

THE DESERT WAR

From 1940 to 1943, decisive operations took place in North Africa. In this harsh campaign Allied armies confronted German and Italian forces, engaging in decisive battles at Tobruk, at El Alamein, in the waters off Cape Bon or during the Allied landings of November 1942. This conflict left an enduring mark on national memories: Rommel and Montgomery became heroes, even myths. The Free French constructed legends around the exploits of Leclerc and Koenig: the oath of Koufra and the victory of Bir Hakeim. This myth-making had its reverse, however: the supposed weakness of the Italian Army would become an enduring source of mockery and ridicule, while revisionist historians endeavoured to detract from Montgomery's talents and to sideline the importance of El Alamein. If Operation Torch allowed for the liberation of Algeria and Morocco, it struggled to free Tunisia and immobilised the Anglo-American troops in the Mediterranean Theatre, thus delaying Operation Overlord.

This project seeks to revitalise the history of the war in the desert by providing a much-needed global perspective on this theatre of operations. National historiographies have certainly done much of the groundwork but they have remained prisoners of their national frameworks and have almost wholly neglected the point of view of the adversary. In addition, this project seeks to transcend the preoccupations of 'traditional' military history. Military operations will certainly be studied: it will be necessary to analyse the nature of the combat and thus to investigate the strategies adopted, the merits of the leaders, the resolve of men and the conduct of the operations. But the project also intends to broaden the investigation beyond the battlefield. It aims at a better understanding of the diplomatic context, such as the relations between Rome and Berlin or the divergences opposing London and Washington. It hopes to cast new light on the colonial dimension of this war by investigating the relations established between colonisers and colonised peoples during wartime and, in particular; by assessing the impact of the intrusion of newcomers (the Germans on the one hand, the Anglo-Americans on the other). This approach will allow for greater reflection on the phenomenon of acculturation aroused by these encounters. It also intends to assess the overall colonial contribution to the war effort (whether voluntary or compelled).

> INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP



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17-18

OCTOBER 2014

CASA DE VELÁZQUEZ | MADRID

A Universal carrier escorts a large contingent of Italian prisoners, captured at El Hamma, 28 March 1943. Photograph by Sgt. John Silverside (No 2 Army Film & Photographic Unit). Ref: Imperial War Museum collection, NA 1630

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University of Cambridge

Olivier WIEVIORKA
École Normale Supérieure de Cachan

Julie LE GAC
École Normale Supérieure de Cachan

> 10h

Opening Session
Michel BERTRAND
Director of the Casa de Velázquez

Olivier WIEVIORKA
École normale supérieure de Cachan

> 10h30-13h**EXPERIENCING A NEW KIND OF WAR**

Chair
Nicola LABANCA
Università di Siena

Peter GRAY
University of Birmingham
The Royal Air Force in the Desert War

Lars HELLWINKEL
Gymnasium Athenaeum Stade
Kriegsmarine and the War in North Africa

Discussion

Coffee-break

Fabio DE NINNO
Università di Torino
Italian Logistics, at odds under Allied Bombs,
between Sicily and Libyan Coasts (« la battaglia
dei convogli »)

Iain JOHNSTON
University of Cambridge
Independence and Interdependence:
the Dilemmas of the Dominion Units
in the British Eighth Army

Discussion

Celebration place
**CASA DE VELÁZQUEZ,
MADRID**

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> 15h-17h

WAR VIOLENCE
Chair
David REYNOLDS
University of Cambridge

Martin CÜPPERS
University of Stuttgart
Nazi Plans for the Extermination
of Jews in North Africa

Discussion

Julie LE GAC
École normale supérieure de Cachan
Looting and Repression:
the Troubled Liberation of Tunisia (1943)

Rüdiger OVERMANS
Universität Freiburg
German Prisoners of War

Discussion

Break

> 17h30-19h

MEMORIES OF THE DESERT WAR
Chair
Olivier WIEVIORKA
École normale supérieure de Cachan

Jörg ECHTERNKAMP
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg/Zentrum
für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften
der Bundeswehr (Potsdam)

North Africa: A Forgotten Theatre of War?
Identity, Legitimization and the Shifts in
German Memory Culture since 1945

Patrick BERNHARD
University College, Dublin
Prosecuting Italian War Criminals and Writing
the History of the Desert War

Agostino BISTARELLI
Giunta Centrale per gli Studi Storici
Memories of the Italian Prisoners of War

Discussion

> 9h30-10h30**THE IMPACT OF THE DESERT WAR
ON LOCAL POPULATION**

Chair
François DUMASY
École française de Rome

Daho DJERBAL
Université Alger 2
Alliances et mésalliances entre nationalistes
algériens et parties en conflit durant
la Seconde Guerre mondiale

Fayçal CHERIF
Institut supérieur d'histoire du mouvement national
(Tunis)

The Desert War and the Rise
of Tunisian Nationalism

Discussion

Coffee-break

> 11h-12h30**DIPLOMACIES AT WAR**

Chair
Patrick BERNHARD
University College, Dublin

Haim SAADOUN
Open University and Ben Zvi Institute (Israel)
Operation Torch. International Relations,
Spying and Resistance in Algeria

David REYNOLDS
University of Cambridge
British and American Allies and the Experience
of the Desert War

Albert SALUENA
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
The Spanish Army in Morocco. Its influence
in the Mediterranean during the Second
World War

Discussion

> 12h30-13h**GENERAL DISCUSSION**