



The Desert War

General Overview

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).

Institutions affiliated

École française de Rome
École Normale Supérieure de Cachan
Deutsches Historisches Institut in Paris
Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom

Scientific Committee

François Dumasy, Nicola Labanca (Università di Siena), Stefan Martens (Deutsches Historisches Institut Paris), David Reynolds (University of Cambridge), Olivier Wieviorka, Julie Le Gac (École Normale Supérieure de Cachan)

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Second workshop Combatants and relations with local populations

25-26 October 2013 au
Centre Jacques Berque

Le colloque aura lieu dans la salle de conférence
du Centre Jacques Berque
35, avenue Tarik Ibn Ziyad, Rabat



Contact

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PROGRAMME

Friday 25 October 2013

10h00 : Words of Welcome by the direction of the Centre Jacques Berque and Olivier Wieviorka

1) War Leaders

Chair : Stefan Martens

10h30 : Sönke Neitzel, London School of Economics (S.Neitzel@lse.ac.uk) : Rommel

10h50 : Nial Barr, King's college London (nbarr.jscsc@defenceacademy.mod.uk) : Montgomery (tbc)

11h10 : Hubert Heyriès, université de Montpellier (hubert.heyries@univ-montp3.fr) : the Italian high command

11h30 : *Discussion*

12h00 : *Lunch Break*

2) The experience of combatants

Chair : Nicola Labanca

14h20 : Wolfgang U. Eckart, University of Heidelberg (Wolfgang.Eckart@histmed.uni-hei-

delberg.de) : Sanitary and psychiatric experiences during Germany's desert war in Libya, 1941/43

14h40 : Christopher Mann, Royal Academy of Sandhurst (m_c_mann@hotmail.com) : the Commonwealth forces

15h00 : Nir Arielli, University of Leeds (n.arielli@leeds.ac.uk) : Italian colonial soldiers

15h20 : *Coffee Break*

15h50 : Stefan Petke, Freie Universität Berlin (stefan.petke@googlemail.com), *The Deutsch-Arabischen Lehrabteilung in North Africa*

16h10 : Driss Maghraoui, Al-Akawayn University (D.Maghraoui@au.ma) : the Moroccan colonial troops

16h30 : *Discussion*

Saturday 26 October 2013

3) War, local populations and the rise of nationalisms

Chair : Olivier Wieviorka

9h00 : Martin Thomas (University of Exeter, Martin.C.Thomas@exeter.ac.uk) : Feeding the Fury : The Political Economy of Algerian Dissent, 1940-45

9h20 : Jamaâ Baida, Université Mohamed V, Rabat (jbaida@yahoo.fr) : The Allied presence and its consequences for the Moroccan population

9h40 : François Dumasy, Ecole Française de Rome (dirmod@efrome.it) : The incidence of war on Libyan population

10h00 : Eric Jennings, University of Toronto (eric.jennings@utoronto.ca) : Colonial mobilisation and its consequences in AEF

10h20 : *Discussion*

11h00 : *Coffee Break*

4) Occupation and repression in North Africa

Chair : David Reynolds

11h30 : Patrick Bernhard, Trinity College Dublin (dr.patrickbernhard@web.de) : Italian repression in North Africa

11h50 : Peter Wien, University of Maryland (pwien@umd.edu) : The Arab-German Nexus in World War II : A Critical Assessment of the Historiography

12h10 : David Motadel, University of Cambridge (dm408@cam.ac.uk) : Islam and the Desert War: Military Conflict and the Politics of Religion in North Africa, 1941-1943

12h30 : *Discussion*

13h 00 : *Conclusion : David Reynolds*