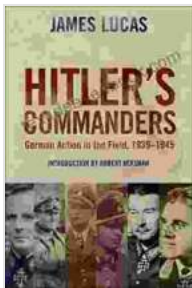


# Hitler's Commanders: German Action in the Field, 1939-1945

The German military machine that spearheaded Hitler's aggressive campaigns in World War II was guided by a cadre of highly skilled and experienced commanders. These men played a pivotal role in shaping the course of the war, from the lightning-fast conquests of 1939 to the bitter defeats of 1945.



## Hitler's Commanders: German Action in the Field,

**1939–1945** by James Lucas

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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In this comprehensive article, we will delve into the lives and careers of some of the most prominent German commanders. We will examine their backgrounds, their strategic choices, and their impact on the outcome of the war.

## The Commanders

1. **Gerd von Rundstedt:** A highly respected and experienced field marshal, Rundstedt commanded German forces in the invasion of Poland, the Battle of France, and Operation Barbarossa. He was known for his cautious and methodical approach to warfare.
2. **Erwin Rommel:** The "Desert Fox," Rommel was a brilliant tactician who led the Afrika Korps in North Africa. His innovative tactics and charismatic leadership earned him widespread admiration.
3. **Heinz Guderian:** A pioneer of armored warfare, Guderian played a key role in the development of the Wehrmacht's Blitzkrieg tactics. He commanded armored divisions in Poland, France, and the Soviet Union.
4. **Erich von Manstein:** A brilliant strategist, Manstein commanded German forces in the Crimea, the Siege of Sevastopol, and the Ardennes Offensive. He was known for his ability to outmaneuver his opponents.
5. **Wilhelm Keitel:** As Chief of the Armed Forces High Command (OKW), Keitel was responsible for coordinating the actions of all branches of the German military. He played a key role in planning and executing Hitler's campaigns.
6. **Hermann Göring:** As Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, Göring oversaw the development and deployment of the German air force. He was a close confidant of Hitler and a key figure in the Nazi hierarchy.
7. **Heinrich Himmler:** As head of the SS and the Gestapo, Himmler was responsible for carrying out Hitler's genocidal policies and maintaining internal security. He was a fanatical ideologue and a major architect of the Holocaust.

## **Early Careers**

Many of Hitler's commanders had distinguished military careers before the outbreak of World War II. Rundstedt, for example, served in the German army during World War I and rose to the rank of general by the early 1930s. Rommel also had a distinguished career in the Weimar Republic, serving as a military instructor and commanding a mountain battalion.

Other commanders, such as Guderian and Manstein, were pioneers in their respective fields. Guderian developed innovative tactics for armored warfare, while Manstein devised new strategies for offensive operations.

## **The War Years**

With the outbreak of World War II, Hitler's commanders played a crucial role in the German military's early successes. Rundstedt led the invasion of Poland and the Battle of France, while Rommel's Afrika Korps fought a brilliant campaign in North Africa.

As the war progressed, the German commanders faced increasingly difficult challenges. Guderian's armored forces were stopped at the Battle of Kursk, while Manstein's Ardennes Offensive was a costly failure. In the end, Hitler's commanders were unable to overcome the overwhelming forces of the Allies.

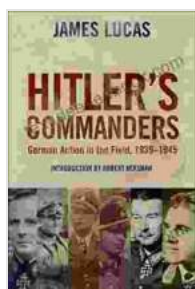
## **Aftermath**

After the war, many of Hitler's commanders were tried for war crimes at the Nuremberg Trials. Several, including Keitel, Göring, and Himmler, were sentenced to death. Others, such as Rundstedt, were acquitted.

The legacy of Hitler's commanders is complex and controversial. They were highly skilled and experienced military leaders who played a key role in Germany's early successes in the war. However, they were also instrumental in carrying out Hitler's genocidal policies and contributing to the suffering of millions.

Hitler's commanders were a diverse group of men who played a significant role in the course of World War II. Their skills, experience, and strategic choices shaped the outcome of major battles and campaigns. While they were undoubtedly instrumental in Germany's early successes, they were ultimately unable to overcome the overwhelming forces of the Allies.

The legacy of Hitler's commanders remains a fascinating and controversial topic. They were skilled military leaders who contributed to some of the greatest victories and some of the most horrific defeats of the war.



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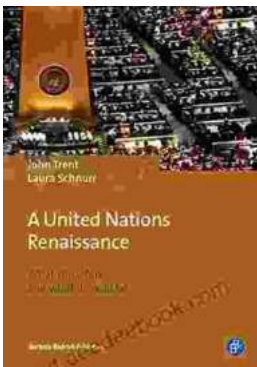
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