

Adolf “Dolfo” Galland

19 March 1912 – 9 February 1996

One of the leading flying Aces of the German Luftwaffe, Galland was a gifted and daring pilot. He started his flying career at the age of 15 in gliders – the only way young Germans could learn to fly as, under the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, an air force was not allowed.



Following graduation from high school in Buer, Galland applied to the German Commercial Flying School (DVS) and was one of only 18 out of 4,000 to be accepted. Then in 1933 he and several other pilots were ordered to attend an interview at the Central Airline Pilot School (ZVS) where he was invited to join a secret military training program piloting high performance aircraft. A few months later he was then ordered to a meeting with others from clandestine programmes where he met Hermann Göring for the first time. After a few months of further training Galland was invited to join the newly formed Luftwaffe and went on to fly during the Spanish Civil war where he first displayed his unique style; flying in swimming trunks with a cigar between his teeth in an aircraft decorated with a Mickey Mouse figure!

While serving in Spain he developed early petrol and oil bombs and flew trials in Bf109s, which encouraged him to transfer from strike pilot to fighter pilot when he left in May 1938. Following success in the Poland campaign (1939-41) he was awarded the Iron Cross Second Class in recognition of his 360 missions in two wars and was transferred to Jagdgeschwader 27 in February 1940 as adjutant. On 6 June 1940 Galland took over command of Jagdgeschwader 26 (JG 26) as Gruppenkommandeur.

On 19 July 1940 during the Battle of Britain, Galland was promoted to Major and with JG26 moved to the Pas de Calais, being involved in many battles with Spitfires. For the first time he realised that there would be no quick and easy victory, having been shocked by the aggression shown by the relatively inexperienced and outnumbered RAF. He was awarded the Knight's Cross on 1 August 1940 for 17 victories.

Despite his original respect for Reichsmarschall Göring, Galland had an increasing amount of disagreements with his superior. Together with Werner Mölders, the only other Ace with a greater number of victories and equally experienced, they argued with Göring about tactics and strategies. Another time when Göring, frustrated with the lack of progress in The Battle of Britain, asked what his pilots needed to win the battle, Galland replied: “I should like an outfit of Spitfires for my squadron”, which left Göring speechless with rage.

Galland's success during The Battle of Britain continued and on 25 September he received the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross from Hitler in Berlin, becoming only the third member of the Wehrmacht to receive it. While The Battle of Britain officially ended on 31 October 1940 large-scale dog fights continued for some time. On 5 December 1940 Galland recorded his 57th victory making him the most successful fighter pilot at that point - beating his colleague, friend and rival Werner Mölders.

After the war Galland met RAF Ace Robert Stanford Tuck when they acted as consultants to the Battle of Britain film in 1969. The two became firm friends, with Galland often flying into Manston airport to collect Tuck for a shooting trip or for other adventures. Tuck was godfather to Galland's son Andreas.

Adolf Galland died on 9 February 1996 and was buried at St Laurentius Church, Remagen-Oberwinter.