



Korsun Pocket

Niklas Zetterling , Anders Frankson

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During the second half of 1943, after the failure at Kursk, Germany's Army Group South fell back from Russia under repeated hammer blows from the Red Army. Under Erich von Manstein, however, the Germans were able to avoid serious defeats, while at the same time fending off Hitler's insane orders to hold on to useless territory. Then, in January 1944, a disaster happened. Six divisions of Army Group South became surrounded after sudden attacks by the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts under command of generals Nikolai Vatutin and Ivan Konev around the village of Korsun (near the larger town of Cherkassy on the Dnieper). The Germans' greatest fear was the prospect of another Stalingrad, the catastrophe that had occurred precisely one year before. This time, though, Manstein was in control from the start, and he immediately rearranged his Army Group to rescue his trapped divisions. A major panzer drive got underway, led by General der Panzertruppen Hans Hube, a survivor from Stalingrad pocket, which promptly ran up against several Soviet tank armies. Leading the break-in was Franz Baeke with his Tiger and Panther tanks. Due to both weather and ferocious resistance, the German drive stalled. Ju-52s still flew into Korsun's airfield, delivering supplies and taking out wounded, but it soon became apparent that only one option remained for the beleaguered defenders: breakout. Without consulting Hitler, on the night of February 16 Manstein ordered the breakout to begin. Led by the strongest formation within the pocket, SS Wiking, the trapped forces surged out and soon rejoined the surrounding panzer divisions who had been fully engaged in weakening the ring. When dawn broke, the Soviets realized their prey was escaping. Although the Germans within the pocket lost nearly all of their heavy weapons and left many wounded behind, their escape was effected. Stalin, having anticipated another Stalingrad, was left with little but an empty bag, as Army Group South this time had pulled off a rescue. In *The Korsun Pocket*, Niklas Zetterling, a researcher at the Swedish Defense College since 1995 and Anders Frankson, have provided a highly detailed and often breathtaking account of one of the most dramatic battles of World War II. From grand strategy to soldiers' voices on the ground, including expert statistical analysis, the action, and the stakes, of the battle at Korsun are made vividly clear.

Korsun Pocket Details

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From Reader Review Korsun Pocket for online ebook

Steve Switzer says

Excellent detailed account of this critical eastern front battle of ww2.

Unlike Michael Jones you get a detailed analysis of just how many tanks were in which division which is the sort of detail I really like

Plus you also get first hand accounts from men who were there during and after the German breakout of the encirclement

Wonderful details like the mud was so bad that the Panzer battalions used Mk IVs to haul fuel and ammo to the Panthers who did the fighting in one Panzer Bn.

The initial breakout was done with rifles unloaded at the point of the bayonet and was a success while surprise lasted.

Singleton Mosby says

A good account of the momentous and chaotic battle. Not superb however.

Andre says

Good:

- * Personal stories of soldiers involved in the battle.

Bad:

- * Needs more maps.

- * The combat description is too detailed, might be good for historians but not for ordinary readers.

Bruinrefugee says

This book covers a significant period/battle on the Eastern Front in the period after both Stalingrad and Kursk. It makes a real effort to help the reader keep track of what was happening in a relatively obscure area of the old Soviet Union. The biggest gripe is the use of different spellings or names in some of the maps from those used in the text. In a genre that can be either dry or grandiose, the prose is generally good and catches the fluid flavor as the surrounded Germans try to hold out for rescue and breakout.

Marc says

I was really hoping this book would be an interesting read about one of the last battles on the Eastern Front in which the Germans and the Russians were on somewhat even terms...but it didn't quite make it.

The book is very detailed about the units involved on both sides and the casualties suffered. However, it has a grand total of SIX pictures and while it does provide several maps, many times I was left wanting/needing another map to understand where a particular unit was fighting. Unless you have a PhD in the geography of the former Soviet Union, you'll be left wanting more maps as well. The book also suffers from a bit of one-sidedness as there isn't as much from the Russian side of the fighting as there is from the German side. There are a few personal recollections, mostly from the German side, but these were few and far between.

If dry details are what you want, this is the book for you.

Judy says

Fair warning: this book is an incredibly boring read. However, with that said, Zetterling and Frankson have gone into incredible depth to give a battle order account of the German army's breakout from the Korsun Pocket on the Eastern front. They are diligent in providing details, such as times of specific events, equipment, number of men, etc. They also provide an excellent analysis of the German and Soviet armies' successes and failures. Because there seems to be little about actions between Stalingrad and Berlin, this book fills this void.
