



Turning Point: Recollections of Russian Participants and Witnesses of the Stalingrad Battle

Popov, Petr Pavlovich

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Rarely do Westerners gain an understanding of the Russian perspective of the battle. While a flurry of translated memoirs by senior commanders like Zhukov and Chuikov in the 1960s and 1970s provided a higher level point-of-view, very little has been reported in English about how the fighting affected ordinary Russian soldiers and civilians. Retired Colonel Anatoli Venediktovich Kozlov, a participant in the battle and section chairman of Volgograd city's veterans' council, realised it was imperative to record the accounts of the few remaining veterans before time inevitably claimed them all. Glasnost has enabled these veterans to provide a more candid account of their experiences than if they had been interviewed during the Communist era. Kozlov's wish was for this book to be available to Westerners' and now it is. The book is divided into two distinct parts, each describing a different aspect of the Stalingrad battle. In Part 1, titled 'On the Southern Approaches to Stalingrad', Popov writes about a sector often overshadowed by dramatic events further north. Long before the Germans approached Stalingrad, tens of thousands of its citizens were put to work erecting defences around the city and in doing so endured unbelievable hardship. The southern district of Krasnoarmeysk was soon struck by the full might of Hoth's panzer army in August 1942. Popov explores the district's preparations, defence and retribution in detail. In Part 2, 'From Beyond the Don to the Volga', Kozlov and Usik explore the better known aspects of the battle by way of riveting first-hand accounts. It begins with the battle in the great bend of the Don, an armoured clash in the hot dusty steppe which resulted in Kozlov losing his entire tank unit. The fighting then moves into the streets of Stalingrad and we discover how the brutal struggle was viewed by Red Army soldiers and scores of civilians remaining in the city. The book concludes with the victorious November counteroffensive and eventual destruction of Paulus's 6. Armee in the Stalingrad pocket. Russians are proud of their victory at Stalingrad, and justifiably so, but only by reading the veterans' own words can this source of pride even be begun to be comprehended. Several photos, maps and aerial photos

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