Adolf Galland

Surname	Galland
Given Name	Adolf
Born	19 Mar 1912
Died	9 Feb 1996
Country	Germany
Category	Military-Air
Gender	Male



Contributor: C. Peter Chen

Adolf Joseph Ferdinand Galland was born in Westerholt, Westphalia, Prussia in Germany as the second of four sons of a land manager. He developed an interest in aviation as a teenager, flying in home-built gliders from a field near his home. He graduated from the Hindenburg Gymnasium in Buer, Germany in 1932 and proceeded to the aviation school established by the airline company Lufthansa. In 1933, he was accepted into the fledgling German military organization that would later become, in 1935, the *Luftwaffe*. Between 1933 and 1935, he crashed twice during training missions in Italy. The first resulted in a three-day-long coma, one damaged eye, fractured skull, and broken nose. On year later, in the second crash in an Ar 68 aircraft, his injured eye as aggravated. In order to continue flying, he memorized the eye test chart so that he could pass the medical exam that determined whether he was still fit for service. In 1935, he was posted to *Jagdgeschwader 2* (Jg 2) *Richthofen* based at Döberitz airfield near Berlin, Germany.

Galland, as a member of the *Staffel* (*Jagdgruppe* 88, was sent to Spain in mid-1937 to participate in the civil war on the side of the Nationalists. He flew He 51 aircraft, for the most part performing ground attack missions. During the Spanish Civil War, his unique personality developed a style unlike other airmen in the German air force at that time, often seen flying in teamless formations, with cigars hanging from his lips, and with Mickey Mouse painted on his aircraft. He flew 300 missions during the Spanish Civil War and won the Spanish Cross decoration in Gold with Diamonds.

During the Battle of Britain, Galland flew Bf 109 fighters as a part of *Gruppenkommandeur* of *III./Jagdgeschwader* 26 (JG 26) based in Pas-de-Calais, France. In Jul 1940, he was promoted to the rank of *Major*. On 22 Aug, he was promoted to the commanding officer of JG 26 during Hermann Göring's attempt to instill more spirit into the *Luftwaffe* by introducing younger wing commanders.

On 8 Sep 1940, Galland was flying in a Bf 109 fighter on the French coast. Nearby, fellow veteran pilot Ulrich Steinhilper found a lone and unsuspecting British Hurricane fighter, and broadcasted over the radio that he was to demonstrate to the rookie pilots in his squadron how to bounce a Hurricane fighter. Galland listened in on the radio, curious whether his comrade's approach would be any different than his own. Suddenly, tracers flew passed him from behind. Turning his head, he found a Bf 109 fighter on his tail, firing at him. He yelled into the radio, and was fortunate to stop Steinhilper before Steinhilper shot down the "Hurricane fighter" in this near-fatal episode of mis-identification.

On 25 Sep, Galland was awarded Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross medal. By the end of 1940, he had achieved 58 kills. In 1941, he was promoted to the rank of *Oberstleutnant* (lieutenant colonel). As the commander of the wing, he led two fighter wings in France (with the majority of *Luftwaffe*'s resources fighting in the Russo-German War), he carefully managed his resources so that he could continue to fight against the RAF.

On 15 Apr 1941, Galland flew a Bf 109 fighter toward La Touquet, France to attend his General Theo Osterkamp's birthday party; he took a detour toward Britain in search of potential targets, and was engaged with a group of Spitfire fighters off Dover, England. Although Galland was able to shoot down one fighter and damage to others, he was shot down by the British group's commander Brendan Finucane. He was rescued from the sea a few hours later. In the afternoon of 21 Jun 1941, he was once again shot down, this time by a No. 145 Squadron RAF Spitfire after sustaining damage from aircraft of No. 303 (Polish) Squadron RAF earlier that day. When he returned to base that evening, he was awarded Swords to his Knight's Cross for having achieved his 70th kill that day. On 2 Jul 1941, while flying against a formation of British Blenheim bombers, his fighter was damaged by 20-millimeter shells fired by an escorting British Spitfire fighter, which also caused injuries; he was hospitalized upon landing. It was determined that a recently-installed armor plating in the cockpit probably saved his life. By Nov 1941, his kills had reached 94.

In Nov 1941, Galland was appointed by Göring to the position of *General der Jagdflieger* (Inspector of Fighters), thus making him a member of the High Command of the *Luftwaffe*, succeeding the recently passed *Oberst* (Colonel) Werner Mölders; he was reported unenthusiastic about this appointment, feeling that it takes him away from the cockpit. As he had feared, he spent much of 1942 inspecting fighter bases on various fronts, taking him to Russia, Ukraine, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, North Africa, and the Balkan Peninsula. In Nov 1942, he was promoted to the rank of *Generalmajor*, making him the youngest German officer to attain a general rank. Responsible for training, doctrine development, and operational planning of fighter forces in the *Luftwaffe*, he played a role Operation Cerberus (as known as the Channel Dash) and the evaluation of new fighters; toward the latter, he test flew the prototype of Me 262 jet fighter, commenting that "[i]t was as though angels were pushing"; he became an active supporter of the jet program to the last days of the war, but ultimately these new fighters would enter the war far too late to make a difference. Even with his high rank, he still flew combat missions whenever he could, probably gaining two more kills by the end of 1944 while was almost shot down at one occasion.

Two of Adolf Galland's brothers also became fighter pilots and aces. Paul Galland scored 17 victories and was shot down and killed by a RAF Spitfire on 31 Oct 1942, and Wilhelm-Ferdinand Galland was shot down on 17 Aug 1943 after achieving 54 victories.

The German 6th Army was wiped out at Stalingrad, Russia in early 1943, and Göring placed the blame on *Luftwaffe* officers such as Galland rather than blaming himself for making baseless promises to Adolf Hitler. "Our leadership killed our brave men", Galland noted on the Stalingrad defeat. It was around this time that he no longer held in his frustration with Göring. In one instance, after a particularly unbearable meeting with Göring, he took off his medals one by one, placed them on the table before him, and simply walked out of the room; he fully expected to be fired, or worse, after the incident, but he believed that Hitler had heard about the incident, understood Galland's contribution to the war effort, and prevented Göring from seeking retribution. The source of frustration, however, remained and steadily grew in scale. In Jan 1945, he arranged a meeting during which Günther Lützow complained of the incompetence of the German High Command (i.e. Göring), he was relieved of his command. Dubbed the *Fighter Pilots Conspiracy*, the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) and *Gestapo* each established files on him, and Heinrich Himmler sought to put him on trial for treason. He was relegated to a squadron commander with 30 X4 on the Soviet front in the Courland pocket, but he never took command of this squadron; instead, he was soon given the task of forming *Jagdverband 44* (JV 44) in Mar 1945, which was to be consisted of the best pilots in Germany for piloting the new Me 262 jet fighters. Participating in combat himself, he achieved an additional 7 kills against American aircraft. On 26 Apr 1945 when he was shot down by an American P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft and sustained a knee injury during the crash landing of his Me 262 jet fighter; he was removed from the command of JV 44 due to his injuries. In early May, he attempted to negotiate a separate surrender with the Allies for his pilots, but this attempt did not succeed.

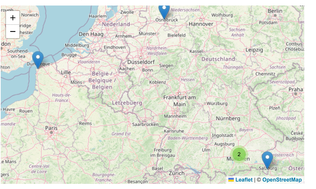
At the end of the war, Galland's total kills was claimed to be 104, most of which were British fighters (55 Spitfire fighters and 30 Hurricane fighters. He flew a total of 705 missions. He was one of only 27 to have Oak Leaves, Swords and Diamonds added to the Knight's Cross award.

After the war, Galland was captured by the US Army on 14 May 1945 and would remain in captivity until 1947. His first job after being released was to lecture on fighter tactics for the RAF. Between 1948 and 1955, he worked for the Argentinean Air Force and various aircraft manufacturing firms in Argentina. In 1954, he married Sylvinia von Dönhoff. Also in 1954, he published his autobiography titled *Die Ersten und die Letzten* (The First and the Last). In the late 1950s, he returned to Germany and established a successful aviation consulting firm. In 1963, he married his second wife, Hannelies, with whom he would have two children. In 1960, he served as a technical advisor for the film "Battle of Britain", followed by his contributions on screen for the 1973 British television documentary series "The World at War". In the 1970s, a Sam Jose State University graduate student determined that the American pilot who forced him to crash land on 26 Apr 1945 was James Finnegan formerly of the 50th Fighter Group of the US Army 9th Air Force; Galland and Finnegan would meet in person in San Francisco, California, United States in 1979 during an Air Force Association meeting. In 1984, he married his third wife, Heidi Horn, who remained with him until his death. In 1986, he authorized the book *Adolf Galland: A Pilot's Life in War and Peace* by Anton Weiler and Werner Held. He passed away in 1996 in Remagen-Oberwinter. Germany and now rests in the cemetery of the St. Laurentius church, also in Remagen-Oberwinter.

Sources:
Stephen Burgess: The Most Dangerous Enemy
Colin Heaton: The German Ace Speaks
Wikipedia

Last Major Revision: Jul 2010

Adolf Galland Interactive Map



Photographs



See all 19 photographs of Adolf Galland

Adolf Galland Timeline

19 Mar 1912 Adolf Galland was born.
15 Feb 1934 Adolf Galland joined the Luftwaffe; he would complete basic military training at Dresden, Germany.
1 Oct 1934 Adolf Galland was commissioned Leutnant, and was posted to Fighter Instructor 3FS (fighter pilots school), Schleissheim, Germany.
1 Oct 1939 Adolf Galland was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class medal and was promoted to the rank of Hauptmann.
12 May 1940 Adolf Galland achieved his first three victories near Liège, Belgium.
6 Jun 1940 Adolf Galland was appointed *Gruppenkommandeur* III/JG 26.
18 Jul 1940 Adolf Galland was promoted to Major.
1 Aug 1940 Adolf Galland was awarded the Knights Cross for achieving 17 kills.
16 Aug 1940 Adolf Galland recieved the Pilot's Badge in Gold with Diamonds from Hermann Göring.
22 Aug 1940 Adolf Galland was appointed Geschwaderkommodore JG 26 "Schlageter".
8 Sep 1940 Adolf Galland was nearly shot down on the French coast by fellow pilot Ulrich Steinhilper in an episode of mis-identification.
25 Sep 1940 Adolf Galland was awarded Oak Leaves to his Knight's Cross by Adolf Hitler for achieving 40 kills.
30 Oct 1940 Adolf Galland claimed his 50th victory.
1 Nov 1940 Adolf Galland was promoted to the rank of Oberstleutnant.
1 Dec 1940 Adolf Galland claimed his 60th victory.
1 Jan 1941 Adolf Galland was promoted to the rank of Oberst.
15 Apr 1941 Flying in a Bf 109 fighter en route to Theo Osterkamp's birthday party, Adolf Galland took a detour toward Britain in search of targets. After shooting down one Spitfire fighter, he was shot down by another Spitfire. He was rescued from the water a few hours later.
11 May 1941 Adolf Galland was ordered by Hermann Göring to dispatch his pilots to search for and shoot down Rudolf Hess' Me-110 aircraft somewhere over the North Sea.
21 Jun 1941 Over France, Oberstleutnant Adolf Galland was shot down for the first time after scoring his 68th and 69th victories; both of which were British Blenheim aircraft; his fighter that he him down were British Spitfire fighters of No. 145 Squadron RAF. Galland successfully landed his fighter in a grassy field, returned to base, and took off from another mission by the afternoon. After achieving his 70th kill in the afternoon, he was shot down again. This time he ditched the aircraft, his parachute barely opening before reaching ground, and was brought to a first aid station by French civilians using a horse-drawn cart. When he returned to base that evening, he found that he had been awarded Swords to his Knight's Cross for achieving 69 kills.
2 Jul 1941 While flying against a formation of British Blenheim bombers, Adolf Galland's fighter was damaged by 20-millimeter shells fired by an escorting British Spitfire fighter. Though injured, his life was saved by a parachute that he had brought with him.
6 Dec 1941 *Oberst* Adolf Galland was appointed General der Jagdflieger.
28 Jan 1942 In Berlin, Germany, fighter ace Adolf Galland was awarded Diamonds to his Knight's Cross by Adolf Hitler for achieving 94 kills.
19 Nov 1942 Adolf Galland was promoted to the rank of Generalmajor.
7 Nov 1944 Adolf Galland inspected the newly created *Jagdgeschwader 7* wing at Achmer Airfield in Germany, which was equipped with Me 262 jet fighters. He repeated his orders for Walter Nowotny to keep a cover of Fw 190 fighters above the airfield when the jet fighters were taking off or landing, in order to prevent the type of attack that took place on the previous day.
8 Nov 1944 Adolf Galland monitored the progress of the operation "Big Blow" from the radio shack at Achmer Airfield, Germany.
10 Apr 1945 Adolf Galland met Hermann Göring for the last time at Obersalzberg in München-Oberbayern, Germany.
25 Apr 1945 Adolf Galland announced to the pilots of German Jagdverband 44 at München (Munich), Germany that the war was effectively lost, and he would only accept volunteers to continue fighting from now on. All of his men stepped forward as volunteers.
26 Apr 1945 Shortly after Adolf Galland (Jagdverband 44) attacked and shot down US B-26 bombers, his Me 262 jet fighter was shot down by Lieutenant James Finnegan's P-47D Thunderbolt fighter (US 50th Fighter Group). Galland crash landed safely at Munchen-Riem Airfield in southern Germany, though sustaining wounds.
14 May 1945 Adolf Galland was captured by the US Army.
9 Feb 1996 Adolf Galland passed away.

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4. *Anonymous* says:
5 Dec 2013 11:19:17 PM

His comrades and close friends call him in private "Dolfs"

5. *Marcelo* says:
18 Jul 2015 07:25:55 AM

I read several years ago "I flirt and last" great read.

6. *Anonymous* says:
25 Mar 2016 06:51:36 AM

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Famous WW2 Quote

"All right, they're on our left, they're on our right, they're in front of us, they're behind us... they can't get away this time."

LL Gen. Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, at Guadalcanal

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