



# **We Will Not Go to Tuapse: From the Donets to the Oder with the Legion Wallonie and 5th SS Volunteer Assault Brigade 'Wallonien' 1942-45**

*Fernand Kaisergruber*

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This is a classic soldier's chronicle, told in unvarnished candor, about the author's experiences as a volunteer with the Wallonian Legion of the German Army and later the 5th SS Volunteer Assault Brigade Wallonien and the 28th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division Wallonien. However, it also ventures far beyond the usual soldier's story and approaches a travelogue of the Eastern Front campaign, seldom attained by the memoirs of the period. His self-published book in French is highly regarded by Belgian historian and expert on these volunteers Eddy de Bruyne, and Battle of Cherkassy author Douglas Nash. This book merits attention as the SS volunteer equivalent of Guy Sajer's *The Forgotten Soldier*, a bestseller in the USA and Europe. By comparison, Kaisergruber's story has the advantage of being completely verifiable by documents and serious historical narratives already published, such as Eddy de Bruyne's *For Rex and for Belgium* and Kenneth Estes' *European Anabasis*.

Until recent years, very little was known of the tens of thousands of foreign nationals from Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France and Spain who served voluntarily in the military formations of the German Army and the German Waffen-SS. In Kaisergruber's book, the reader discovers important issues of collaboration, the apparent contributions of the volunteers to the German war effort, their varied experiences, their motives, the attitude of the German High Command and bureaucracy, and the reaction to these in the occupied countries. The combat experiences of the Walloons echoed those of the very best volunteer units of the Waffen-SS, although they shared equally in the collapse of the Third Reich in May, 1945.

Although unapologetic for his service, Kaisergruber makes no special claims for the German cause and writes not from any postwar apologia and dogma, but instead from his firsthand observations as a young man experiencing war for the first time, extending far beyond what had been imaginable at the time. His observations of fellow soldiers, commanders, Russian civilians and the battlefields prove poignant and telling. They remain as fresh as when he first wrote some of them down in his travel diary, *'Pensées fugitives et Souvenirs (1941-46)'*. Fernand Kaisergruber draws upon his contemporary diaries, those of his comrades and his later work with them while secretary of their postwar veteran's league to present a thoroughly engaging epic.

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