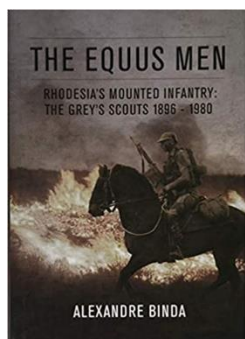


Book reviews

The Equus Men: Rhodesia's Mounted Infantry: The Grey's Scouts, 1896-1980 by Alexandre Binda; United Kingdom: Helion and Company; 2021; 288 pages; \$300 hardcover, \$35.77 paperback.



Is there a role for horse-mounted cavalry in modern warfare? The answer to that question may be found in the story of Rhodesia's own cavalry force during the so-called Bush War of 1964-1979.

Written by Rhodesian-army-veteran author Alexandre Binda, *Equus Men* opens with an account of the emergency stand-up of an *ad hoc* paramilitary cavalry unit during the Matabele Rebellion of 1896, in what would later become Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). This unit, dubbed Grey's Scouts from its founder Englishman George Grey, served as part of the larger Bulawayo Field Force throughout the 100-day conflict.

Both formations passed into African military history until Rhodesia recognized the need for a cavalry branch as a counterinsurgency tool. Despite some resistance to the idea, the Rhodesian army authorized a provisional cavalry force drawing its lineage from the Grey's. These cavalrymen played a pivotal, albeit short-lived, role until Rhodesia collapsed in 1980. The unit disbanded a final time as dictator Robert Mugabe assumed power in the newly renamed Zimbabwe.

The text's middle is a year-by-year analysis of the reformed Grey's in Rhodesia, including combat-informed changes to its organization, structure, employment, personnel, equipment and tactics. Binda concludes the story with a series of appendices listing military honors, the Grey's fallen soldiers and even selections from the unit's songbook.

Binda writes from a position of expertise, having served in the Rhodesian army as a paymaster to several units, including the Grey's. His research is exhaustive, and the writing is detailed to an extreme. Unfortunately, his writing style is dense, with little in the way of an appealing storyline to the reader.

What *Equus Men* lacks in a narrative is more than made up for in period photographs and information, leaving an overall impression of a unit yearbook rather than historical work. Readers searching for a "one-stop shop" on the Grey's Scouts need look no further.

Rhodesia reintroduced horse cavalry in a search for tactical solutions to an increasingly untenable strategic problem set during the nation's civil war. Petrol shortages, land mines and difficult terrain – combined with declining external material and political support for Rhodesia – required its military leaders to look for novel approaches to counterinsurgency. The idea of an army maintaining a ready, resourced and trained cavalry force may seem anachronistic in 21st Century military warfare, and certainly was not the answer to Rhodesia's existential challenges.

Binda presents a compelling case for the maintenance of a small mounted cavalry force as a reconnaissance or counterinsurgency element to augment modern military capabilities. That said, there is a danger of presenting tactical-level solutions as a silver-bullet answer to operational or strategic level challenges – a lesson U.S. Army leaders seem to have largely forgotten in our own counterinsurgency experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan.

LTC CHRISTOPHER J. HEATHERLY

Stalingrad 1942-1943 (2), The Fight for the City by Robert Forczyk; Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey Publishing; 2021; 96 pages; \$24 paperback, \$9.99 Kindle.

Dr. Robert Forczyk has written three volumes chronicling the Battle of Stalingrad for Osprey's long-running Campaign Series. Volume 2, the subject of this review, covers the German attack within the city itself. Volume 1 covers the approach of the German army to the city, and Volume 3 deals with the massive and decisive Russian counterattack. A reader interested in the campaign will want to read all three volumes. But this work can stand alone and be read and understood by someone who has not read the others.

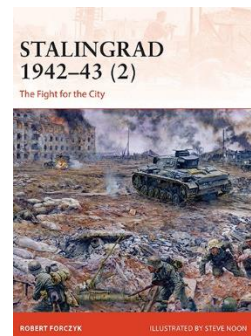
Most readers of **ARMOR** will be familiar with Osprey's Campaign Series, of which literally hundreds have been published. These always-concise works range from good to excellent and focus on standard military history. Full of maps, photographs and excellent drawings, they narrate the course of their battles describing the plans and maneuvers of both sides.

This work follows the standard Campaign Series format. It starts out with an analysis of the origins of the campaign, a brief biography of the major commanders of both sides and then an analysis of the contending armies. The book then narrates the battles and ends with a discussion what the battlefield looks like today.

Forczyk, one of today's leading military historians, has produced one of Osprey's best histories with this book. His descriptions of the commanders involved are excellent, and his analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of both sides' armies and air forces are interesting and informative. Most importantly, his battle narrative is clear and easy to follow. Readers often get bogged down in military histories trying to follow the movements of different commanders and their formations over unfamiliar terrain, but there is no problem with that here. Forczyk's clear prose is supported by a host of excellent and detailed maps. One comes away with a clear understanding of what happened and why.

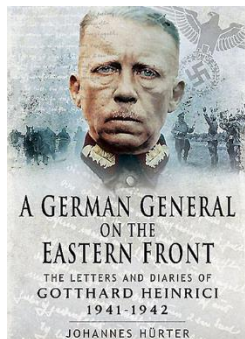
As always in Osprey books, there are cut-outs in the text that examine portions of the battle in great detail, using three-dimensional terrain depictions. There are also careful drawings with annotations that describe uniforms and equipment in detail.

If you are interested in and want to clearly understand the Battle of Stalingrad in a relatively short, but accurate, work that is packed with detail, this is for you.



COL (RETIRED) WILLIAM R. BETSON

A German General on the Eastern Front: the Letters and Diaries of Gotthard Heinrici, 1941-1942 by Johannes Hurter; United Kingdom: Pen and Sword Books Ltd; 2021; 176 pages; \$34.95 hardcover, \$19.95 paperback.



The Russo-Ukrainian War, Europe's first major conflict since 1945, makes the private letters and diaries of a senior German commander, Generaloberst Gotthard Heinrici – who led combat operations over much of the same ground in World War II – relevant as a glimpse of what warfare in that region, especially in wintertime, entails.

Heinrici knew this region well, having fought over it as a young officer in World War I. Much of his 6½ years of combat experience were spent on the terrain contested during the opening stages of the present fighting in Ukraine. His letters to his wife, private in nature but intended to be preserved as a historical record of what Heinrici saw, offer an almost-daily recounting of what the Wehrmacht encountered once they passed the German frontier bound for the Eurasian heartland. These letters – excerpted to focus on military matters – combined with diary entries, offer a short, pungent recounting of the enemy and elements that ultimately broke the fighting power of the Wehrmacht.

Dr. Johannes Hurter, a distinguished German historian specializing in this period, discovered Heinrici's private papers in an archive and edited a German edition similar to the now-available English translation. His expertise in this chapter in German history makes his work especially relevant as a retelling of the opening year of the war on the Russian front.

Heinrici records the relentless, ruthless and often savage nature of Russian resistance and the German response to it that characterized combat in his sector. He recounts no acts of mercy or chivalry – such as those that occasionally appear in the memoirs of his colleague GEN Erhard Raus; Heinrici's war was, for his soldiers, one of no quarter asked or given. Nonetheless, Heinrici was not a Nazi and did not engage in wanton destruction.

The savagery of the combat and the scenes of extreme suffering and utter ruin that greeted him everywhere, in contrast to what he'd witnessed in World War I, led him to remark on several occasions that nothing like what he saw had happened in Europe since the Thirty Years' War. A particularly telling example of the intensity of the

conflict is Heinrici's relating how a Russian partisan had, prior to execution, made his own noose, exclaiming, "I die for Communism!" as his sentence was carried out.

Partisan warfare was endemic and a regular refrain in Heinrici's writings. Both civilians and Russian soldiers caught behind the leading edge of the German advance would operate independently in the Wehrmacht's rear, frequently equipped with military gear abandoned in forests and swamps during the retreat. Airborne insertions behind the German front added to partisan strength and made the fight effectively a two-front war before the close of the first year. Partisan efforts to interdict German resupply were a constant source of worry and frustration and contributed materially to the deterioration of Wehrmacht combat effectiveness.

Heinrici observed a number of sharp contrasts to what his soldiers had experienced in operations in the West: "seasons of mud" lasting for months in Fall and Spring; subfreezing temperatures for weeks on end, with lows reaching -30F; a lack of potable water; near-universal poverty, and yet every village had a new, well-equipped public school.

Poor planning, based on German underestimation of Russian morale and fighting ability, caused endless suffering for Heinrici's troops when the hoped-for quick victory failed to materialize. Like the fictional soldiers in *Cross of Iron*, Heinrici's men lived for months on end in combat, outdoors, in all kinds of weather, without reliable resupply, hungry, cold, ill and bonded to each other in a misery that often produced heroic sacrifice, while the top brass in Berlin continued to live in comfort and believed in fairy-tales of eventual victory. Stories of men with frostbite, sores and lice remaining in the trenches or on the ground for hours during a sub-arctic winter to hold the line against repeated attacks by better-fed, -clothed and -equipped foes are a regular feature of Heinrici's letters.

The takeaway for the reader is that climate and geography will be critical factors for any would-be combatant planning operations in the realm of "General Winter." Doing so will help avoid the mistakes Heinrici's superiors made in learning the lessons of combat in Eurasia. Germany's failure to learn from history contributed to their "Napoleonic retreat" from a Russia they'd marched into expecting a quick and easy triumph.

SFC (RETIRED) LLOYD A. CONWAY