



Center of Military History  
of the United States Army

# COMBAT IN RUSSIAN FORESTS AND SWAMPS

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States Army**

# **Combat in Russian Forests and Swamps**

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# PREFACE

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*Combat in Russian Forests and Swamps*, prepared for the Historical Division, EUCOM, by a committee of former German generals and general staff officers, deals with the principles of combat in the vast woodlands and swamps of European Russia. The main author and all other contributors have drawn upon their own extensive experience on the Eastern Front and that of their allies, especially the Finns, to present the actual lessons learned from the events of the war. When the study was translated and prepared for publication, every effort was made to retain the point of view, the expressions, and even the prejudices of the original authors.

The reader is reminded that publications in the German Report Series were written by Germans from the German point of view. Throughout this study, any mention of “normal methods” or standard infantry tactics refers to German combat doctrines, and applies to units organized and equipped in accordance with German regulations. Similarly, the recommendations contained in the final section are made against the background of German methods of individual and unit training before and during World War H.

# FOREWORD

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In conformance with the assignment, this study had to be confined to a discussion of tactical principles. The author's lucid and methodical presentation fully corresponds with the experiences reported to me by our combat forces during the Russian campaign.

Apart from tactical principles, however, another problem calls for serious consideration: The problem of education and training, of teaching self-confidence to young men of military age and of training them in the art of improvisation. The need for this training is pointed out in the final section of this study.

Furthermore the presence of vast forest and swamp regions, as encountered in eastern Europe, must be taken into consideration in the planning of military operations. Future planners will have to make certain that extensive areas of woodlands and swamps are not permitted to assume more than tactical importance. The German command in Russia was not always successful in this respect, partly because it did not see clearly all the elements involved and partly because it did not succeed in driving the enemy away from the large wooded and swampy areas. On the contrary, there were numerous occasions when we deliberately drove the Russians into the swamp, assuming that this would prevent them from interfering with the further course of operations. That proved to be a fatal error.

When the enemy has been maneuvered into a large forest and swamp region, the area cannot be sealed off by the same methods as a beleaguered fortress. Even a force with great numerical superiority will never have enough men available for such a task. It was also our experience