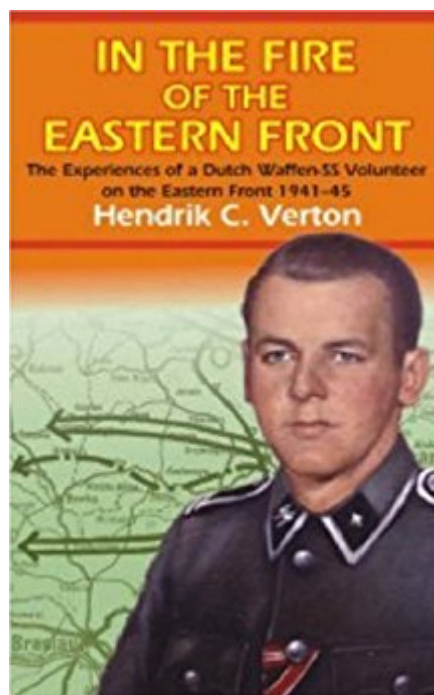




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In The Fire Of The Eastern Front: The Experiences Of A Dutch Waffen-SS Volunteer On The Eastern Front 1941-45



Synopsis

Dutch SS accounts are very rare, particularly ones such as this, covering recruitment, training, and frontline service first with 5th SS Panzer Division 'Wiking', then later with SS Regiment Besslein. He not only informs and illustrates the general politics of the time, but also explains how Dutch views of the Third Reich changed so radically, discusses the founding of the Waffen-SS, the recruitment of Dutch volunteers into it and why so many non-German Europeans volunteered to fight and risk their lives for Germany. His discussion of the intensity of the SS's training is also noteworthy. Of course, the core of the book lies in Hendrik's recollections of his service on the Eastern Front between 1941 and 1945, initially with the 5th SS Panzer Division 'Wiking'. He offers the reader an impressive and fluid account, whether it be describing the midst of battle, surviving 50 degrees below zero, frosts and frozen ground, or traversing a quagmire of roads. Of particular historical interest are his later recollections of service during 1944-45 with SS Regiment Besslein on the Eastern Front, focusing on his participation in the epic defense of Breslau - this siege remains little-known in the West, and first-hand accounts such as Hendrik's are even scarcer, making this title a worthy addition to the literature on the Second World War.

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Customer Reviews

This is the story of a young Waffen SS WWII volunteer. It is also a sensitive look at the lives and societies of European countries between WWI and post WWII. There is so much information about the actual Waffen SS, celebrating the valor of the people and troops of the Breslau siege, and life in the late war and post war occupied Eastern and Western Europe it was eye opening and amazing to this reader. This is a book I will treasure!

Good reading. Very interesting. It is fair and necessary to know the other side of the history.

Great book of personal experiences

I found this book extremely interesting and hard to put down. It is true history is written by the victors and therefore the lies which we are fed. Well written and definitely worth reading

The brief detail of the Authors experience in the Waffen SS Westland/Regiment Besslein is unusually devoid of any specifics possibly due to the time lag of the events in 1940-1945 and the authors recollections of 2003 Recruitment/Training receive brief detail in few words as "selective", training is described simply as "hard with sweaty," nothing else to determine what different training methods the German Army and SS Military drills used, for overall comparison leaving the reader to wonder. The authors account then begins with Chapter War in Winter, that provides a moment the author recalls from memory, but not the preliminary activities associated with these military events. The author / unit action in 1941 near Tula, near Moscow provides no description of what kind of routine or other soldierly actions that were carried out under these conditions, that most other accounts of this kind provide, preparations, formation, weapons etc. The authors participation in the fighting in and around Breslau 1945 consists of several paragraphs placed across different pages in the pertinent Chapters, Festung Breslau and The Last Battle. The Authors focus changes during the brief mention of a particular moment in battle, and then focuses on the larger overall military or political considerations in far greater, sometimes excessive manner, that the author apparently feels compelled to explain in retrospective comments that further detract from the detail of the fighting. The basis of the authors experience at Breslau is described as surviving by constantly moving, or crawling along the ground. to their positions, there is no impression that there was Heavy Street Fighting involved by the descriptions provided by the authors mention of sniper fire and Heavy Russian Artillery/Air Strikes followed by an attempt by Russian Infantry to advance, the

Russians would retreat when fired upon, Russian Artillery would then again begin to pound the area. The author states His Section would then have to displace, and when the Russian Artillery slacked off, the author and His Section would quickly move back to their assigned positions. The author gives this one example, of a particular action, that apparently composed the entire course of Russian Tactics that were used in the area the Author was positioned. fighting in and around Breslau, The Authors comments about atrocities committed by Russian Forces and General Eisenhowers proclamation against Nazi Doctrine cannot be reconciled or considered as valid in the context given by the Author. It is of great interest to note that in many accounts of this type, a constant theme appears, that Hitlers War and their experience in the War, was to "protect" Western Civilization from Communism. This rationale has some MERIT, but it also ignores the process of Human extermination and World Destruction that Hitlers War perpetuated.

When the Wehrmacht gave up or withdrew, Hitler would send in the Waffen-SS to seal the gap in the lines or to 'put out the fire'. The best-trained, the most determined and steadfast, the most idealistic, these men would perform in a way that left their enemies filled with dread. As a Dutch volunteer, Verton explains that his purpose was to take part in the fight to hold back Communism, to keep it from their doors, to protect Europe itself. French volunteers in the SS Charlemagne division, Belgians, Danes, and those SS volunteers from all over Europe and beyond, said the same thing and presented their decision as a moral one, as one of personal responsibility. In other words, it wasn't enough to TALK about stopping the Bolsheviks from taking over Europe, one had to DO something, one had to STEP UP. The Germans were doing that already, so one had to join their 'Crusade in the East' if one's life purpose meant anything at all. Verton surprisingly does not have all that much to say about the war in Russia other than the extreme cold, the overwhelming odds against them, and the appalling conditions of war there. He has much more to say about the siege of 'Festung Breslau' in which his SS Regiment Besslein defended the city from the Russians for three months and won one tactical victory after another against them whilst inflicting enormous casualties on the enemy. His postwar comments about the aftermath of the war, i.e. the war crimes committed by the Russians, the Americans, the British, and so on, and shocking conditions and inhuman suffering in the various zones of occupied Germany, is priceless. Usually this kind of material is flat-out censored/edited out of existence due to its 'controversy' (i.e. its presentation of unpalatable truths about the war). Rape, ethnic cleansing, mass murder, the killing off of Axis POWs, dispossession, expulsion en masse, and so on - most people today are still unaware that these things took place at all. The narrative remains one of Allied liberation and even nearly 70

years after the war's end it is still rather difficult to get an alternative across. I observed in reading this book that numerous errors of date, place, names, etc. occur, but they don't seriously mar an otherwise fascinating narrative. This is an important book that anyone seriously interested in World War Two history should read carefully. I sincerely hope that other, similar narratives from the voice of the SS Freiwilligen get published in English, as well as the many similar works that have appeared somewhat obscurely in Europe in past decades. The truth of who Europe's real heroes were, and who the villains, and how the year 1945 has led directly to today's unfolding global catastrophe, at some point is going to have to emerge and be understood.

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