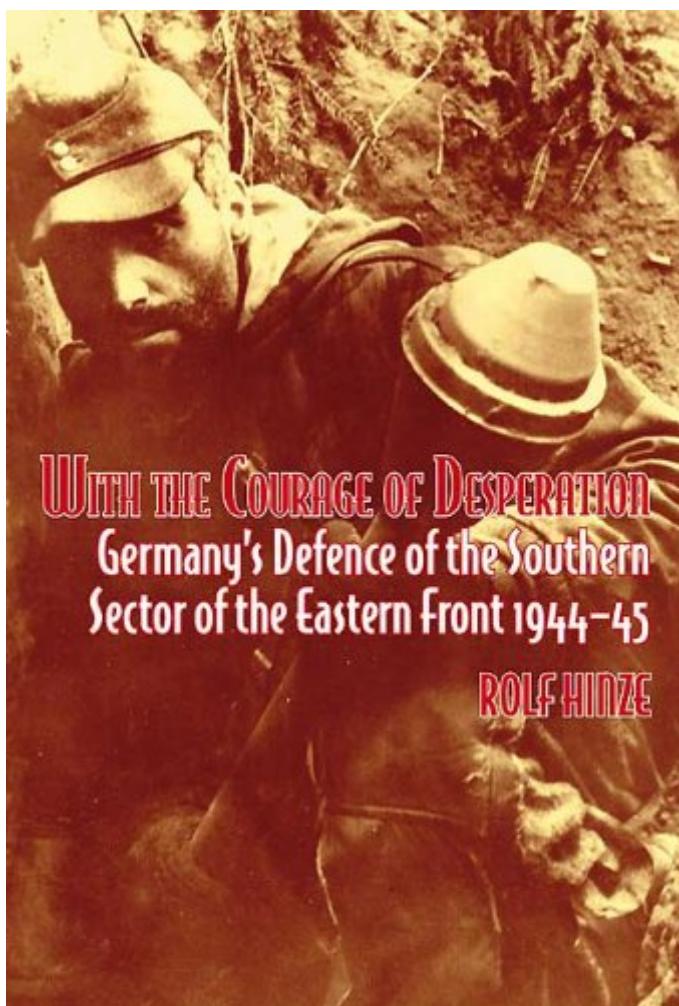


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With The Courage Of Desperation: Germany's Defence Of The Southern Sector Of The Eastern Front 1944-45



Synopsis

In his historical series Hinze provides the only comprehensive account of events on the central and southern portions of the German Eastern Front during the years of German retreat. This volume covers events on the southern portion of the Eastern Front from July 1944, in the aftermath of the cataclysmic defeat of Heeresgruppe Mitte, through the Soviet drive to victory. Events covered include the retrograde fighting of 4th Panzer-Armee, the situation on the flanks of Heeresgruppe Nordukraine, operations around Lemberg, and the settling of positions along the line of the Vistula river. The Soviet drive through Rumania against Heeresgruppe SÂ ukraine is described, leading to the fall of Bucharest before the panorama moves into the Hungarian Puszta. The German attempts to stem the Soviet drive on Budapest, the Gran bridgehead and the last great German offensive of the war, Operation 'Spring Awakening' are all recounted, as is the steady and now inevitable final withdrawal and defeat of the remaining Axis forces as the Soviets penetrate into Austria. The fall of both Budapest and Vienna are related, before Hinze completes his study with the final battles in Austria and the area north of the Danube. Hinze's accounts are indispensable to any study of the decline and collapse of the German Eastern Front, and are published by Helion across three volumes - the great retreats across the Ukraine to the borders of Hungary and Rumania, and the evacuation of the Crimean Peninsula (Crucible of Combat), the fate of Heeresgruppen Nordukraine, Sudukraine and Sud-/ Ostmark in 1945 (this volume) and the battles of Heeresgruppe Nordukraine/A/Mitte ('To the Bitter End'). There are no other detailed but comprehensive accounts in which the various individual narratives, unit histories and studies of individual battles may find their place in relation to the big picture. Hinze's maps, alone, would justify his works, for most of the unit histories, narratives and studies of individual battles lack maps illustrating their place in the larger geography of the war. The study is complemented by orders of battle, the aforementioned maps (over 80 of them), plus photographs. Publication of With the Courage of Desperation completes Hinze's trilogy, and represents a keystone to our understanding of the Soviet-German War 1941-45.

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Customer Reviews

This last book of Rolf Hinze is the sequel to and equal of "Crucible of Combat". There are many similar attributes between them: they both have extensive coverage of the German side, provide good descriptive operational coverage and analysis. There are many detailed maps between the two books. They have the same translator so that if you have read "Crucible" you'll know what to expect in this new book. There is a little overlap in coverage between the two books but the transition is smooth. Though this book has a little more Soviet detail, there could certainly be more; this might be an issue for some. If there had been more Soviet coverage as well as anecdotal experiences, I would have felt more comfortable giving five stars. The book begins in March 1944 for the battle to control the Kovel sector as well as the German attempt to close the gap at the boundary line between AGC and Army Group North Ukraine which was a short distance north of Kovel. After describing the key battles dealing in AGNU sector, the author transitions into AGSU sector as the Soviets build up forces for their next push into Europe. The action dramatically escalates in July as the Soviets begin their summer offensive and the German circumstances deteriorate dramatically. At this stage of the war, the Soviets have an overwhelming advantage in men, tanks and guns, morale and though the Germans put up a relatively stout defense there is no practical way of holding back the Red Tide for very long. The Germans do pull off a number of successful local counter-attacks that delay the Soviets but it's too late in the war to reverse the retrograde movement or even stop the enemy's advance as the Soviets push the Germans beyond Rumania, Hungary and into Austria. It's also shown that Hitler's reluctance to react to actual battlefield conditions had detrimental effects on the Wehrmacht. As a veteran of the war, Mr Hinze

clearly has empathy for the German cause, showing pride of German accomplishments and remorse for German defeats. He also reminds the reader the Germans performed well against the stiff odds but at least he doesn't distort the history. The operational history is very good with the author drilling down to the events incurring in each relevant division. This empathy can also be seen with brief coverage after the war with the inhuman treatment German POWs received in Russian Gulags. A small sample of battles covered include Tarnapol, Lemberg, Jassy, Debrecen, Bucharest, Ploesti, Budapest, along the Danube and ending with the battles in Austria. Key political events are covered as well, including the defection of Rumania to the Soviets as well as the attempt by Horthy to leave the Axis and sue for peace. Soviet's occupation of Bulgaria is also mentioned. There are 69 B&W maps that have the same format as the maps in "Crucible". The maps have lots of detail but I found them hard to decipher at first. I had to invest a lot of time and make a lot of crib notes to make them useful. There are 60 fewer pages in this book than in "Crucible" but when you consider there are 36 fewer maps and no photo gallery in the new book, the level of operational details are comparable between the books with a slight advantage to "Desperation" in Soviet coverage. There is an abbreviated Order of Battle for the Germans, a good Bibliography, no notes and sorry to say no Index. While there is a lot of information presented on the many divisions and regiments, their movements, objectives captured or lost, there is a noticeable lack of personable content. There is little analysis on commanders or their command decisions and is also a dearth of first hand or anecdotal accounts. Some readers will see this book as dry and maybe even uninspiring. I found this book to be an informative tactical read that added much to my knowledge of the war in the south. The author provides important historiography that when added to the more popular history to the north, will give students a better overall understanding to the end of the war and if you have such an interest of this time and place, these books should be a part of your core library alongside books by Georg Maier and Rudolf Pencz which adds a more personable touch. Recommended to all interested students of the war.

details of final battles of ww2

If you are looking for a book with personal stories of the soldiers involved, this is not the book for you. This book gives the operational history of the battles on the eastern front in very clinical terms. It just happens that this is exactly what I was looking for. The author has gathered a tremendous amount of information and I can only marvel at the research that was required to put this book together.

A great book written with great detail on unit movement in this sector towards the end of WW2. Unit location and fighting are detail in such great accuracy this book shows that even in retreat the german army was still successful. Most units in this sector tried to make it to american lines to surrender

Excellent account of the often ignored final 10 months of the war on the Eastern Front from the German perspective - lots of good maps and a good translation into nicely readable English

Some months (if not years!) ago when I first heard about this book I was very excited about it, a book specifically focused on the battles in the critical years 1944-1945, very little covered by historians. Now in August 2013 when I finally got the book I was more than disappointed. At first glance I suspected that this book is old and I was right - it was originally published under a German title as back as 1993! Therefore the reader will acquire a 20-year-old book that did not benefit from the newest scholarship/studies on the subject. The book is divided in 29 main chapters (each with many subchapters) describing the battles in South Ukraine, Romania (Bessarabia operations included), Hungary (Budapest, Debrecen, operation Spring Awakening, etc), former Czechoslovakia and, finally, in Austria (particularly the battle for Vienna). Throughout the book the author is devoting his energy in showing the fate of German soldiers in these theaters of operations, thus readers shouldn't expect to find too many references about other forces involved. If I didn't know the year of the battles I could assume that the operations were in the middle of early successes of Barbarossa, so imagine a narrative that amplifies every German tactical victories and downplays enemy's gains. While the presentation and details for German Army is remarkable, going down even to battalion or battery level, one will be puzzled to identify Soviet/Romanian/Hungarian formations (going down up to Corps/division level). I was particularly interested of the battles in Northern Romania and events on August 23th, 1944 (the so-called "Romania's defection or betrayal"). Mr. Hinze doesn't know that there was no treaty between Germany and Romania concerning the war against USSR. On the other hand, Germany was fully involved in the territorial losses suffered by Romania in the summer of 1940. The so-called Vienna Award, dictated and supported by Germany, meant for Romania, the loss of Northern part of Transylvania. Even with the betrayal of Romania's interests, the troops performed at their best, with modest equipment, suffering over 680.000 casualties against USSR and almost 170.000 casualties against Germany. As I expected, author spared no criticism against Romanian troops. But much more can be added to the story: the incapacity of German forces to

stop Red Army (the front in 1943 was held only with German units, so nobody can blame the weak Axis Allies for their failures), the improper behavior of German troops, only promises with modern equipment, stealing from Allies, arrogance, the hasty withdrawal of the most German panzer reserves, etc. Moreover, the text is full with errors concerning aerial bombing of Romanian cities (dubious figures and dates) as well as units participating in different battles. The involvement of Romanian 7th Corps in the battle for Budapest is "missing in action". The actions of two Romanian armies in Hungary and former Czechoslovakia went also unnoticed by author. Even today's names of the Romanian cities are misspelled in Hungarian. After 29 chapters follow a four-page Epilogue in which the author is very careful in detailing the fate of German soldiers, the losses, war crimes, etc - without mentioning, of course, what was the fate of over five million Soviet POWs. There are no photos or index in the book. The only positive things I can say about this "comprehensive account" are a seven-page glossary and short, but still unsatisfactory conclusion. Bibliography is made of almost only German studies and documents (unit histories, individual narratives etc). NOT even one Soviet/Romanian/Hungarian book is cited, another proof that Hinze's book is just one-sided study and fully subjective. The maps are so lauded in the book's description ("...maps alone would justify his works") that I was anxious to see them. What a shock: out of 69 maps, very few can be labeled as satisfactory, the rest being mere sketches. The reader will have a difficult time to understand which arrow is a German thrust and which is Soviet in the maze of rivers, roads and units. Adding that they are in German you have the complete picture. In conclusion, a subjective and unreliable book that cannot be labeled as a serious historical study. I cannot rate this book with more than two stars but I can promise that is the last book by Rolf Hinze.

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