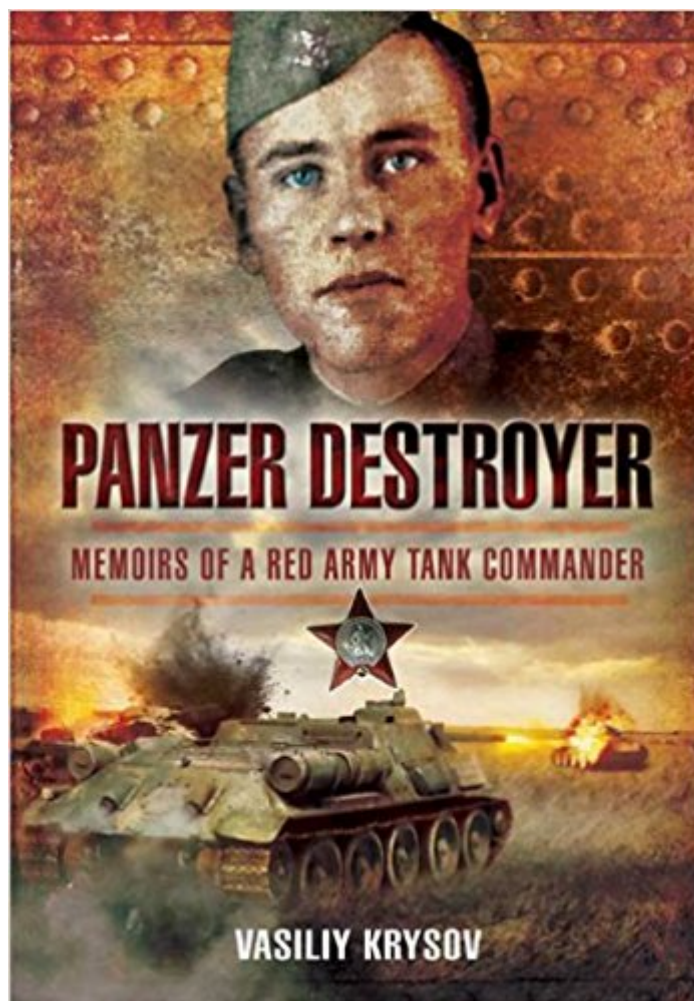


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Panzer Destroyer: Memoirs Of A Red Army Tank Commander



Synopsis

The day after Vasilii Krysov finished school, on 22 June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union and provoked a war of unparalleled extent and cruelty. For the next three years, as a tank commander, Krysov fought against the German panzers in some of the most intense and destructive armored engagements in history—including those at Stalingrad, Kursk and Königsberg. This is the remarkable story of his war. As the commander of a heavy tank, a self-propelled gun—a tank destroyer—and a T-34, he fought his way westward across Russia, the Ukraine and Poland against a skillful and determined enemy which had previously never known defeat. Krysov repeatedly faced tough SS panzer divisions, like the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Panzer Division in the Bruilov-Fastov area in 1943, and the SS Das Wiking Panzer Division in Poland in 1944. . Krysov was at Kursk and participated in a counterattack at Ponyri. The ruthlessness of this long and bitter campaign is vividly depicted in his narrative, as is the enormous scale and complexity of the fighting. Honestly, and with an extraordinary clarity of recall, he describes confrontations with German Tiger and Panther tanks and deadly anti-tank guns. He was wounded four times, his crewmen and his commanding officers were killed, but he was fated to survive and record his experience of combat. His memoirs give a compelling insight into the reality of tank warfare on the Eastern Front.

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Customer Reviews

Vasilii Kryson fought on the Eastern Front as a tanker throughout the Second World War. After the

war, he wrote one of the outstanding first-hand accounts of tank warfare in the Red Army.

The writing is a bit dry but redeems itself by being factually accurate, honest and frank. He addresses issues such as drunken commanders, useless political officers, sexual exploitation of female soldiers etc. Also, it is a bit choppy. For instance, he will spend a lot of time describing one battle, but on another will just say, " We were repulsed at such and such". In other places, there are gaps. For instance, you're never quite sure when he stopped being a platoon commander and became a company commander. He is pretty curt and short about his feelings and reactions to events and persons but that may be just his personality. Although his survival of so many brushes with death may be unbelievable to some, I feel the author made every effort to be honest and accurate. One definitely gets the feeling the author is a man of integrity and honesty. I believe this is a book that can be trusted. It is not until the last page that you see a real glimpse into his heart. What impresses you most is the strong moral character and courage of this simple soldier and his very strong sense of duty and simple sense of honor. A good addition to any scholar's library.

I see some fairly lackluster reviews here. I disagree. After reading some very good Soviet memoirs, including both Dimitiry Loza's books ("Commanding the Red Army's Shermans" and "Fighting for the Soviet Motherland"), Vasiliy Brukov's "Red Army Tank Commander" and a 5 or 6 others, I considered Krysov's book the best written of the bunch. His observations are honest and forthright. He gives us the good and the bad and his personal side notes are very interesting. Krysov, on a personal level, is exceptional. He is the only one who professed a belief in God and seemed quite happy never to have had a membership in the Communist Party. Krysov fought from Stalingrad, in a KV1, to Kursk (in a Su-122) then finished most of the war in a SU-85, before finally getting a T-34/85. Interesting that he notes he preferred assault guns. The combat is well documented and when he mentions Tigers, you can probably believe him. He knows his tanks. He was also up against the main SS assault at Kursk, and he mentions the Ferdinands, Nashorns, PZIV's and other Panzer types when applicable. His writing style is fluid and interesting. His notes on women in the Red Army are also well stated and confirm some other observations in other books. I highly recommend this one if you are looking to catch up on Red Army memoirs after decades of German only books.

While this book is enjoyable and interesting as a first-hand account from someone who lived the experiences, be aware that it is an account with a lot of brevity. The author tries to condense a great

deal of experiences into a relatively modest book, and I feel it suffers a little as a result. While the author does come across as honest and straightforward, the writing style has a hint of Soviet-style hyper-optimistic propaganda to it, which I suppose is understandable. There seems to be just a few too many instances of miraculous survivals and harrowing charges through the center of German-occupied towns to be one hundred percent believable, but I don't think it makes the book less valid for what it is, one man's account of his experiences as an armored warrior. The book doesn't really describe any of the defeats and setbacks that one would assume would be part of a struggle as vicious as that which occurred on the Eastern front in World War II. Nevertheless, it had a refreshing quality to it which made it an entertaining read for an amateur WW II historian.

This is another in a series of books written by a Russian who served in World War Two. This time he served in the tank corps as well as an anti-tank unit. The book provides an interesting first person account from the Russian perspective of the war. The author starts his service in a military school where he is processed like so many other Russian citizens. His unit is then sent to fight the Germans at a number of significant battles to include Stalingrad, Kursk and a number of attempts by the Germans to stop the Russian juggernaut. It is interesting that the author manages to survive at least five vehicles that were destroyed while he was in them or commanding them. There are a number of examples of great heroism as Russian tankers attempt to help comrades escape those destroyed tanks. It is also interesting to note they used German machine guns against German troops. An extra machine gun, especially one as good as a German machine gun, was something they used to great success. There is even one section where they describe using captured German tanks that was quite interesting. Clearly the author was a very patriotic man. But I also wonder how much the Russian oligarchy played a role in the publication of this book. While the author does mention the hardships and death and destruction they endured in the war they also seem to be uncanny in victory after victory. In fact, I would say it's quite remarkable the author managed to survive the war at all given all he endured. To some extent I suppose this is reality. As Churchill said, "Before Stalingrad the Germans scarcely had a defeat. After Stalingrad they scarcely had a victory." If you enjoyed this book I would strongly suggest reading about the German side with *Survivors of Stalingrad: Eyewitness accounts of the 6th Army, 1942-43* by Reinhold Busch and Guy Sajer's master work *The Forgotten Soldier*. For more on the Russian experience I would suggest *Red Road From Stalingrad: Recollections of a Soviet* by Mansur Abdulin.

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