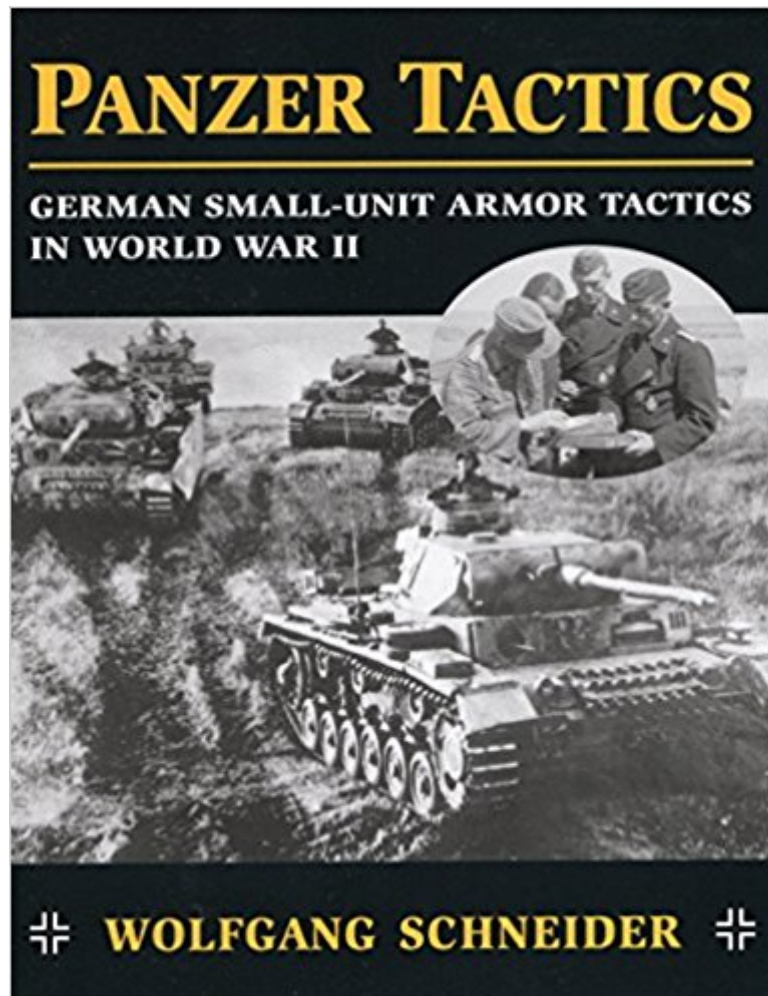




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Panzer Tactics: German Small-Unit Armor Tactics In World War II



Synopsis

Ultimate inside view of the blitzkrieg in World War II
Diagrams, maps, and schematics illustrate key principles
Hundreds of rare photos show Panzers and crews in action
Wolfgang Schneider has written the definitive account of German small-unit armor tactics. Using period training manuals, after-action reports, countless interviews with Panzer veterans, and his own experiences as an armor commander in the modern German Army, Schneider describes World War II Panzer tactics, coupling his narrative with scores of illustrations that highlight armor concepts. Schneider covers the major types of small-unit operational art-offensive and defensive-and also discusses road marches, reconnaissance, command and control, working with other arms of service, life in a tank, armor training, gunnery, and the future of armor. The book provides useful insight into armor tactics for both the layman and the armor enthusiast.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wolfgang Schneider, an expert on German armor, lives in Germany.

An amazing book. I am not done with it yet, it's not light reading by any means, but I will expand this review when I am done. For now, let's just say that this is the closest to a "how to" manual on WWII armored warfare that I've seen. Sure, if you are a soldier you probably are familiar with those types of manuals, but for us civvies, this is eye opening. And remember, this is from the most proficient tank army in what has been the only truly large scale tank war in history. The guiding principles would probably be partially applicable even nowadays, corrected for AT helicopter, night vision and

other modern tech. In fact, that is just what the author was doing for the Bundeswehr professionally. Not at all the usual anecdotal contents about tactical engagements. Tactical tank combat doctrine, distilled, explained and put in context. And if the Russians didn't train/endocrinate their troops this well, easy to see how their numerical and even tank quality superiority took a long time to carry the day, despite their courage. Last, and admittedly a bit frivolous. I am a keen computer gamer and play a fair bit of wargames. Reading this upped my game quite a bit, I've always been too cautious, but this preaches a heightened level of controlled aggressiveness as the way to keep your enemy off balance. Lots of formation and attack logic being described is very applicable to computer gaming. The one peeve I have is that, on a paperwhite Kindle, the maps are not very clear at all and are still labelled in German. Given the quality of the overall book, I'll leave it a 5 stars, but it would have been much better with nicer maps.

...at least in my own ever-growing collection. We have the experiences of a Guderian, von Mellenthin, or Manstein, self serving as they sometimes may be, but at all these decades remove the view of the actual panzer crewman starts to get a little hazy. This book remedies this by way of hundreds of photographs that I don't believe are published in any other popularly available work. The CAPTIONS to these are of value! (For example: "Proper spacing is 100 meters - these Pz IIIs are too close!). Each chapter begins with a concise exposition of the topic (Offensive operations, Defensive operations, Unit Movements, Command and Control, Logistics and Maintenance, etc.) from the point of view of the experienced veteran. A number of reproductions of the actual training materials for panzer crew from the period are included. The author takes pains to show how, during actual operations over the course of the war, panzer crew were repeatedly forced to improvise, departing from rigid adherence to the doctrine in these materials. Also included are a number of sketch maps of various operations at the smaller unit level, to further illustrate the principles. I believe a number of these are from actual after-action reports, hand drawn by the officers involved. But it's the photos that are of the most value. These bring to life all the gritty little details of the panzer crew's existence, which was at times boring, terrifying, exhausting, freezing, burning, bleeding, and at most times thoroughly miserable. Life in a tank in WW II was hard. Operating them with enough skill to accomplish impossibly difficult missions with any chance of survival was even harder. This book goes some way towards showing how the Germans did it. If you are a modeler or wargamer, mark this one down as a MUST HAVE.

Any review of this book needs to start off by stressing the fact that this book is really geared to the

specialist. This is defined as either that group very knowledgeable on the minutia of German armoured tactics or those with actual military experience in the field (i.e., armour operations), even if on the modern battlefield as opposed to that of the Second World War. It also needs to be stressed, as if the subtitle of the book "German Small Unit Armour Tactics in WW 2" is not enough of a give-away, that the book emphasizes tactics and other factors (i.e., training, maintenance) at individual tank level, platoon level and the platoon - company nexus. The book is definitely not geared to high level tactics and strategy (basically any activity over and above the battalion level). The book covers small scale operations on a very thorough level. It has chapters on: offensive operations, defensive operations, unit/march maneuvers (both in rear areas and combat areas), reconnaissance, command and control, logistics and maintenance, combined arms and operations (emphasizing front line cooperation with infantry, engineers, artillery and air support), life in a tank, training and a chapter contrasting tank tactics then and now (this last one is too brief). Each topic is covered in an extremely technical manner and just about every detail, no matter how minute, is covered in very great detail. For example, complete lists are provided for how communications should be sent from tank to tank (in a platoon environment), platoon to company, etc. These include content of communications as well as the order that content should be transmitted. It is that detailed of the book. Considering that it has been written by a current German officer this is no surprise. Hence it would be of interest to primarily the specialist as opposed to the layman. The specialist will find it a gold mine and for those currently (or recently serving in armoured vehicles) one sees how little things have really changed, to a very large degree, in 60 years. Despite these weaknesses, the book does have a few weaknesses that need to be pointed out. They are as follows:

- a) The translation is rough. As a result, many times, the reader needs to reread passages 2 or 3 times to understand what the author is attempting to convey. This is not surprising considering the author's native language is German and not English. A translator should have been hired to, at the very least, fine tune the text.
- b) There are many maps, diagrams, etc. but all are in German. In addition many leave much to be desired in terms of quality. The book should have hired illustrators to draw high quality maps/illustrations to show what many of the poor quality maps/illustrations cannot clearly show. Apparently the budget was so limited none could be hired. The use of original training materials, etc. is a very nice touch to the book but many times something that was better drawn would have much better assisted the author in conveying his views.
- c) A few stories from actual troops to illustrate the tactics stressed in the book would have been nice to have included.
- d) Some technical specifications on tanks and how and why the physical characteristics of the vehicles changed over the course of the war would have been nice too.

Despite these relatively

minor problems, that can be easily overlooked, this is all and all a book that is very highly recommended for its niche intended audience.

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