



Wolves of World War II: An East Prussian Soldier's Memoir of Combat and Captivity on the Eastern Front

Hans Thiel

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On September 25, 1944, Hitler attempted to shore up his faltering forces by creating the Volkssturm or People's Army. His new draft called into service all remaining able-bodied men, including those whose civilian labor had previously been deemed indispensable. Among the latter was an East Prussian farmer named Hans Thiel, who suddenly found himself on the Eastern front, fighting not to bring glory to the Nazi Party (for which he felt at best a troubled resignation) but to save his country from destruction. With the defeat of the Germans, Thiel was taken prisoner by the advancing Soviet forces.

From the closing days of World War II through three years of postwar captivity, this memoir details the experiences of Hans Thiel. Beginning with the realities of agrarian life during World War II, it then describes Thiel's conscription, his combat experiences, and his life as a postwar prisoner, held first by the Red Army and then transferred to camps under Polish control. The atrocities these prisoners suffered at the hands of their captors--as retaliation for German military war crimes--are discussed in detail.

The book includes a glossary (general terms), an appendix commenting on German agrarian policy under the Third Reich, a second appendix discussing the difficulties of tracing Thiel's route through the war-torn countryside, and a third appendix of placenames. Photographs and maps are also included.

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