

Demyansk 1942-43

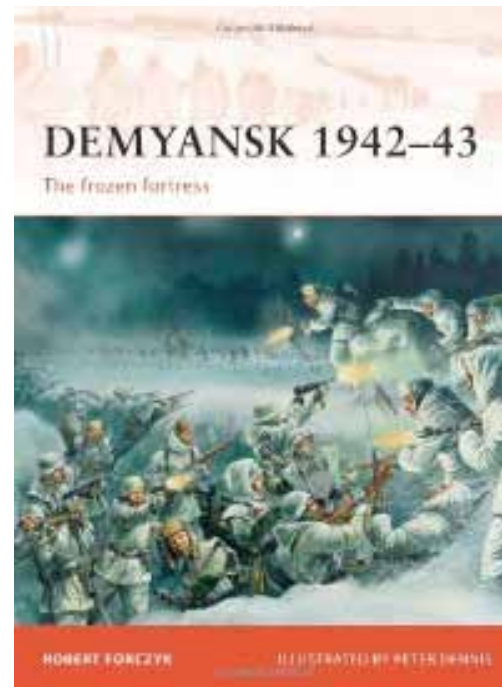
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Demyansk 1942-43
Author: Robert Forczyk
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Summary

The Demyansk salient proved a horrific Eastern Front battleground, due in part to the meddling of two dictators. Osprey's latest 'Campaign/' series covers this desperate encirclement battle and its aftermath in their indubitable style.

The fighting around the town of Demyansk was one of the longest encirclement battles of the Eastern front during World War II, stretching from February 1942 to February 1943. The German Armeekorps 16, who had occupied Demyansk in the autumn of 1941, stopped the Winter Counteroffensive but at the cost of the encirclement of II Armeekorps, with over 100,000 men trapped at Demyansk and another 5,000 at Kholm. What followed was an epic of defensive warfare as the German defenders fought off overwhelming Soviet assaults until their relief in May 1942. A key role was played in the defense of the Demyansk pocket by the Luftwaffe, who kept the defenders supplied by



air. This led to an unwarranted confidence in Hitler and Goring of the ability of the Luftwaffe to supply the defenders of Stalingrad, which was to set up the German forces for disaster later that year.

This latest Campaign book from Osprey brings the familiar format of past volumes back, including full color maps and action paintings, black and white photographs with extensive captions, and orders of battle. There is also an interesting chronology of the extended battle showing the repeated attacks and counterattacks, and resulting leadership changes. A year before ordering a complete withdrawal, Hitler declared Demyansk a 'festung', or

Fortress, giving the reader the impression of a desperate and, in the end, pointless struggle. In one attempt by the Russians to capture two airfields, the German units repulsed attacks by Soviet forces that outnumbered them 8:1, and then annihilated the remaining forces over the following weeks. The final outcome, however, was all but decided once the German withdrawal was complete.

I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the more obscure battles from the Eastern Front during World War II. I would like to thank Osprey Books for the review copy, and Internet Modeler for the opportunity to review it.