



Besieged: The Epic Battle For Cholm

By Jason D. Mark

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Kampfgruppe Scherer's outstanding feat of arms was one of Germany's most famous military achievements during the Second World War. With only a few thousand men from all branches of the service, including mountain troopers, elderly reservists, police officers, navy drivers, SS partisan hunters and supply troops, Generalmajor Theodor Scherer was ordered to hold Cholm in the face of a superior enemy force. That Scherer and his men prevailed is now an historical fact but analysis of daily radio traffic and combat reports reveals that the pocket's survival was precarious; at times, even senior commanders doubted if it could be saved. On several occasions the Soviet onslaught looked poised to inflict the death blow but somehow the exhausted men of Cholm grimly clung to a few resistance nests upon which a new line was anchored. General Scherer, a popular leader and inspiration to all his soldiers, despaired many times and was forced to continually plead for more men, more supplies and more aerial support. Urgent demands by other sectors meant Kampfgruppe Scherer was drip-fed just enough supplies and reinforcements to stay alive until, eventually, a relief force forged a permanent link and freed the exhausted survivors.

After a catastrophic winter of setbacks and resounding defeats for the Wehrmacht, the General and his men were lauded as heroes and recognised with an arm shield that marked them as Cholmkämpfer, men of exceptional courage who had prevailed despite overwhelming odds.

Primary sources have been utilised for the first time to present this battle in a detailed day-by-day format, from the forlorn days of January and February to liberation in early May.

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22 maps and sketches

22 aerial photos

9 supporting documents

7 detailed appendices

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