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"Our Commander-In-Chief Chose The Right Strategy": From Balakliia To Iziom, On The Way To Ukrainian Reconquest

By David Sadler — Last Updated Sep 12, 2022



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A captured Russian soldier lies on a tank surrounded by Ukrainian soldiers, in Iziom, Ukraine, September 11, 2022. LAURENT VAN DER STOCK FOR "THE WORLD" The defeated Russian tankman nonchalantly smokes a cigarette as he listens with a smirk as the victorious Ukrainian fighters ask him questions. "So, like that, you Russians want to liberate Ukraine? And you, bastard, you wanted to free us from what, from whom?" The captive tries to convince the commander of the unit that took him prisoner that he did not want the invasion of Ukraine. "I was against this war..."

In front of the Cathedral of the Ascension of Izioum, three women bring a pot of varenyky with potatoes (ravioli) to the Ukrainian fighters. They thank their liberators for putting an end to the Russian military occupation. "Feed that bastard too", commands the officer. The prisoner receives his ration of ravioli.

"You saw how we are welcomed by the population! And you, were you greeted like that when you arrived?" The tanker thinks for five seconds, then replies that "even in [sa] hometown, in Russia, we are not welcomed like that". He makes some soldiers smile. "I can't listen to that bastard, I want to kill him", whispers a Ukrainian fighter, gritting his teeth. He steps aside and goes to find his comrades sitting on the other side of the street, in front of the cathedral. Above them, perched in the steeple, a soldier keeps watch and watches the surroundings.

Women bring cooked meals to Ukrainian army soldiers who have just regained control of the city from Russian forces, in Iziom, Ukraine, September 9, 2022.

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"Today marks 200 days of our resistance"

The city of Iziom is the main conquest of the dazzling Ukrainian counter-offensive launched on September 6 in the Kharkiv region, in northeastern Ukraine. Once the front was broken through in heavy fighting at Balakliya, the Russian army collapsed and its units fled in disorganized order. Faced with the debacle, Moscow announced on September 10 that it had ordered the withdrawal from Iziom, where thousands of soldiers were being surrounded.

Read also: Vladimir Putin weakened by the military debacle in Ukraine kyiv confirmed, Sunday evening, by the voice of President Volodymyr Zelensky, to have completed the capture of the city. Iziom is now the symbol of how five days of assault become a turning point in a war. "Today marks 200 days of our resistance. Our struggle for freedom, for independence" indicated the Ukrainian president, before paying homage to each army corps and listing the cities having resisted or having been reconquered since the outbreak of the war.







The decisive attack which shattered the Russian defense had taken place five days earlier on the Balakliia front. Captain Andriy Malakhov, nom de guerre "Tuman" ("fog"), led one of the assaults at the head of the 518th battalion of the 1st special forces brigade Ivan Bohun, named after a Cossack fighter of the XVIIth century became a national symbol in independent Ukraine.

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