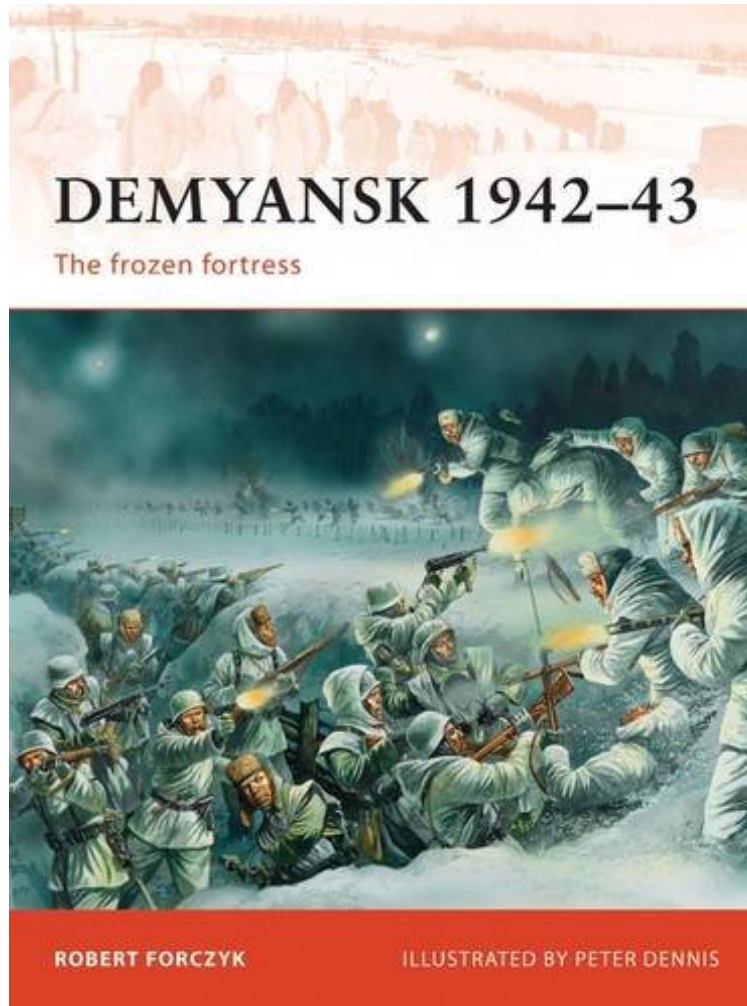


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## Demyansk 1942–43: The frozen fortress (Campaign)

*Robert Forczyk*

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**Robert Forczyk : Demyansk 1942–43: The frozen fortress (Campaign)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Demyansk 1942–43: The frozen fortress (Campaign):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Top notch operational summary of a forgotten but very important battle...By DimitriosIn my opinion this is one of the best titles in the Osprey Campaign series, and I have more than a hundred of them in my personal library. The operational analysis is crystal clear and excellent and if you have an interest in this important but neglected siege you'll enjoy this book. The successful defence of the twin cauldrons of Demyansk and Kholm, achieved through the use of an airbridge by Germans, was a significant development in modern warfare at that time. The resultant encircled pockets of German forces demanded an inordinate reply on the part of the Soviets, the knock on effect was the stalling of offensive actions elsewhere on the Eastern Front. Its success was a major contributor to the disastrous decision made by German high command, to try the same tactic during the

Battle of Stalingrad. The details of the battle of Demyansk are little known even to the avid readers on the Eastern Front, thus that lack of familiarity certainly helped, as this easily the best Osprey Campaign book I've had the pleasure to read in many years. All the parameters of that forgotten battle south of lake Ilmen are perfectly analysed in the most convenient way in this proficient presentation. If David Glantz is the top authority on the Eastern Front with massive super-detailed volumes, then Robert Forczyk is the best author for excellent summaries. I enjoyed every page of this book! Especially the "Opposing Commanders", the "Opposing Armies" sections are really a revelation since I didn't know many of the details presented. The maps are very good and I couldn't put this book down. Bravo Mr Forczyk!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A dangerous precedence

By WryGuy2 "Demyansk 1942-1943 (Campaign)", by Robert Forczyk and illustrated by Peter Dennis, is an entry in the Osprey "Campaign" series about the Soviet attacks on and encirclement of German forces in Demyansk and Kholm during World War II. The book follows the typical Osprey Campaign format - typically about 96 pages long, consisting of analysis of the campaign, commanders, forces and styles of warfare, pictures, illustrations, and maps. The author has written numerous other Osprey books on the Eastern Front in World War II (as well as other battles in other times and places), and he does a typical outstanding job of setting the stage, taking the reader through the fighting, and analyzing what happened and why. The copious maps and photographs greatly complement the text. The three double-page illustrations, although very well drawn, seem a little too "sanitized" to me. For example, the one that shows a climactic battle inside of Kholm has a wide, mostly unmarked roadway within the city with Soviet soldiers advancing alongside some tanks, and a knocked-out German anti-tank gun virtually in the center of the street. In urban combat, especially in a location where fighting has been on-going for weeks, I would expect a massive jumble of debris with the soldiers advancing very cautiously, and the German anti-tank gun hidden much better than just behind a wall of sandbags in the open. This is just a nit and perhaps unjustified, as I obviously wasn't there, but it just seems too "neat". As noted above, the Soviets had attacked and encircled German forces at Kholm and Demyansk. In addition to the fighting, Mr Forczyk also describes the large-scale airlifts that the Germans were able to organize ... the first-ever successful attempt to supply large numbers of encircled forces via the air. However, this success set the stage for the German resupply attempt at Stalingrad later in the year, and the author shows that the Germans did not draw the proper conclusions from this success. For example, the majority of the entire Luftwaffe transport fleet was engaged in supplying 105,000 surrounded Germans, against relative weak Soviet fighter forces and from air bases that were relatively close to both supply points and the encircled forces. And even then the Germans were barely able to provide enough supply to keep the pockets from collapsing. Yet later in 1942, in large part because of the success at Demyansk, the Germans attempted to supply over 300,000 trapped soldiers with a smaller transport fleet (partly because of losses and partly because of a need to also use aerial transports to help provide supply to North Africa) against a much stronger opponent from less favorable airbase/supply locations. You could make the argument that if the Germans had been less successful in supplying Demyansk/Kholm, the German 6th Army might have immediately fought its way out of the Stalingrad encirclement rather than leave their collective heads in the noose, and avoided the larger debacle. In most wars, this year-long series of battles would have well known and much studied, as around 800,000 soldiers were killed or wounded during this campaign. However, given the titanic brawls occurring elsewhere in the Soviet Union during this time frame, this campaign has largely been forgotten except by serious students of the war, perhaps because the eventual outcome was relatively inconclusive. But Mr Forczyk adeptly brings this portion of the war back to life, and shows the wider implications to Germans later in the war. Overall, this is another strong offering from Robert Forczyk and Osprey Publishing, and provides excellent information about a "forgotten campaign". And if you, like me, have read most of the standard histories of the fighting on the eastern front and are looking for something new, this is a great buy. Five stars.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Demyansk 1942-43: The Frozen Fortress

By Illinois Reader This book details the plight of encircled German Forces around Demyansk in northern Russia. In this battle the Germans hold off a much larger Soviet force attempting to destroy them. In short, the Germans are well led, and well-enough supplied by air that Hitler and other German War Planners attempt to repeat the feat at Stalingrad to disaster. This book also describes the actions of the Germans at Kholm. This book is filled with pictures, maps, exciting drawings and is mostly from the German point of view.

The fighting around the town of Demyansk was one of the longest encirclement battles on the Eastern Front during the Second World War, stretching from February 1942 to February 1943. Originally, the German 16. Armee occupied Demyansk in the fall of 1941 because it was key terrain - a crossroads located on high ground amidst a sea of swampy terrain - that would be used as a springboard for an eventual offensive into the Valdai Hills. Instead, the Soviet winter counteroffensive in February 1942 encircled the German II Armeekorps and other units, totalling about 100,000 troops, inside the Demyansk Pocket. Another pocket was also created around Kholm, with another 5,000 Germans inside. Yet despite severe pounding from five Soviet armies, the embattled German troops held the pocket and the Luftwaffe organized a major aerial resupply effort to sustain the defenders. For the first time in military history, an army was supplied entirely by air. After stopping the Soviet winter counteroffensive, the German 16. Armee mounted two major relief efforts to rescue their trapped forces in the Demyansk and Kholm pockets, which were finally

relieved in April-May 1942. During the siege, the crack 3. SS-Division 'Totenkopf' was virtually destroyed, suffering 80 per cent casualties. However, Hitler demanded that the 12 divisions of II Armee Korps remain in the narrow Demyansk salient, whose base was only 6km wide. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1942, the Soviets pounded the salient from all sides, inflicting heavy casualties on the defenders. In February 1943, Marshal Timoshenko was ordered to launch an offensive to cut off the base of the salient and annihilate the 12 divisions. At the same time, Hitler finally came to his senses after the Stalingrad debacle and authorized the 16. Armee to withdraw from the pocket. Thus, the Germans began to withdraw just as Timoshenko opened his grand offensive to cut them off and destroy almost 100,000 German troops. This volume will conclude with the drama of a German army-size withdrawal under fire in winter, under attack from three sides.

“...provides a powerful, in-depth survey of the fighting around the town of Demyansk, one of the longest encirclement battles of World War II.” ?James A. Cox, *The Bookwatch* (September 2012) From the Author This volume covers both the Battle of the Demyansk Pocket and the Siege of Kholm, during the period of January 1942 to February 1943. It is based primarily upon research on primary source records from the archives at NARA. About the Author Robert Forczyk has a PhD in International Relations and National Security from the University of Maryland and a strong background in European and Asian military history. He retired as a lieutenant colonel from the US Army Reserves having served 18 years as an armor officer in the US 2nd and 4th infantry divisions and as an intelligence officer in the 29th Infantry Division (Light). Dr Forczyk is currently a consultant in the Washington, DC area.