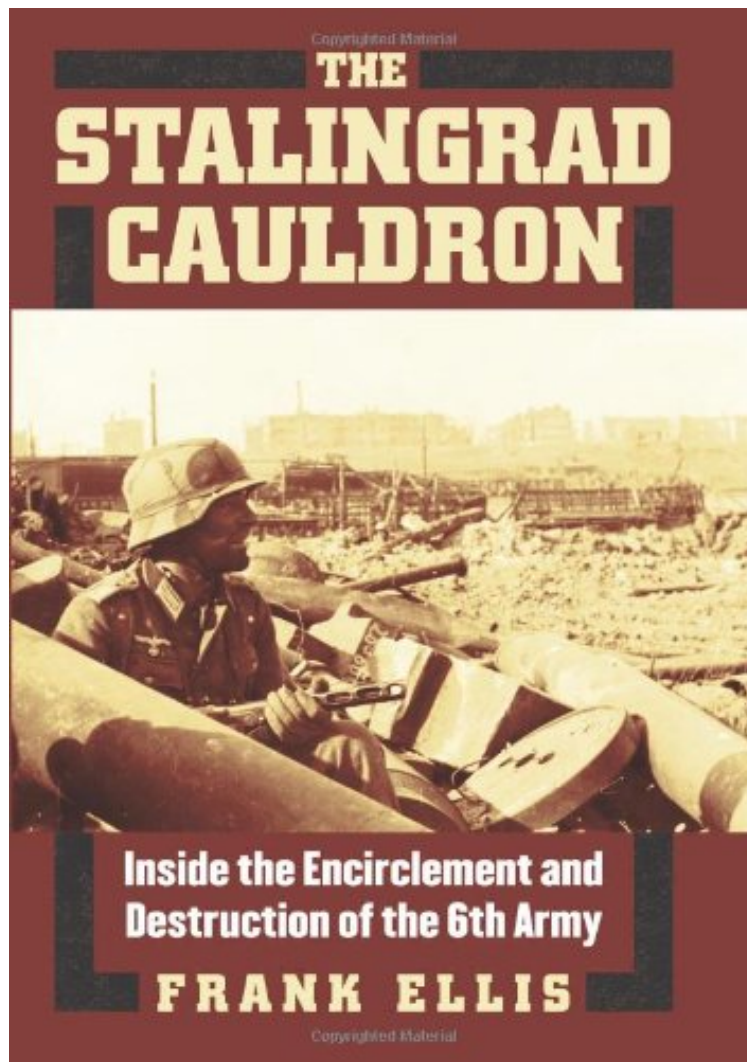


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The Stalingrad Cauldron: Inside the Encirclement and Destruction of the 6th Army (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))

Frank Ellis

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Frank Ellis : The Stalingrad Cauldron: Inside the Encirclement and Destruction of the 6th Army (Modern War Studies (Hardcover)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Stalingrad Cauldron: Inside the Encirclement and Destruction of the 6th Army (Modern War Studies (Hardcover)):

58 of 61 people found the following review helpful. A highly expert but supplemental study of Stalingrad By Dave Schranck While this may sound like criticism, its not; I enjoyed this book immensely. This is not a comprehensive

study of the operational aspects of the battle for Stalingrad like you have read from David Glantz. This is a specialty book, a niche book that Mr Ellis, with topics meticulously chosen, has developed. Its main theme concerns urban warfare and what life was like for the trapped men of 6th Army though there is minor, initial coverage of crossing the Don and transversing the land bridge to Stalingrad and the subsequent defense of the extreme flanks by Italian, Hungarian and Rumanian troops. The importance of controlling the Volga is also shown. The opening chapter is ideal for setting the stage for the rest of the book by describing the horrific fighting in the city for both sides before the November 19 counter offensive. Though this narrative is generally German driven, much is said in this chapter on Stalin's Order # 227 (Not one step back), the impact it had on the Russian soldier and the involvement of the NKVD in prosecuting this order. The author clearly shows Stalin and his security division had much less concern for the welfare of the Soviet soldier with the implementation of this unreasonable order that saw thousands killed or imprisoned. The author also believes the German soldier and especially the cadre of junior officers were better trained and disciplined over its counterpart to fight an urban battle and was a prime reason why more Soviet forces were lost than German forces but it was also pointed out several times how both sides learned from this dreadful fighting. Besides the terrible battle conditions, it's shown how long term deteriorating logistical and psychological conditions impacted the troops of both sides but especially the German side. As a relevant but secondary issue after the trap was sprung, I particularly enjoyed the insightfulness of General Seyditz-Kurzbaach and his argument to General Paulus for disobeying Hitler's order to remain in Stalingrad and to make a breakout attempt in the last week of November to the south toward Kotelnikovo. Seyditz knew that 6th Army could never be resupplied by air so deep in enemy territory and that it would be doomed if it stayed at Stalingrad. To support the author's opening overview, the war diaries of 16th PzD, 94th ID, 76th ID are presented to show the deteriorating conditions of fighting and living conditions in the cauldron in bitter winter with little food or ammunition against a relentless foe. Another interesting chapter concerns sniping. Over the decades, myths and legends have risen about the superiority of Soviet snipers over German snipers. The author presents the case the two sides were more or less equal and that thousands of victims were taken from long range on both sides. First presenting a brief history of sniping going back to WWI, the author then presents what he believes is the true history of the contribution of sniping in general as well as the duels between Konings vs Zaitsev and many others that fought there. There are also other interesting chapters on battlefield espionage, deception, propaganda, war crimes and post battle imprisonment. The recruitment of Russian minorities by the Germans to support and in a few cases to fight in the trenches was also noteworthy. There are many topics covered and positions defended in this book that are absent or barely touched on in other books that make this book worthy of your consideration. Mr Ellis clearly shows his knowledge of Stalingrad by the topics chosen along with providing quality commentary and analysis. The author has clearly done his homework and has tried not to heavily duplicate earlier works yet still presents pertinent information to the interested student. In addition to the select narrative, the Notes Section is especially informative and helpful as is the six part Appendix. Though the author gives praise to the works by David Glantz, David Stone, Antony Beever and V Grossman, most of the author's references are either German or Russian as the Bibliography clearly points out. There is also a small but worthy photo gallery; at least half of the photos I haven't seen before and were appreciated. There are many informational tables but no maps. That's too bad; it would have been interesting seeing a series of maps showing the shrinking pocket. The battle for Stalin's city and the Volga was one of the landmark events of the War. I would suggest that "The Stalingrad Cauldron" would make an excellent, even must have supplement to the traditional works by Glantz, Jason Mark, Hayward and Bergstrom etc if you're looking for a well rounded knowledge of the Stalingrad Battle. This book is therefore highly recommended to all Stalingrad students.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. So-so By Thomas Reiter Maybe I didn't read the other reviews carefully enough, but I bought this book expecting to read an account of the "encirclement and destruction of the 6th Army," in other words a standard military history of this campaign. This is not that book. In fact, this book is not a military history of the campaign at all, but rather ten chapters dealing with various narrow topics relating to the battle. These chapters (topics) are as follows (I've paraphrased the chapter titles below): 1) the battle in the post-cold war perspective; 2) diary of 16th panzer division officer at Stalingrad; 3) diary of 94th infantry division officer at Stalingrad; 4) diary of 76th infantry division officer at Stalingrad; 5) German and Soviet snipers at Stalingrad; 6) Soviets working on the German side on the eastern front; 7) espionage and counter-espionage at Stalingrad; 8) German POWs in Soviet camps; 9) materials relating to Arthur Boje, a German colonel, in Soviet captivity; and 10) work of the German graves registration bodies, etc. after the war. The author spends a lot of time (text) on certain topics which seem near to his heart, such as Stalin's order 227, the supposed sniper duel in Stalingrad, Hiwis helping the Germans, etc. Some of this is interesting, but some of it is wholly unconvincing. As one example, on page 368 the author shows a table taken from Soviet records listing different categories of Soviets arrested for various reasons. One of the categories is "Volunteers in the German Army", which to me clearly means the Hiwis. I quote the author's reaction: "The interesting thing here... is the total absence of any reference to Hiwis... one must ask why there was no reference to Hiwis in this and similar reports. 'Volunteers in the German Army' could be a euphemism for 'Hiwis'. It is as if the use of the word 'Hiwi' had been banned from Soviet documents so as not to draw attention to them. Was this intended to hide something sinister?" I'm not sure why the author finds it strange that the Soviets do not use a German word in Soviet documents,

and I don't know how much clearer the term "Volunteers in German Army" could be...and yet the author supposes some "sinister" intent behind the Soviet's failure to use a German expression. There are many similar examples where the author refuses to accept Soviet explanations, documents, etc. Another odd thing is that in the chapter on espionage and counter-espionage at Stalingrad the author avoids mentioning the elephant in the room--how the Germans overlooked, or ignored, or whatever, the massive Soviet buildup on their flanks. In any event, the author has done quite a bit of research and the book would probably be useful for anyone studying Stalingrad in depth, but I would not recommend it for the general reader looking for an account of the battle.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Up close and personal in the Stalingrad Cauldron

By TJ Diamond

The Stalingrad Cauldron: Inside the Encirclement and Destruction of the 6th Army. Frank Ellis. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2013. 542 pp.

Frank Ellis, a former academic and veteran of the British Army, has added to World War Two, Eastern Front's Stalingrad body of work through his highly readable and often intriguing book, *Stalingrad Cauldron*. Ellis tells this often told story by presenting the unique perspective of the German soldiers surrounded by the Red Army. He does this in a day-by-day account, where the reader senses the growing tension and ultimate desperation the men trapped within the Red Army's encirclement (cauldron) to feel, from previously unpublished German Army divisional reports, translated here for the first time. Additionally, Ellis presents a fresh and closer look at aspects of the Stalingrad cauldron such as sniping, desertion, spying, and the fate of German prisoners. Rich in colorful detail, it is his desire to demonstrate how an "Army faced with inevitable defeat showed great resiliency".

In chapter one, *The Battle of Stalingrad in Post-Cold War Perspective*, Ellis not only lays out his concern for a story that is "more tactical and personal...and more concerned with some lesser known detail..." but provides the relatively standard background fair, setting the strategic context for the battle. Of interest is his discussion and critique of Stalingrad in literature, film and documentary. Ellis does a masterful job in summarizing the David Glantz and Jonathan House Stalingrad trilogy. Ellis provides the 16th Panzer, 94th Infantry Division, and 76th Infantry Division accounts in the following three chapters. These read like journal entries; for those military historians or those who've served, or are currently serving in the military, they will read like daily operational summaries or situational reports- complete with personnel strengths, ammunition and rations statistics. Ellis has done a great service to the community by translating these accounts for the English speaking reader. Here is where he gets the most "tactical and personal" as he set out to do:

Major von Rochow...reports: Early on 20 January 1943 heavy Russian mortar and antitank fire fell on the right wing of Hauptmann (captain) Isberner's battalion sector...The battalion was almost completely destroyed...Major von Rochow was wounded.

In the remaining chapters, Ellis takes the reader through an intriguing look at those aspects that are often neglected in the study of the Stalingrad cauldron but never the less, are important to understanding the totality of war on the Eastern Front. His presentation of the German Army's recruitment of Soviet national minorities, deserters, and prisoners of war along with his treatment of German prisoners of war in Soviet camps and the arrest, interrogation, and repatriation Oberst (Colonel) Arthur Boje, the commander of 134th Grenadier Regiment, 44th Infantry Division, are the most compelling. Oberst Boje was one of the small group of German survivors that returned to Germany after 13 years of imprisonment. Here Ellis presents Oberst Boje's account from the latter's memoir, *Stalin's German Agents: German Prisoner of War Reports*. Ellis concludes it "is an underrated contribution to the genre of camp literature" and "on a par Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*." Finally, Ellis provides "bonus" material in the form of six appendices with two notable inclusions, translations of Chapter 18 ("The Duel") of Vasilii Zaitsev's *Memoir* and Vasilli Grossman, Glazami Chekhova (*Through Chekhov's Eyes*), 16 November 1942, *Stalingrad Front*. Although Ellis is not unsympathetic to the German Soldier's plight in the Stalingrad cauldron and as a Red Army prisoner of war, he is not heavy handed either, trying to exonerate from all wrong doing. Ellis simply provides a fair and balanced look into the day-to-day challenges and later reconciliation the German soldier faced. He captures Stalingrad Cauldron survivor Johannes Petzold's thoughts, "I never heard anything again from any of my comrades in the Kessel. Were they killed in battle; did they freeze, starve, or perish in captivity? The same thing could have happened to me. The tragedy of Stalingrad and the uncertain fate of my comrades have been a psychological burden all my life."

Stalingrad Cauldron is a well re-researched and written addition to the Eastern Front and Stalingrad body of work. There is no doubt that Ellis's book will not only appeal to the Stalingrad specialist, but to the World War Two enthusiast as well.

The encirclement of the German 6th Army at Stalingrad in mid-November 1942 and its final collapse in February 1943 was a signature defeat for Hitler, as more than 100,000 of his soldiers were marched off into captivity. Frank Ellis tackles this oft-told tale from the unique perspective of the German officers and men trapped inside the Red Army's ever-closing ring of forces. This approach makes palpable the growing desperation of an army that began its campaign confident of victory but that long before the end could see how hopeless their situation had become. Highlighting these pages are three previously unpublished German army division accounts, translated here for the first time by Ellis. Each of these translations follows the combat experiences of a specific division—the 76th Infantry, the 94th Infantry, and the 16th Panzer—and take readers into the cauldron (or Kessel) that was Stalingrad. Together they provide a ground-level view of the horrific fighting and yield insights into everything from tactics and weapons to internal disputes, the debilitating effects of extreme cold and hunger, and the Germans' astonishing sense of duty and

the abilities of their junior leaders. Along with these first-hand accounts, Ellis himself takes a new and closer look at a number of fascinating but somewhat neglected or misunderstood aspects of the Stalingrad cauldron including sniping, desertion, spying, and the fate of German prisoners. His coverage of sniping is especially notable for new insights concerning the duel that allegedly took place between Soviet sniper Vasilii Zaitsev and a German sniper, Major Konings, a story told in the film *Enemy at the Gates* (2001). Ellis also includes an incisive reading of Oberst Arthur Boje's published account of his capture, interrogation, and conviction for war crimes, and explores the theme of reconciliation in the works of two Stalingrad veterans, Kurt Reuber and Vasilii Grossman. Rich in anecdotal detail and revealing moments, Ellis's historical mosaic showcases an army that managed to display a vital resilience and professionalism in the face of inevitable defeat brought on by its leaders. It makes for compelling reading for anyone interested in one of the Eastern Front's monumental battles.

“Characterized by sound scholarship, clarity, and acute attention to detail, Ellis’s work adds substantially to our understanding of the Battle of Stalingrad and the travails of the troops who fought, suffered, and often perished in the fighting.”—David M. Glantz, author of *The Stalingrad Trilogy* “Ellis has uncovered a number of previously unavailable or neglected sources that offer valuable insight into the daily struggles for survival in the Stalingrad cauldron.”—Stephen G. Fritz, author of *Ostkrieg: Hitler’s War of Extermination in the East* “A fascinating and essential volume for all students of the Eastern Front.”—Robert M. Citino, author of *The Wehrmacht Retreats: Fighting a Losing War, 1943* “... taps previously unpublished Wehrmacht records to offer vivid testimony.”—*World War II Magazine* “[A] detailed and enlightening look at the German 6th Army's tenacious but doomed resistance. Ellis uses a wide range of newly uncovered German and Russian sources to weave a strong narrative about the complex and often misunderstood context within which the 6th Army fought and died in and around Stalingrad.”—H-Net sAbout the Author Frank Ellis is the author of *Vasilii Grossman: The Genesis and Evolution of a Russian Heretic*; *From Glasnost to the Internet: Russia’s New Infosphere*; and *The Damned and the Dead: The Eastern Front through the Eyes of Soviet and Russian Novelists*. A former academic and veteran of the British army, he currently lives in the United Kingdom.