

Into Oblivion Kharkov To Stalingrad: The Story Of Pionier-Bataillon 305

Jason D. Mark

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After 16 months of training and garrison duty in France, Pionier-Bataillon 305 together with the rest of 305. Infanterie-Division was sent to the Eastern Front. Little could they know that an inevitable train of events had been set in motion that would lead to their destruction at Stalingrad barely nine months later. An unprecedented discovery of original material has permitted an examination of the brutal fighting on the Eastern Front through the eyes of one German battalion. Commanded by apolitical officers, reservists mainly, its ranks were filled with older-than-normal recruits. When they arrived on the Eastern Front in May 1942, it was a first time visit for most of them, yet they sensed what awaited them. Everyone knew someone who had been killed in the Soviet Union. Stories about the ferocity of combat on the Eastern Front had reached them through the soldier's grapevine. They were under no illusions, but still believed they would prevail. Weeks of monotonous, endless marching were interspersed with terrifying encounters and set-piece attacks. How would this fresh battalion compare with experienced units? Were its men less jaded and more inspired than those that had been at the front since Barbarossa began in June 1941? Was the arrival of a tough, battle-hardened commander enough to compensate for the unit s lack of combat experience? What effect did the ongoing casualties have on both the soldiers and the battalion's performance in battle? By exploring and answering these questions and others, this intimate analysis of an ordinary battalion enables the Eastern Front to be seen as never before. 620 pages on a high-quality satin (semi-gloss) stock 327 photos 56 maps and sketches 7 aerial photos 5 tables 3 appendices, including officer biographies and medal lists.



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