Heinz Vinke

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Heinz Vinke (22 May 1920 – 28 February 1945) was a German military aviation ace during the World War II, a fighter fighter ace credited with 54 aerial victories claimed in approximately 300 combat missions making him the eighteenth most successful fighter pilot of World War II. He flew most of his combat missions as a member of the Western Front in Defense of the Reich, missions against the Royal Air Force's (RAF) Bomber Command.

Born in Berlin, Vinke grew up in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. Following graduation from school and the Luftwaffe's Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labour Service) he joined the Luftwaffe in 1938 and completed his fighter pilot training in October 1941. Assigned to the Ergänzungsgruppe (Supplemental Group) of Jagdgeschwader 51 (JG 51 – Fighter Wing), flying a Messerschmitt Bf 110 heavy fighter. Following an injury sustained in July 1941, he was posted to Ergänzungsgruppe (Supplemental Group) of Jagdgeschwader 54 (JG 54 – Fighter Wing) in October 1941 and completed his training in April of 1942. Following his 25th aerial victory, he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 10 September 1943. Vinke and his crew were shot down and crashed on 28 February 1945 in Vienna, while on a transfer and rescue mission. He received the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves.

Early life and career [edit]

Vinke was born on 22 May 1920 in Berlin, as the Professor of Botany, a Free State of Prussia. He was the son of Heinrich Heinrich Vinke and his wife Maria, née Bartz. Vinke had a sister, Ilse. He attended school in Berlin. While at school, he joined the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend) and became a glider pilot, receiving his A, B and C licenses by glider aircraft. Following his school graduation, he joined the National Labour Service, he joined the Luftwaffe on 1 April 1938.[1]

World War II [edit]

Vinke was stationed in Fürstenwalde, Germany, in September 1939, when German forces invaded Poland. At the time, Vinke was based at Zerbst/Anhalt on the Flugzeugführer Ausbildung (pilot training) regiment, Ausbildungsregiment 1 (Training Regiment 1) where he received his flight training which he completed in 1940.[1] [2] Sergeant, he was then sent to Wesermünde-Drehe Schlesien and they were manned on 20 April 1942 in Berlin-Kloschütz.[3]

Vinke was then transferred to the Ergänzungsgruppe (Supplemental Group) of Jagdgeschwader 51 (JG 51 – Fighter Wing) in July 1941.[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [31] [32] [33] [34] [35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40] [41]