

Présentation

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 relationship between Rome and Berlin or the divergences between 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).

École française de Rome
Histoire, archéologie, sciences sociales

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Programme « La Guerre des sables /
The Desert War »

Atelier

Projets, plans et opérations
militaires



Rome, 5 et 6 octobre 2012

École française de Rome
Piazza Navona, 62
00186 Roma

Vendredi 5 octobre 2012

École française de Rome
Salle de conférence, 1^{er} étage

9h30

Accueil par Catherine Virlovet, directrice de l'École française de Rome, et François Dumasy (École française de Rome).
Introduction par Olivier Wiewiorka (École Normale Supérieure de Cachan)

Première session :

L'AFRIQUE DU NORD DANS LA STRATEGIE
GLOBALE DES BELLIGERANTS

(présidence : Nicola Labanca, università di Siena, Centro Interuniversitario di Studi e Ricerche Storico-Militari)

10h

Simon Ball (University of Glasgow) : *The Three Wars for the Mediterranean : British Strategy in North Africa.*

10h20

David Reynolds (University of Cambridge) : *North Africa in Anglo-American strategy and diplomacy, 1941-1943.*

10h40

Lucio Ceva Valla (Università di Pavia) : *Italian strategy and North Africa (1940-1943)*

11h

Jörg Echternkamp (Sciences po - Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg) : *The African theater of operation in the perspective of the "Third Reich". An outline of campaigns, strategy, and ideology.*

11h20-12h20 : Discussion

Pause déjeuner

Deuxième session :

L'AFRIQUE DU NORD : UNE QUESTION
COLONIALE ?

(présidence : David Reynolds, université de Cambridge)

14h

Chantal Metzger (Université de Nancy) : *Did the Third Reich harbour colonial intentions in North Africa?*

14h20

John Darwin (University of Oxford) : *The British Empire and North Africa*

14h40-15h10: Discussion

Pause

Troisième session :

LES COMBATTANTS (I)

(présidence Lutz Klinkhammer, Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom)

15h30

Julie Le Gac (Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan) : *Hastily thrown together: the French Army of Africa in Tunisia (1942-1943)*

15h50

Richard Carrier (Royal Military College of Canada) : *Assessing Fighting Power : The case of the Italian Army in North Africa, June 1940-May 1943.*

16h10

Nial Barr, (King's college London) : *The British forces in North Africa.*

16h30

Jonathan Fennell (King's College London) : *The Commonwealth forces.*

16h50-17h50 : Discussion

Samedi 6 octobre 2012

Quatrième session :
LES COMBATTANTS (II)

(présidence Stefan Martens, Deutsches Historisches Institut in Paris)

9h

Eric Jennings (University of Toronto) : *African Free French troops at Koufra and in the Fezzan*

9h20

Patrick Bernhard (Trinity College, Dublin) : *Italian colonialism as a model for the Third Reich ?*

9h40-10h10 : Discussion

Pause

Cinquième session :

CAMPAGNES ET BATAILLES

(présidence Olivier Wiewiorka, ENS Cachan, IUF)

10h30

Nigel Hamilton (University of Massachusetts) : *Operation "Torch".*

10h50

Thomas Vogel (Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt Potsdam) : *Tobruk 1941 and the legend of Erwin Rommel as a brilliant general.*

11h10

Nicola Labanca (Università di Siena) : *El Alamein.*

11h30

Romain Rainero (Università di Milano) : *La phase finale de la campagne de Tunisie: vers la reddition du Cap Bon (13 mai 1943).*

11h50-12h50 : Discussion

12h50 : Conclusion