developed and practiced by the German army between 1918 and 1945. In the early years, of course, the Germans could not have any armored formations so most of the story focuses on their development of the doctrine of armored warfare that they would come to practice in World War 2. These parts of the book also describe the development of the various series of panzers. One of my negative impressions of this

book relate to the fact that even though the author spends many words describing the various machines, there is not one single photograph or sketch to be found in this whole volume. Adding such photos would have lent much more credibility to statements that go like this: "... leading to its distinctive shape...". How distinctive is this shape? To find out, I had to go on line and do my own research. Once World War 2 is joined, the book describes the major campaigns and how they were fought from the panzers perspectives. The book tries to give the reader a sense of the different organizations and how they were formed by taking some space from time to time to describe the organizations changes, both numeric and content ones, and explaining why they were being done. The author also gives an idea of how later in the war, most of the formations were hollow shells and had very few armor units in them. This description takes us all the way through the rest of the war, until it ended with the complete disintegration of the Wehrmacht. The second negative point that I found in this book is the lack of maps to accompany the descriptions of the battles and campaigns that occupy prominent descriptions in the book. There are a series of five maps at the beginning of the book, but they are at such a high level that they can only show the broad strokes of the campaign. While the author spends many pages on the Kursk battle, there is no way to follow its course on that map which shows the span from Germany though most of Russia. This is a shame because the battle descriptions would make much more sense if the readers could actually understand the wheeling and action that was taking place. Another part that appears to be near and dear to the author's heart is the puncturing of various myths, and he uses parts of this book to attempt to do so. So, for instance, he claims that the German 88 mm Flak guns were not really as good as anti-armor guns as their reputation and that most of the kills attributed to them were actually made by other devices. On the other hand, he also points out how scrupulously each German unit recorded each of their kills. So, which is it? Did the 88 record the kills, or did other units? On that part the author is silent. Similarly he takes great pains to discuss Rommel and the dessert campaign and attempt to paint it, the officer, and the results as not being quite as glamorous as imagined in film and legend. Yet, at the same time, he does not mince words in making the British Army and its commanders appear completely incompetent. At one point he states that the British viewed armor as horses with engines and used their tanks accordingly. He addresses the problems with supply and states that Rommel was wrong to attack as often as he did given his long logistical tail and how thin it was, yet at the same time he points out that Rommel did all of this with only a few divisions! This was the third major negative observation I have about the book, the author states that the legends are wrong, but then does not really convince the reader that he is correct. My fourth complaint is that this book must have been deeply researched but there is no way to verify

this. At times the author cites the works of other authors in his text and calls them out by name; but he does not give the name of the book or article in which that other author made his case. Nor is there a bibliography, footnotes, or any other way to go to his sources and see what they said. While these footnotes and the like can make a book look too academic for a general readership, the lack of any attribution of sources is a serious mistake and takes away from this book's value. Finally, I am curious why there was such poor editing of this book? Frequently I found mis-spelled words and sentences that did not make any grammatical sense. Here is simply one example from page 222: "Men, tanks, and ammunition: the Soviets seemed to have limitless supplies of each, and committed them regardless of losses everywhere along the German reinforcements arrived in driblets." Huh? The good parts of this book are that it does attempt to document what the panzers did and how they did it. Clearly the tank crews were very well trained, organized, and lead. This is obvious when one commonly reads the sections in the book that point out how several hundred German tanks withstood attacks by thousands of Russian tanks accompanied by thousands of airplanes, thousands of artillery pieces and hundreds of thousands of infantrymen. Similarly on the Western front, it is obvious from the numbers that the German tankers were far superior to anyone they encountered. As a study of the armored slice of the war, this book gives you a good basic overview of what took place, and in many cases, why it took place the way it did.

Well done

Eminently readable this book synthesizes much information into an easily digestible read that is not dry or academic. Would recommend.

this is a must-have for Dennis Showalter fans. His style of writing is easy to read and keeps me going for hours at a time.

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