

## At War's Summit

This is the story of the highest battlefield of World War II, which brings to life the extremes endured during this harsh mountain warfare. When the German war machine began faltering from a shortage of oil after the failed Blitzkrieg against the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht launched Operation Edelweiss in the summer of 1942, a bold attempt to capture the Soviet oilfields of Grozny and Baku and open the way to securing the vast reserves of Middle Eastern oil. Hitler viewed this campaign as the key to victory in World War II. Operation Edelweiss presumed the crossing of the Caucasus Mountains. Mountain warfare requires unique skills: climbing and survival techniques, unconventional logistical and medical arrangements, and knowledge of ballistics at high altitudes. The Main Caucasus Ridge became the battleground that saw the elite German mountain divisions clash with the untrained soldiers of the Red Army, as they fought each other, the weather, and the terrain.

**Alexander Statiev** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Waterloo, Canada. His extensive experience in mountain trekking, white-water rafting, and ski expeditions across five continents helped him assess the challenges to military actions in the mountains described in this book.

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# At War's Summit

## The Red Army and the Struggle for the Caucasus Mountains in World War II

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**To Grisha Don, my partner in mountaineering**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Abwehr	German military intelligence
MCR	Main Caucasus Ridge
NKVD	Narodnyi komissariat vnutrennikh del SSSR (USSR People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)
OG	Operations Group for the Defence of the Main Caucasus Ridge Passes
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
OPT	Obshchestvo proletarskogo turizma (Association for Proletarian Tourism)
OPTE	Obshchestvo proletarskogo turizma i ekskursii (Association for Proletarian Tourism and Excursions)
OSOAVIAKHIM	Obshchestvo sodeistviia oborone, aviatsionnomu i khimicheskomu stroitel'stvu (Association for Assistance to Defence, Aviation, and Chemistry)
SMERSh	Smert' shpionam (Soviet Military Counterintelligence Service)
TCF	Transcaucasian Front

