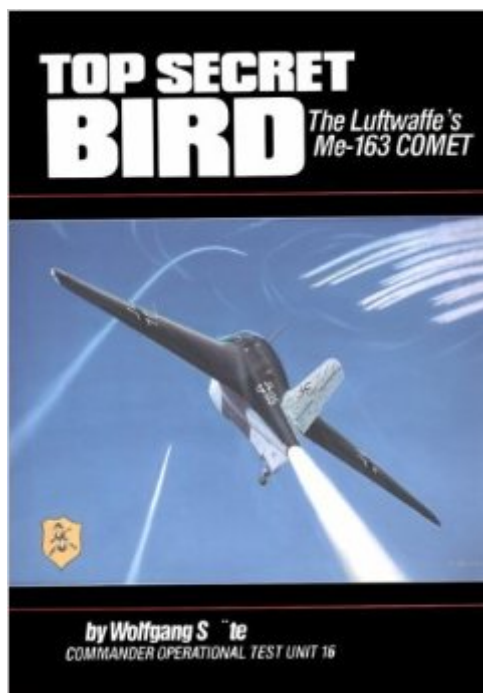


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# Top Secret Bird: The Luftwaffe's Me-163 Comet



## Synopsis

Book by Wolfgang Spate

## Book Information

Paperback: 270 pages

Publisher: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co. (October 1989)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0929521080

ISBN-13: 978-0929521084

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 7.2 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,010,224 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #169 in [Books > History >](#)

[Military > Weapons & Warfare > Biological & Chemical](#) #2644 in [Books > Textbooks >](#)

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## Customer Reviews

Wolfgang Spate has masterfully described the human and technical details of developing the Me-163 Komet, the world's first rocket fighter. He was the military officer in charge of the program and his keen insights into the technical challenges and human issues in this program are remarkable. Well illustrated with black and white photographs, this book is an excellent resource for historians, model-builders, and students of World War II events. Highly recommended!

The best book I have read about the ME 163 creation, development, failures and success. Direct from the Test group 16 commander, Spate's detailed history of his experiences as commander and test pilot are excellent. I have enjoyed very much this book and learned many intimacies in the milestones of launching this radically different WWII fighter. Spate evaluates this fighter as the best all around fighter of WWII regarding flying characteristics in the three axis of flight. Spate compares the flying wing to even modern airplanes and evaluates the ME 163 as been the best plane he has flown. Handicaps, the lack of modern day materials to hold and transfer its very corrosive fuel. This caused most of the serious accidents which cost lives during its testing and military operation. In summary, an excellent book.

Top Secret Bird gives one a first person account of the development of a rocket powered interceptor

and the enormous technical difficulties regarding such a task. The author Wolfgang Spate commanded the Luftwaffe unit whose task was to test the revolutionary craft. Spate was also the first to fly the Me163 on a combat mission. Needless to say Spate's qualifications for authoring this book are outstanding. I found the book very readable and entertaining as well as informative. The book contains photographs of this "top secret bird" some of which are color photos of Me163s in various museums. If you are looking for a detailed, in depth study of the technical aspects of the Me163 you won't find it here. But you will find a personal memoir regarding one of the most unique aircraft of World War II.

'Top Secret Bird' by Wolfgang Spate is an interesting first-hand account of the Luftwaffe's program to build the Me-163 'Komet'. This aircraft was one of the early jet fighters designed by the Germans to help turn back the Allied control of the air over Occupied Europe and Germany towards the end of WW2. The author was an Army Reconnaissance pilot, chiefly employed in the Polish and French campaigns. Thereafter, he served as a fighter pilot, operating mainly in the East. In 1942, he became Head of 'Erprobungs-Kommando 16', tasked with the development of the Me 163 Rocket Fighter. Returning to operations as a Wing Commander in 1944, he continued flying until the end of the war, by which time he had been promoted Major. He was credited with ninety-nine aerial victories and was awarded the Knight's Cross. This book goes into great detail about how the Germans designed, constructed, tested and mass-produced this most revolutionary aircraft. The book has numerous black and white photographs throughout which offers great detail in regards to the Komet. The majority of the book covers the frustrating efforts to get the Komet tested and massed produce whilst Germany was slowly losing the war. Overall it's a great story of brave pilots testing a revolutionary type of aircraft sometimes with quite horrific results. The book is more directed to this aspect of aviation history than about fighter combat but it's still a gripping read. The narrative pulls you along, weaving in and out of Nazi politics, the air war, flight-testing and the sometimes-terrible results. This is a great story, well told and should hold the interest of anyone interested in aviation history.

An exceptional book covering a little-known corner of aviation history. Easily one of the most dangerous assignments in all of World War II, flying and testing the Me163 called for a very special cadre of pilots and engineers. Well written, this is a first-class translation of the memoir of the pilot most responsible for bringing an aircraft far ahead of its time to completion. An engaging read for aviation buffs. A must read for those interested in the WWII Luftwaffe.

I had to give it five star. The author was in charge of making the bird operational, and after the war was an aviation writer and pilot for a few years in the Bundesluftwaffe. The translation was superb. Very detailed and precise, and gives personal insight into many of the well known Luftwaffe pilots of the era. Spate only mentions his combat flying prop planes in minor details. Being an over 80 victory ace he should have written a separate book on his combat experiences.

What I found difficult about this book is the flow. It seemed to jump around a lot with its time line and kept referencing a lot of different people. The specific issue I have is if you are going to go to the detail of mentioning a lot of different people (all with German names, obviously.) then please put some sort of reference table in the book listing who these people are by time line, position, rank (if applicable) and their contribution to the project. I found myself constantly having to go back into earlier chapters to try and remember who this or that person was. I admit I have a hard time remembering names, but I found this book nearly unreadable.

Generally OK but not same text as original "Rocket Fighter" I was seeking.

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