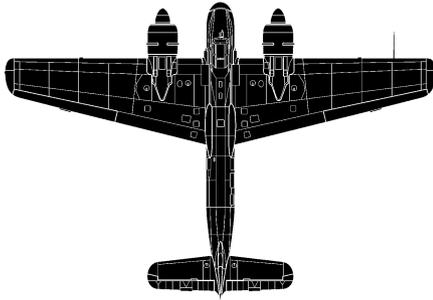


Hs 129



The Hs 129 attack airplane was an air weapon that “might have been.” If the prewar Luftwaffe bureaucracy had not been so shortsighted, Germany could have fielded a fully developed Hs 129 ground-attack aircraft that would have been as useful to them as the Sturmovik was to Russia. Instead, delays, changes, and ultimately inadequate resources caused the Henschel-designed aircraft to be too late and too few in number to be decisive.

The Hs 129 was an all-metal, low-wing, twin-engine attack airplane. It followed in the footsteps of the first “Stuka,” the highly regarded Henschel Hs 123 biplane. While disliked by the Luftwaffe’s test pilots, this so-called Panzerknacker (meaning “tank cracker”) was beloved by the pilots who flew it. The aircraft, however, was dogged

by misfortune. Sabotage by Henschel’s foreign workers led to problems. Moreover, delays in the Hs 129’s development put it into combat just as the Germans were losing air superiority. Because the aircraft was vulnerable to fighter attack, its loss rate almost equaled its rate of production.

The Hs 129 featured heavy armor protection of the pilot, fuel tanks, and engines. For instance, the tiny windscreen had 75 mm-thick armored glass. As a result, it was successful in attacks on Allied armor against heavy defenses. Eventually, field fixes to its temperamental engines and other gear raised the mission-ready level to about 70 percent. In one of the war’s many ironies, Hs 129s supplied by Germany to its Romanian ally were used against German forces when Romania switched sides in 1944.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: German Hs 129B-2—Red F—as it looked in 1945 when assigned to 14 Panzerjäger/Schlachtgeschwader 9 in Hungary.



Hs 129 was a rugged anti-tank platform.

In Brief

Designed, built by Henschel ★ first flight spring 1939 ★ crew of one ★ two Argus AS 410 piston engines ★ number built 868 ★ **Specific to Hs 129B-2:** armament two 7.9 mm machine guns, two 20 mm cannon or four 7.9 mm machine guns and one 30 mm cannon ★ two Gnome Rhone radial engines ★ load two 50 kg bombs ★ max speed 253 mph ★ cruise speed 196 mph ★ max range 428 mi ★ weight (loaded) 11,574 lb ★ span 46 ft 7 in ★ length 32 ft ★ height 10 ft 8 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables: Arno Ehrhardt, Ernst Kupfer, Bruno Meyer. **Test pilots:** Albert Gatzemeier, Hans Wilhelm Kaempf, Siegfried Schuricht.

Interesting Facts

Featured extremely small cockpit (some instruments mounted on engine cowling ★ tested with 20-foot-long 75 mm cannon, each round weighing 26 pounds ★ fitted with downward-firing rocket mortars ★ used Revi gunsight mounted outside cockpit ★ equipped with engines that rotated in opposite directions, eliminating torque effects ★ used with some success in Tunisia ★ succeeded as anti-tank aircraft in Battle of Kursk ★ considered “defenseless” against enemy fighters ★ flown by air arms of Hungary and Romania.