

MANUSCRIPT DATA SHEET

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SUPPLEMENT TO THE PAPER "REASONS FOR ROMMEL'S SUCCESSSES IN AFRICA,

1941-42"

by

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Gen. Maj.

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As former G-2, from 1 July 41 to 31 May 42, and as deputy G-3, from 1 June 42 to 31 August 42, of Panzer Army Africa, I present the following supplement to the essay by Generalmajor von Holtzendorff, "Reasons for Rommel's Successes in Africa, 1941-42."

In his presentation, von Holtzendorff gave an accurate picture of Rommel's character and personality. I wish to add the following observations in order to supplement and emphasize certain of von Holtzendorff's statements.

Rommel was the logical commander for desert warfare. His main strength, the immediate command of forces right on the battlefield, could be given full play in such broad, open spaces. Army field orders which failed to keep pace with the developing situation could, therefore, be given bold, rapid, and flexible revision on the spot by a direct order from Rommel.

The direct command by the Army Commander, while offering this advantage, was also accompanied by serious disadvantages in regard to the over-all operations of the Africa Army. Decisions affecting the Army as a whole were likewise made in the midst of tactical situations, and were strongly influenced by the success or failure of the local operation. Following is an example:

On 23 November 1941, during the defensive battle in MARMARICA, Rommel gave an on-the-spot order because of a local success near BIR EL GUBI, where elements of the German Africa Corps had succeeded in destroying a South African regiment. He ordered the Africa Corps to give pursuit through BIR SCHEFFERZEN and on into Egypt. The complete failure of this thrust showed that, because of the over-all situation, the time in no way was ripe for such a decision. Rommel, together with the Army Chief of Staff, advanced with the point of the pursuing forces and experienced in a very personal manner that the enemy resistance, as a whole, was far from being broken.

The German panzer divisions suffered considerably on this raid.

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The German panzer divisions suffered considerably on this raid, and Rommel divorced himself from the command of the over-all situation for

a period of about five days. The Army headquarters, which was located near EL ADEM at this time and out of all contact with Rommel, had the burden of conducting the over-all operation and particularly the defensive engagements in the TOBRUK area.

The general staff officer had to guard against any exaggeration in his reports on the enemy or on the own situation, for Rommel was likely to arrive at extreme conclusions in such cases. The G-2 had a pleasant, gratifying job, since Rommel devoted much interest to this field. The best intelligence source, the reports of radio intelligence submitted by the intercept company, influenced his decisions decisively. The Quartermaster occupied a difficult position, for not until 1941-42, when reverses were suffered in this field, did Rommel give more attention to the supply situation. Typical of the importance which he placed on the supply problem is the following statement from Rommel: We'll get our gasoline from the British!

In conclusion it may be said that Rommel was a commander blessed with a special talent for leading ^{mobile} forces in desert warfare.

(signed) Friedrich Wilhelm von Mellenthin

Translated B. Bailey
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