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Red Star Under the Baltic: A Firsthand Account of Life on board a Soviet Submarine in World War 2

Viktor Korzh

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Red Star Under The Baltic is the graphic memoir of a Soviet submariner during his years at sea in the Baltic during the Second World War. Not only is this a superb record of the appalling conditions endured on these basic craft, but a very human account detailing the comradeship and tensions among the crew as they operated in the most life-threatening conditions. Written in the first person, the author vividly describes the many actions that he and his comrades were involved in. Many of these were successful and Korzh witnessed numerous engagements and sinkings of German shipping. However, it was by no means a one-sided contest and there were some horrifyingly close calls.

The comparatively shallow waters of the Baltic were less than ideal for submarine warfare. Perhaps the most dangerous and dramatic moment came when his submarine became entangled in netting. After frantic efforts, they just managed to extricate themselves before being depth-charged. Another constant threat was of mechanical malfunction.

This book will have strong appeal to all those with an interest in the naval history of the Second World War. It is extremely rare to have a totally authentic Russian account, which has been superbly translated into English. There are strong echoes in this thrilling memoir of the classic German U-boat story Das Boot with its non-stop action and constant underwater danger.

The author was born in 1912 in the small Russian village of Melguny, Viktor Korzh graduated from the Naval Training College in 1938 as a submariner engineer. His wartime experiences are the subject of this book which was first published as Reserve of Strength in 1966. After the War he remained involved with the Submarine Service as a researcher and instructor, retiring in 1960 as a Captain First Rank. Married with two children, Viktor Korzh died in St Petersburg in 1993.

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