

From Normandy to the Ruhr: With the 116th Panzer Division in World War II

By Heinz Gunther Guderian



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Normandy . . . Arnhem . . . Aachen . . . the Hürtgen Forest . . . the Ardennes Offensive . . . the Reichswald . . . the Ruhr Pocket . . . Only the men of one unit on either side fought in them all--the 116th Panzer Division!

Organized in France in March, 1944 from elements of the 16th Panzer-Grenadier Division and the 179th Reserve Panzer Division, the 116th Panzer Division was one of the relatively rare German armored formations that fought exclusively on the Western Front. As a result, its opponents included some of the most formidable and famous US Army units of World War II, including the 1st, 4th, 28th, 29th, and 30th Infantry Divisions, and the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 8th Armored Divisions, to name only some. The 116th also fought the British and Canadians, bitterly contesting the areas around Arnhem and the Reichswald against outfits like the 2d and 3d Canadian Infantry Divisions, the 43d (Wessex) and the 53d (Welsh) Divisions.

The "Greyhound" Division's history has now been meticulously chronicled in narrative form and lavishly documented by the wartime Division Chief of Staff and Operations Officer, Heinz Günther Guderian. This comprehensive history was first published in the German language in 1994, but is now being made available in the English language exclusively by The Aberjona Press, the company Military Heritage magazine pronounced "Publisher of the Year 2000" in the Small Publisher Category.

Rarely does the student of the Second World War (or any war) have the opportunity to see military operations through the eyes of the men who planned and directed the battles at the tactical level. Thanks to General Guderian's keen recollections and careful research, readers of From Normandy to the Ruhr can do exactly this.


Rarer still is the author who can lucidly and comprehensively analyze and explain the course of those battles. As the Division's First General Staff Officer throughout its training and combat, General Guderian possessed a unique point of view to do just that. Beyond the tactical decisions—and consequences of those decisions in the deadly and unforgiving arena of WWII armored combat—the author also explains the institutional and political influences on his division's leadership. General Guderian sheds stunning new light on the reasons,

operational and political, behind the fateful deployment of the elements of the German armored reserve before and during the early days of OVERLORD. He details the intrigue behind his Division Commander's reliefs for cause (twice in two months!) and the impact of the accompanying turbulence on the division in combat. Perhaps most importantly of all, the author provides graphic, specific evidence of the catastrophic consequences of political correctness when it infects the chain of command and results in lost battles and squandered lives. As the son of a famous general officer who had a close but dynamic relationship with Hitler, the author was especially well placed for observing and judging this insidious phenomenon.

Most unusual of all is the combat veteran who can honestly and candidly examine what went right, what went wrong, and why . . . and present his findings for all to see and judge. Fortunately, as a life-long soldier in the Wehrmacht and later, the West German Bundeswehr, Major General Guderian is just such a man.

This hard cover book is has been expertly translated by Ulrich and Esther Abele (Ulrich Abele's previous translation credits include Five Years, Four Fronts: The War Years of Major Georg Grossjohann, proclaimed by Military Heritage magazine as the best non-US military memoir of 2000). At 648 pages, with 26 highly detailed maps and 64 photos of the unit in action and key members of the Division, From Normandy to the Ruhr is not only the definitive history of this important formation, but much more.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A must read for the serious student of World War II or armored warfare...I strongly recommend this book..." -- *General John Brown, in Armor magazine, Sep-Oct 2002*

"An in-depth and carefully researched history...fascinating and compelling...a wonderful translation...Highly Recommended." -- *The Journal of Military History, July 2002*

"Does justice to the soldiers of the 116th Panzer Division...provides revealing details...of interest to their one-time enemies." -- *General Frederick J. Kroesen, Former CG, US Seventh Army, in Army magazine, February 2002*

"Impeccable content from the view of the men on the ground." -- *The Australian Army Newspaper, 19 June 2003*

"The detail is unsurpassed...a remarkable document concerning an elite unit, written from a unique perspective." -- *Boresight (The magazine of the Armor Modeling and Preservation Society)*

"Well-crafted and deeply researched...immaculately translated...a definitive history of the ubiquitously employed Greyhound Division..." -- *Military Heritage Magazine, April 2002*

"[A] rich, complex book...[which relies] first and foremost on period military records seldom available to English speakers." -- *World War II magazine, February 2003*

Voted one of the "Top Ten" WWII books of 2001 -- *Stone and Stone World War II Books reader poll*

From the Publisher

Not only does From Normandy to the Ruhr include detailed information about the most famous battles on the Western Front in WWII, but it also contains important information about the operations of the following units in those battles.

Allied Divisions (All are US Army divisions unless otherwise indicated)

1st Infantry 2d Canadian Infantry 3rd Canadian Infantry 4th Infantry 9th Infantry 28th Infantry 29th Infantry 30th Infantry 43rd (Wessex) 53rd (Welsh) 79th Infantry 83rd Infantry 84th Infantry 90th Infantry 95th Infantry 2d Armored French 2d Armored 3rd Armored 4th Canadian Armoured 5th Armored 7th Armored 8th Armored 9th Armored British 79th Armoured

Anglo-Canadian Brigades

2d Canadian Armoured 6th Guards Armoured 8th Armoured 34th Armoured

German Divisions

2d Panzer 2d SS-Panzer 9th Panzer 9th SS-Panzer 10th SS-Panzer 12th SS-Panzer 21st Panzer Panzer Lehr

3rd Panzer-Grenadier 15th Panzer-Grenadier

6th Parachute

12th Infantry (later Volks-Grenadier) 47th Volks-Grenadier 49th Infantry 84th Infantry 89th Infantry 180th Infantry 246th Volks-Grenadier 272d Volks-Grenadier 275th Infantry 353rd Infantry 344th Infantry 346th Infantry 347th Infantry 353rd Infantry 363rd Infantry 560th Volks-Grenadier 17th Luftwaffe Field Div

German Brigades

Panzer Brigade 105 Panzer Brigade 108 Assault Gun Brigade 394

About the Author

Heinz Günther Guderian was born 23 August 1914 at Goslar, in the Harz Mountains. After making his Abitur at the humanistic Gymnasium in Berlin-Zehlendorf, he entered the German Army as an officer cadet on the eve of the Third Reich on 1 April 1933. Promoted to Second Lieutenant exactly two years later, he served as a platoon leader, battalion and regimental adjutant, and company commander in Panzer Regiments 1 and 35. He saw his first combat during the invasion of Poland, and was wounded twice during the campaign in Western Europe in 1940. Graduating from the General Staff College in 1942, he served in a variety of staff assignments in armored units until being assigned as the Operations Officer for the 116th Panzer Division in May 1942. Although again wounded in action, he held that position until the end of the War. After the creation of the Federal German Armed Forces (the Bundeswehr), he returned to the colors to command Panzer Battalion 3 (later 174), Panzer Brigade 14, and served in a variety of staff assignments, culminating in service as Inspector of Panzer Troops for the Bundeswehr

General Guderian's decorations include the Iron Cross Second and First Classes, the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, the Wounds Badge in Silver, and the Federal German Grand Cross of the Order of Merit. He retired in 1974.

The son and grandson of general officers, General Guderian's father was Generaloberst Heinz Wilhelm Guderian, the seminal thinker behind the Wehrmacht's mobile combined arms organizations and tactics. During his rise to Army Chief of Staff in 1944-45, Heinz Wilhelm Guderian held the post of Inspector of Panzer Troops, the same duty position held by his son Heinz Günther 30 years later.

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Alicia Mendes:

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