



## **In Deadly Combat: A German Soldier's Memoir of the Eastern Front (Modern War Studies) (Modern War Studies (Paperback))**

*By Gottlob Herbert Bidermann*

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**In Deadly Combat: A German Soldier's Memoir of the Eastern Front (Modern War Studies) (Modern War Studies (Paperback))** By Gottlob Herbert Bidermann

In the hell that was World War II, the Eastern Front was its heart of fire and ice. Gottlob Herbert Bidermann served in that lethal theater from 1941 to 1945, and his memoir of those years recaptures the sights, sounds, and smells of the war as it vividly portrays an army marching on the road to ruin.

A riveting and reflective account by one of the millions of anonymous soldiers who fought and died in that cruel terrain, *In Deadly Combat* conveys the brutality and horrors of the Eastern Front in detail never before available in English. It offers a ground soldier's perspective on life and death on the front lines, providing revealing new information concerning day-to-day operations and German army life.

Wounded five times and awarded numerous decorations for valor, Bidermann saw action in the Crimea and siege of Sebastopol, participated in the vicious battles in the forests south of Leningrad, and ended the war in the Courland Pocket. He shares his impressions of countless Russian POWs seen at the outset of his service, of peasants struggling to survive the hostilities while caught between two ruthless antagonists, and of corpses littering the landscape. He recalls a Christmas gift of gingerbread from home that overcame the stench of battle, an Easter celebrated with a basket of Russian hand grenades for eggs, and his miraculous survival of machine gun fire at close range. In closing he relives the humiliation of surrender to an enemy whom the Germans had once derided and offers a sobering glimpse into life in the Soviet gulags.

Bidermann's account debunks the myth of a highly mechanized German army that rolled over weaker opponents with impunity. Despite the vast expanses of territory captured by the Germans during the early months of Operation Barbarossa, the war with Russia remained tenuous and unforgiving. His story commits that living hell to the annals of World War II and broadens our understanding of its most deadly combat zone.

Translator Derek Zumbro has rendered Bidermann's memoir into a compelling narrative that retains the author's powerful style. This English-language edition of Bidermann's dynamic story is based upon a privately published memoir entitled *Krim-Kurland Mit Der 132 Infanterie Division*. The translator has added important events derived from numerous interviews with Bidermann to provide additional context for American readers.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Firsthand perspectives of German WWII infantrymen are rare, as respected historian Dennis Showalter (*Tannenberg: Clash of Empires*) points out in his excellent introduction. Bidermann, who is an 18-year-old private in the 132d Infantry Division at the beginning of this memoir, takes us through the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, passage across the Dnieper and southern steppes, battles in the Crimea, engagements in northern Russia and retreat through Riga to the Baltic. He retrospectively reviews historical records and sketches the daily happenings and ambience of his unit in a matter-of-fact and unpretentious--yet invariably proud--tone. The translation is direct and generally graceful, sometimes lyrical. Retired Navy SEAL Zumbro, who has translated German accounts for the Eisenhower Center of the University of New Orleans, has translated and expanded Bidermann's 1964 private German publication, utilizing the same preserved documents and retrospective interviews from other members of the 132d. Before war's end, the unit was cut off in Courland, though Bidermann claims it was "never defeated in open battle." After surrender in 1945, the remnants of the division were held in extended captivity. The Wehrmacht subculture, which Bidermann describes but does not connect back to the Reich's atrocities, was compulsively "professional," with loyalty to fellows its all-consuming central ethic. This ethic seemingly sustained these soldiers through continual dire peril of body and soul. Some did survive. B&W photos. History Book Club selection.

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### Review

"Since 1945, the front-line realities of Germany's Russian war have been submerged under so much myth that a book like this represents a welcome reality check. The 132nd's story, and Bidermann's, are part of the 'master narrative' of a 'demodernizing' Wehrmacht, whose men held against unbelievable odds and in the end were sacrificed to one of history's most purely evil causes. It is a story worth making available to American readers."—**Dennis Showalter**, author of *Tannenberg: Clash of Empires* "Stands head and shoulders above the many other books in this genre. Bidermann's style is crisp, succinct, and lucid and Zumbro has done a great job of translating."—**David Glantz**, coauthor of *The Battle of Kursk* and *When Titans Clashed*

### Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

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#### Carson McDonald:

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**Vickie Flores:**

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