

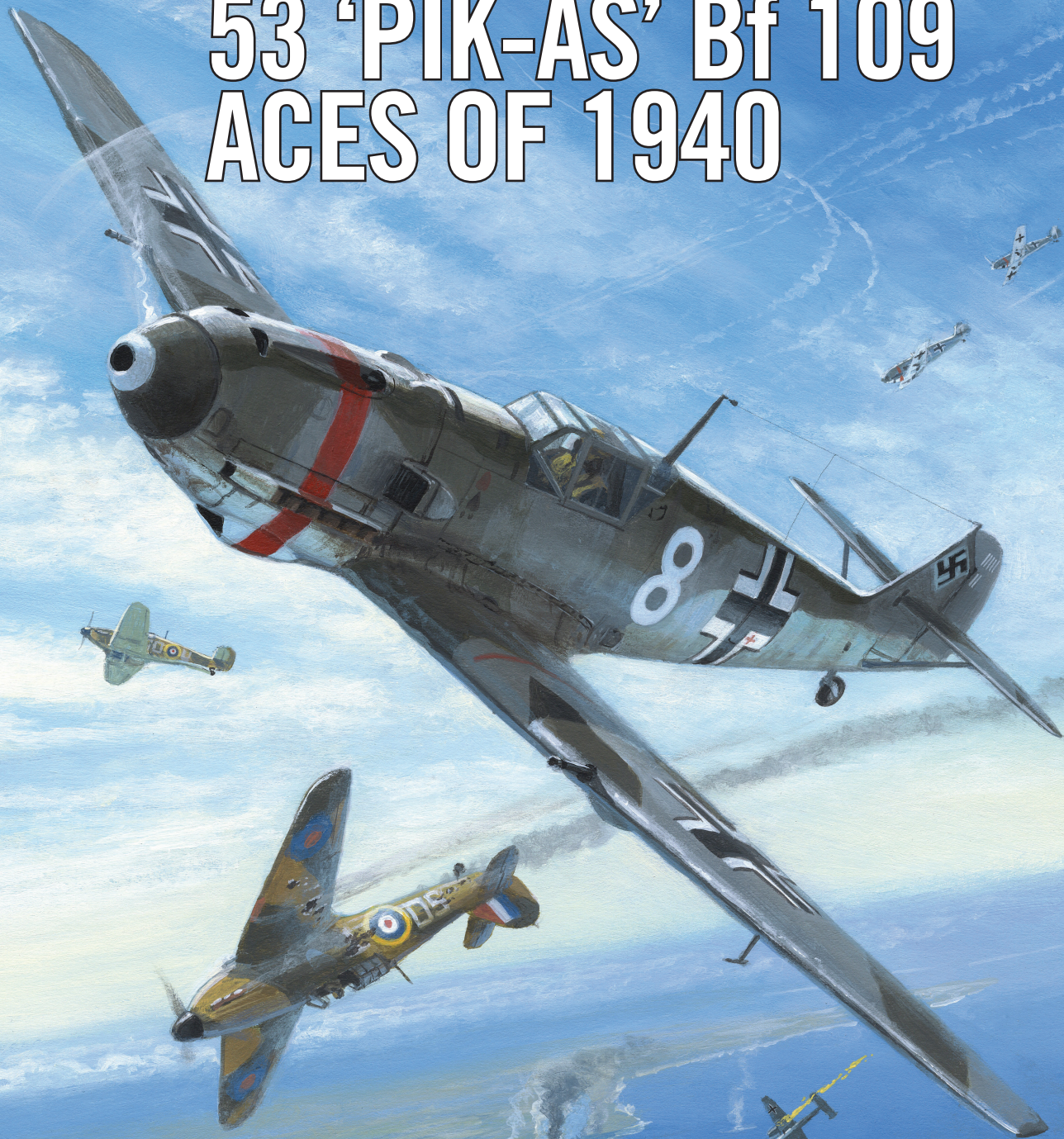
AIRCRAFT OF
THE ACES®

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Chris Goss

JAGDGESCHWADER 53 'PIK-AS' Bf 109 ACES OF 1940



MARK POSTLETHWAITE '16

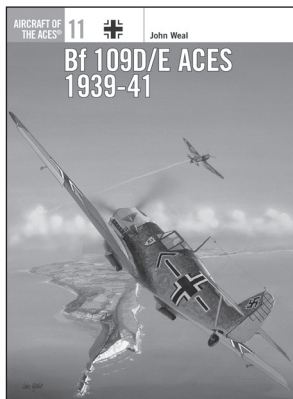
Author

Chris Goss is a retired senior Royal Air Force officer who has studied the 1939-45 air war over northwest Europe for many years, specialising in Luftwaffe air operations. He has amassed a substantial collection of original wartime material and photographs as a result of interviews and extensive correspondence with veterans and their families. Chris has written or revised more than 20 books such as *Bloody Biscay*, *Brothers in Arms*, *The Luftwaffe's Blitz* and, most recently, *Osprey Combat Aircraft 115 – Fw 200 Condor Units of World War 2*, which have been critically acclaimed for their research and have been published in Hungarian, Spanish, and Czech, as well as in English. This is his second volume for Osprey.

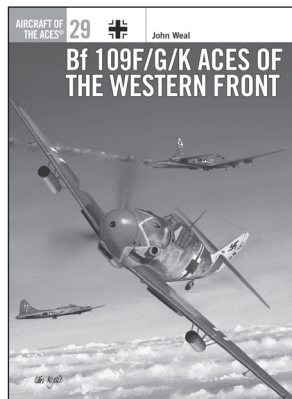
Illustrator

Chris Davey has illustrated more than 30 titles for Osprey's *Aircraft of the Aces*, *Combat Aircraft* and *Aviation Elite Units* series since 1994. Based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, he is Osprey's last traditional airbrush aviation artist. As the profiles in this volume clearly show, he is a true master of his art.

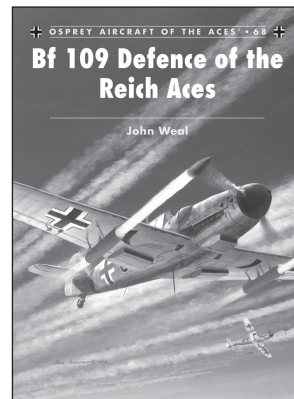
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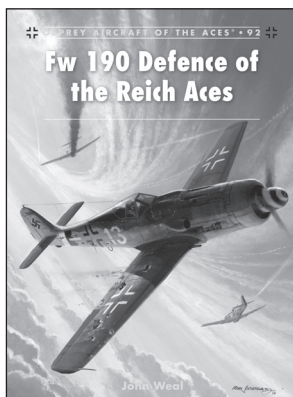
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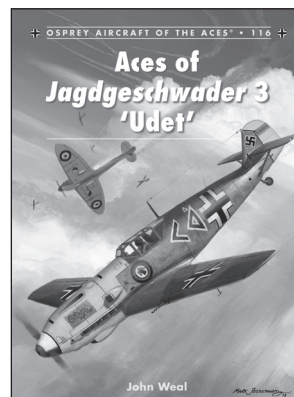
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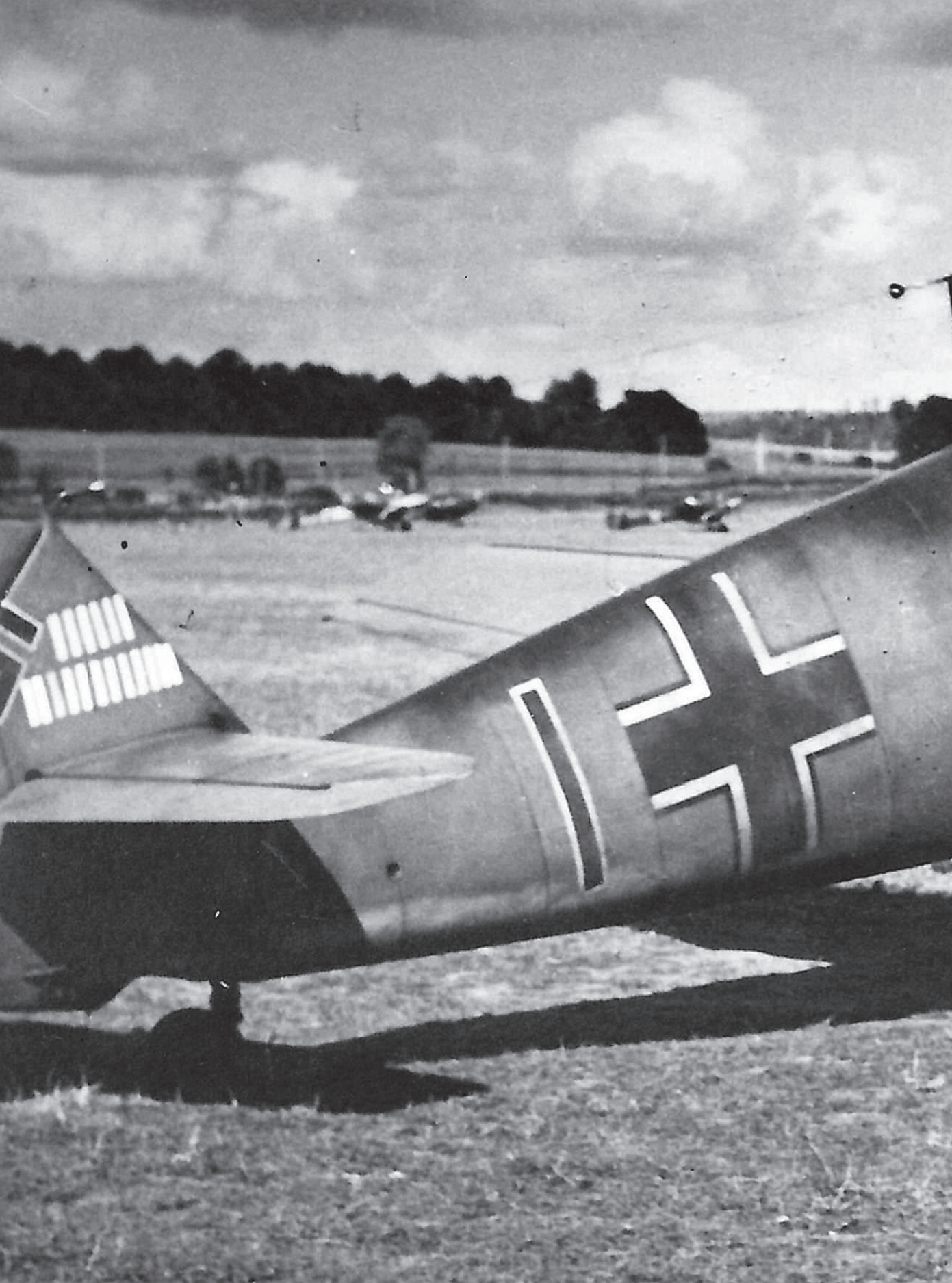


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SERIES EDITOR TONY HOLMES

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Front Cover

On 12 August 1940, JG 53 was tasked with carrying out a 'Freie Jagd' off Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight in support of Ju 88s of KG 51 that were attacking Portsmouth harbour and Ventnor radar station on the Isle of Wight. Leading 1./JG 53 was Hauptmann Hans-Karl Mayer, who was flying a Bf 109E-4 coded 'White 8'. His *Rottenflieger* was Unteroffizier Heinrich Rühl in a Bf 109E-1 coded 'White 10'. Flying at 8500 m, Mayer spotted three Hurricanes below attacking a lone Bf 110 at 1220 hrs, and although he quickly engaged the enemy fighters the Bf 110 pilot bailed out. Mayer selected the right Hurricane and Rühl the left, the former firing a total of 20 20 mm shells and 80 7.92 mm machine gun rounds into the RAF fighter, which immediately burst into flames and dived into the sea for what would be Mayer's tenth victory of the war. Having already exhausted his supply of cannon shells, Rühl fired 200 machine gun rounds at his Hurricane, which then hit the sea in a gentle curve.

Mayer now turned his attention to the remaining Hurricane, which had been engaged by the rest of his *Staffel*. This combat was not as one-sided, however, for his Bf 109E was hit six times. Mayer's combat report noted;

'After my first kill I flew back to the dogfight with the last remaining Hurricane against several aircraft of my *Staffel*. I immediately attacked and was able to open fire twice, and also received some hits myself. The damaged aircraft tried to escape in the direction of the coast but I stayed close to it, while my *Staffel* lost me in the haze. At first it made only slight evasive actions, and so I was able to get in several well-aimed bursts. The aircraft started emitting black smoke, went down in a shallow dive and disintegrated on impact.'

Mayer had achieved his second victory of the mission, firing ten cannon and 250 machine gun rounds at the Hurricane, which, after hitting the sea, sank immediately.

Although it cannot be said for certain, it is believed that Mayer and Rühl accounted for Plt Off John Harrison, Acting Flt Lt Wilhelm Pankratz and Sgt Josef Kwiecinski of No 145 Sqn, all of whom were reported missing in action off the Isle of Wight at times that matched the three German claims (*Cover artwork by Mark Postlethwaite*)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER ONE TO WAR	9
CHAPTER TWO BATTLE OF FRANCE	20
CHAPTER THREE BATTLE OF BRITAIN – THE WESTERN BATTLE	32
CHAPTER FOUR BATTLE OF BRITAIN – THE EASTERN BATTLE	55
CHAPTER FIVE 1940 – THE FINAL DAYS	66
APPENDICES	81
COLOUR PLATES COMMENTARY	93
INDEX	96



INTRODUCTION

On 15 March 1937 *Jagdgeschwader* (JG) 334 was formed. Commanded by former World War 1 ace Oberst Bruno Loerzer, *Stab./JG 334*, I. *Gruppe*, commanded by Hauptmann Hubert Merhart von Bernegg, and II. *Gruppe*, led by Hauptmann Hans-Detlev Herhudt von Rohden, were initially based at Mannheim-Sandhofen. *Stab* and I./JG 334 soon moved to Wiesbaden-Erbenheim (formerly a trotting racetrack on the southeastern outskirts of Wiesbaden), via Frankfurt Rebstock, in May 1937, however. III./JG 334 was not formed until July of the following year. The *Geschwader* was originally equipped with Arado Ar 68E biplane fighters, but early in 1938 it began converting to the Messerschmitt Bf 109B.

As with most other frontline units within the *Luftwaffe* at this time, JG 334 sent a number of its pilots to Spain to fly with the *Legion Condor* in the Spanish Civil War, as the tables opposite show. Many of these *Jagdflieger* went on to be successful and highly decorated fighter pilots in World War 2, although few would survive the conflict.

One pilot whose name stands out was Werner Mölders. Born in Gelsenkirchen on 18 March 1913, he joined the German military in 1931 and began training as a pilot in 1934. His first frontline posting was to JG 134, and he became the *Staffelkapitän* of I./JG 334 upon its formation. He did not arrive in Spain until the middle of April 1938, after which he took command of *Jagdgruppe* 88's 3. *Staffel* from Oberleutnant Adolf Galland – another pilot who would become a successful ace, despite having left Spain

On 15 March 1937 *Jagdgeschwader* (JG) 334 was formed under the command of former World War 1 ace Oberst Bruno Loerzer, who is seen here in the late summer of 1940 with Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. The two men were good friends, having served together as a highly successful reconnaissance crew on the Western Front. By the time this photograph was taken Loerzer had been promoted to *General der Flieger* and made commander of II. *Fliegerkorps* (John Weal)

JG 334 pilots with victories (confirmed and unconfirmed)

NAME	VICTORIES
Oberleutnant Hubertus von Bonin	1
Leutnant Heinz Bretznütz	2
Unteroffizier Günther Freund	2
Leutnant Rudolf Goy	3
Oberfeldwebel Heinz Grimmling	1
Hauptmann Harro Harder	11
Unteroffizier Willibald Hien	4
Oberfeldwebel Fritz Hillmann	3
Hauptmann Lothar von Janson	1
Unteroffizier Karl Kolb	1
Unteroffizier Erich Kuhlmann	4
Leutnant Wolfgang Lippert	5
Oberleutnant Hans-Karl Mayer	8
Oberleutnant Werner Mölders	14
Oberleutnant Rolf Pingel	6
Oberfeldwebel Ignaz Prestele	4
Unteroffizier Bernhard Seufert	3
Unteroffizier Alfred Stark	1

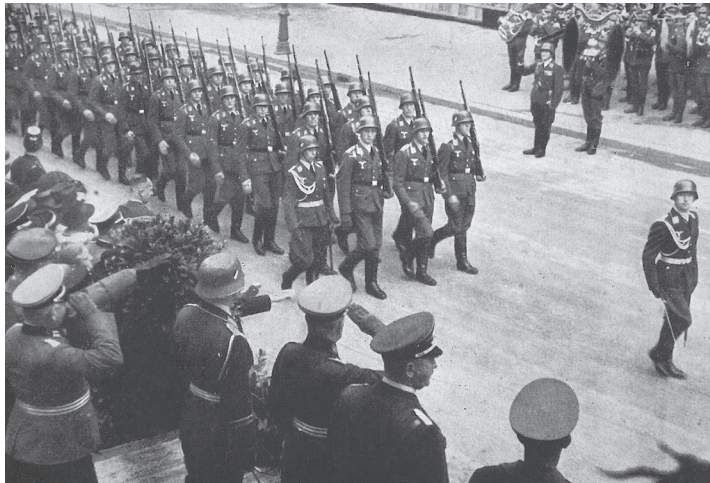
Other JG 334 pilots known to have flown in Spain

Oberleutnant Ernst Boenigk
Oberleutnant Hubert Kroeck
Oberleutnant Alfred von Lojewski
Oberleutnant Günther Schulze-Blanck
Leutnant Werner Ursinus
Oberleutnant Wolf-Dietrich Wilcke

Oberst Loerzer's JG 334 was initially equipped with the Arado Ar 68E biplane fighter, with this particular example from 1. *Staffel* photographed at Frankfurt Rebstock possibly being assigned to future ace Feldwebel Franz Götz (*John Weal*)

without a single victory to his name because he primarily flew ground attack missions in the obsolescent Heinkel He 51. Mölders scored his first and second kills on 15 July 1938, and by the time he handed over his *Staffel* to Oberleutnant Hubertus von Bonin at the start of December 1938 he had shot down 14 aircraft, his last being claimed on 3 November 1938.





I./JG 334's arrival at Wiesbaden-Erbenheim in May 1937 was marked by a ceremonial parade through the town. To the strain of martial music provided by the band in the background, Oberleutnant Werner Mölders leads his 1. *Staffel* past the reviewing stand (*John Weal*)

As the top scorer of the *Legion Condor* he was awarded the Spanish Cross in Gold with Swords and Diamonds, and on his return to Germany he was posted on to the Staff of the *Inspektor der Jagdflieger* of the *Reichsluftfahrtministerium* (RLM) in Berlin. Here, Mölders' extensive combat experience as a fighter pilot was put to good use in developing future tactics and techniques.

Meanwhile, JG 334, now commanded by Oberstleutnant Werner Junck, another World War 1 fighter pilot, had been re-designated JG 133 in November 1938 (and was formed of just I. and II. *Gruppe*). In March 1939 Werner 'Vati' Mölders returned to reassume command of I./JG 133. His fellow *Staffelkapitäne* were also ex-*Legion Condor* pilots, namely Oberleutnant Rolf Pingel in 2. *Staffel* and Hauptmann Lothar von Janson in 3. *Staffel*. Shortly thereafter von Janson took over command of I. *Gruppe* and was replaced by Oberleutnant Wolfgang Lippert.

Similarly, II./JG 133 was also commanded by a mix of combat veterans and relatively inexperienced pilots. Hauptmann Hubert Merhart von Bernegg had moved from being *Gruppenkommandeur* of I./JG 133 to II. *Gruppe* the previous year. Ex-*Legion Condor* pilot Oberleutnant Hubert Kroeck commanded 4. *Staffel* and fellow Spanish war veteran Oberleutnant Rudolf Goy led 5. *Staffel*, but 6. *Staffel* was headed by Hauptmann Günther *Freiherr* von Maltzahn, who had not flown in Spain. Within five months he replaced von Bernegg as II. *Gruppe Kommandeur*, 6. *Staffel* then being led by Oberleutnant Heinz Brettnütz, who had flown in Spain.

At the start of May 1939 JG 133 was re-designated JG 53. Now equipped with the latest Bf 109E-1s and E-3s, the 'Pik-As' (Ace of Spades) *Geschwader*, as it was soon to be known, was still flying from Wiesbaden-Erbenheim when German troops invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Two days later France and Great Britain declared war on Germany, and it was not long before I. and II./JG 53 were in combat.

Unteroffizier Kurt Sauer of 9./JG 53 is sat on the wing leading edge of a Bf 109E from his *Staffel* that has just been adorned with the 'Pik-As' badge. Sauer shot down three aircraft in 1940, and his tally stood at nine by the time he was made a PoW on 16 July 1941. The 'Pik-As' emblem was applied to all of JG 53's aircraft following its adoption by the unit's new *Kommodore*, Generalmajor Hans Klein (himself a 22-victory World War 1 ace), upon him taking over from Oberstleutnant Werner Junck in late October 1939

