An Army at Dawn: The War in Africa, 1942-1943 Study Guide

An Army at Dawn: The War in Africa, 1942-1943 by Rick Atkinson

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

World War II officially began with the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Over the next two years most of Western Europe was brought under Axis control, Japan attacked the United States - putting the U.S. firmly in the Allied camp, Hitler turned east against his former ally Stalin, and Rommel was running rampant in North Africa. The United States quickly mobilized for war. Allied commanders made the decision that an invasion of North Africa would drain German resources and pave the way to an Allied invasion of Europe itself. The North African invasion was to be called Operation Torch.

The landing sites for Torch were decided in October 1942. The initial cities to be taken were Casablanca, Algiers, and Oran. More than 33,000 American soldiers and 100 ships were to be involved in the operation, although most of the troops had no practical combat experience. Several covert operations were already underway in Vichy-held North Africa, with varying degrees of success. Hitler assumed that a North African invasion was coming, but massed his submarines too far east to hinder the invaders.

The British had previously devised several badly planned schemes for small forces to sail into Oran and Algiers. For the most part, the troops were either killed or captured. However, most of the landings did eventually succeed (even if some accidents occurred and transports landed in the wrong location). After varying degrees of difficulty, all three targeted cities were taken. The French were marginally cooperative with the Allies. At that time, transports also came under attack by German submarines.

German troops began landing in northeastern Tunisia, and the French troops mostly stood down and allowed it to happen. German air superiority began to show as their Stuka aircraft started harassing Allied troops more and more. Allies began to move troops east into Tunisia to face the Germans. Logistical issues were among the major problems at this point; not enough supplies had been planned for the operation, and troops could not be efficiently moved to the front. The new Commander, Anderson, had been hoping to deliver a knockout blow to the Germans before they could build up too much force. On the whole, though, the Allies seemed to be very tentative as they moved east.

Eisenhower moved his headquarters to Algeria and became frustrated by the continued dominance of Axis planes. Stukas were attacking Allied formations at will, especially in Tunisia. The first tank battles of the war occurred, and the Americans realized that their lightly armed Stuart tanks were no match for the German heavy Panzer tanks. Only by attacking from the rear did the Stuarts have any success. The British actually made it within sight of Tunis before being turned back by a major German offensive. A German ambush also routed a large British force near Bizerte. Still another German attack decimated the Allied forces near Tebourba. Many Allied troops were in a state of panic.

Both armies dug in and reinforced in mid-December 1942. Many American troops were still stuck hundreds of miles from the front. Several hills were fought bitterly over and a

general stalemate occurred between the armies. Most offensives for the Allies were cancelled.

Back in Casablanca, a high level Allied conference took place between President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, Eisenhower, and the American and English Chiefs of Staff. Eisenhower's Operation Satin, to move quickly across southern Tunisia and head off Rommel, was cancelled. After the Casablanca conference, Eisenhower appointed Major General Lloyd Fredendall to command the II Corps.

During this time, heavy fighting was taking place over a strategic area known as the Eastern Dorsal. Fredendall had not properly defended the area, and when it was attacked, he did not move rapidly to send reinforcements. As a result, the Axis troops seized several key areas, including Faid Pass. The Germans turned several other hurried attacks back, and Allied morale plummeted. The outlook became even worse after the Germans captured and killed thousands of Allied troops near Sidi Bou Zid. The Germans moved steadily westward, even prompting Fredendall to move his headquarters in a moment of panic. Americans were able to fight a holding action against the Axis forces at Sbeitla before falling back to Kasserine Pass. The Germans managed to take the badly defended Pass before being pushed back by an American Unit at Djebel Hamra. After that, the German offence ran out of steam and retreated. The Allies had lost more troops and tanks, but because of shipping losses, the Germans were no longer acquiring reinforcements.

Rommel moved east to confront Montgomery and was beaten badly when the British General intercepted and deciphered his attack plans. The Germans attacked again, but were driven back after taking heavy casualties. Montgomery moved north into Tunisia to join up with the rest of the Allied army, and the more intuitive Omar Bradley replaced Fredendall. The Allies began to retake ground that they had lost in the preceding months, and the Americans also became more adept in their fighting methods - particularly in the use of new artillery techniques. More German attacks were driven back as the Allies prepared for the final assault on the Axis bridgehead.

The Allied assault was to happen in three separate prongs with a total of 300,000 men. All three groups found quite a bit of German resistance and made slow progress, but the American unit under Bradley broke through to Bizerte after a long period of difficult hill-to-hill fighting. The other groups made it through to Tunis, and the war for North Africa was over.

Prologue

Prologue Summary and Analysis

The military cemetery at Carthage, Tunisia holds some 2,800 identically designed marble headstones. The final battles of the people buried there aren't listed on the stones but can usually be inferred by reading the date of death. This site is very near the ancient city of Carthage (the home city of Hannibal), which was attacked, put under siege, and finally razed to the ground by the Romans in 146 B.C.

North Africa was a pivotal point both in World War II and in the rising might of U.S. military power in the world. In fact, North Africa determined the course of the war. The first major clashes between Allies and Axis troops occurred there. What started early on as small firefights between dozens of troops, quickly escalated into great campaigns with thousands of men, tanks, and planes. American ingenuity was tested and later proven up to the task. North Africa is also where the supposed invulnerability of the Third Reich was trounced.

The path to North Africa was set on September 1, 1939, with the German invasion of Poland. The blitzkrieg attack overwhelmed the country in a matter of days. The following spring, German troops swept westward; quickly taking the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and finally France. Only a German error allowed over 300,000 troops to evacuate from Dunkirk across the English Channel to Britain. As France fell, Italy joined the Axis alliance. The German-controlled French (Vichy) government, led by Marshal Philippe Petain, was allowed to control southern France and its African colonies, and the Vichy French pledged to fight any Allied invaders there. A renegade French government was set up in London, led by Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle to support the Allied cause.

Japan then joined the Axis powers, and Hitler declared the war all but won. The German offensive turned north, toward Britain, which was the last holdout, and the aerial "blitz" bombardment began. Only the lend-lease act with the neutral United States kept vast amounts of supplies flowing into the besieged country. Greece and Yugoslavia fell to the combined German and Italian forces in April 1941. Spain disappointed Hitler by remaining neutral. Italians under Dictator Benito Mussolini attacked the British in Egypt from their colony in Libya. German General Erwin Rommel was sent to lead the Afrika Korps to assist the Italians.

Then, two events occurred that changed the outcome of the war. First, Hitler turned on his former Soviet "allies" in June 1941. The Germans' initial overwhelming success in the summer turned into a winter disaster when the German army was stopped outside Stalingrad with over a million either killed or wounded. Also, the Japanese surprise attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 severely damaged the American navy. After the Pearl Harbor attack, Hitler and Mussolini also declared war on the United

States to back their Japanese ally. These actions served to bring the full might of the previously neutral American resources up against the Axis powers.

The American readiness program was immediate and immense, even though in 1939, the United States combat force had been ranked only 17th in the world, just behind Romania. Sixteen million draft registerees were examined for combat readiness, though only 60% were accepted. The initially high draft conscript standards would fall in the months to come. Weapons shortages were common, so recruits trained with brooms and stovepipes to simulate weapons. The resources available were staggering, though. Congress gave the U.S. Army more money in 1940 than it had in the preceding twenty years combined.

The United States government made an early decision to aid Britain against Hitler first instead of immediately fighting Japan. Pacific forces were to fight more defensively. The Americans began sending troops to Britain for an eventual European invasion, but then this risky move (so early in the war) was postponed in lieu of a North African campaign. The Americans preferred the European invasion from Britain as the best strategy to end the war as quickly as possible, but British Prime Minister Winston Churchill cunningly saw Africa as a way to take on the German armies and drain their resources away from Europe and Russia. There was also considerable pressure to make a decision and open a second front to aid the new ally Russia. Churchill prevailed, however, and operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, was prepared. U.S. General Eisenhower was made commanding General of European Operations and Commander in Chief of Torch.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

Kent Hewitt met with President Roosevelt and General George Patton in October 1942 to discuss preparation for operation Torch. His motto was, "You do everything you can, then you hope for the best." Hewitt's contingent of Torch, designated Task Force 34, was to occupy French Morocco and Algeria. Hewitt, Roosevelt, and Patton discussed final plans. In total, over 100,000 troops were to be landed in North Africa. The ultimate plan was to quickly take Tunisia before the Axis troops could gain reinforcements. The initial cities to be taken were Casablanca, Algiers, and Oran.

After sailing from Hampton Roads, Virginia, more than 33,000 American soldiers and 100 ships were to be involved in the operation. The British were not to be involved in the initial operation due to British/French animosity. There was quite a bit of discussion concerning the choices for exact landing points, with some proposed locations being scrapped due to proximity to Axis airports. The final decision was to plan on three sites in Morocco and six beaches in the Algiers/Oran region. These sites were spread over 900 miles of coastline.

Patton had come of age during World War I. He was considered a pioneer of mechanized armor and spoke with much bravado concerning the honor of war. He had a five-word war manifesto: "violent attacks everywhere with everything." His Torch troops were comprised of units assembled quickly to make up three divisions. He addressed troop commanders on October 23 in Norfolk, speaking of urgency and threatening against showing signs of weakness.

At Hampton Roads, ships making up Task Force 34 were being loaded with thousands of tons of supplies. The thousands of soldiers coming together all at once created confusion, and the influx of worried troops waiting to embark in Norfolk stressed the city to its limits. Eventually 28 transport ships were loaded and the fleet set sail early in the morning on October 24.

Only two days earlier, a small group of British and Americans dressed in civilian clothes had set ashore at Cherchel, just up the coast from Algiers. The British submarine *HMS Seraph* waited just off shore. Major General Mark W. Clark, the Deputy Torch Commander, led the mission at the behest of Eisenhower. A Vichy French Commander named General Charles Mast had made contact earlier about letting the Allies get safely to shore. Less than a dozen men came ashore and entered a villa at the planned rendezvous point. General Mast arrived at 6am and the generals spoke at length about Vichy troop morale in North Africa. Mast maintained that the region could easily commit 300,000 troops to the Allied cause, if given enough weapons. Clark gave Mast vague information about Torch, although he did not reveal how imminent the invasion actually was. Mast showed the Americans military target maps, and said to expect the French

Army and Air Force to back the Allies, but not the Navy. Clark returned safely to the *Seraph*, and reported to London what he had learned.

Vessels from Britain were heading for Algeria as Hewitt's forces sailed for Morocco. The ships were staggered to arrive and "shoot" the narrow Strait of Gibraltar in a specific order that required precise seamanship. Many deception plans had been made and broadcast to throw Axis planners - specifically submarines (U-Boats) - off track.

The loading ordeal at British ports turned out to be even more chaotic than at Hampton Roads, and many supplies were lost or stolen. Most troops leaving Britain were fresh recruits with no fighting experience. Many badly needed tanks were left behind when they wouldn't fit in the landing vessels. This armored division was known as "Old Ironsides," and was also full of green recruits. Another infantry division, the 34th, was rushed into service stripped of many of its experienced offers and with the new troops having received no maneuver training. The group sailed for Algeria completely untested in most aspects of combat. In spite of these shortcomings, the fleet turned toward the Strait of Gibraltar on November 5 and then sailed on into the Mediterranean. Soon they would split, with half of the vessels bound for Algiers and the other half toward Oran.

The island of Gibraltar was basically a rock than jutted out of the narrow strait between the Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea. Just 3 miles wide by 1 mile long, it housed a very congested airport where fourteen squadrons of fighter planes had been secretly assembled and now were ready to fly in Torch. Eisenhower met with British officers and found the office he would share with Clark in the bowels of Fortress Gibraltar. He communicated with London and Washington using an ocean cable to maintain radio silence. As the British convoy passed quietly through the Strait, he received no word of Hewitt's convoy to the west. French General Henri Giraud arrived at Gibraltar on November 7 and met with Eisenhower and Clark to discuss his own plan for the invasion of North Africa. He had incorrectly assumed that he would become the Supreme Allied Commander. This was not the case, though Giraud was promised a lesser position in the North African command.

Axis planes soon became aware of the fleet in the western Mediterranean, but Hitler assumed incorrectly that they were headed for Tripoli or Benghazi, which were much farther to the east than the actual landing sites. He massed his submarines and aircraft in the Sicilian Straits, only later realizing that his troops were too far east to meet the Allies. There were still some casualties, though. On November 7, the USS Thomas Stone was hit with a torpedo off the Spanish coast. Nine men were killed and the ship disabled.

Other news was good. Hewitt had slipped by a German submarine wolf pack, and Axis powers had been taken by surprise. The battle of El Alamein had also swung in favor of the British; Rommel was retreating in Egypt.

Operation Torch was worked out at very high levels of command without much thought being given to the details. The fact that it turned out as well as it did must be attributed in large part to luck.. If the Germans had sent submarines and planes farther west and

discovered the convoy while out to sea, the invasion could have ended much differently. The Strait of Gibraltar could easily have been an ambush point. While the author makes the point that individual actions determined many outcomes in the campaign, he also shows that a great many events simply came down to dumb luck.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

The Allied invasion of Oran in Morocco was broken into three types of assaults. The first was a sudden "secret" attack on the city itself. This was carried out by a small group of infantry in former Coast Guard cutters with the goal of keeping the French from destroying the harbor facilities. A paratrooper assault was also set up to seize the two airfields south of the city, and main landings to the east and west of the city were planned to secure airfields and then send reinforcements to surround the town.

The first attack was to be the direct one on the port itself and was very controversial. A senior Navy planner considered it suicidal. British optimists assumed that the French would not resist in any meaningful way, and the plan was adopted. The two ships crept toward the harbor on November 8. Oran was a formidable sea target; the harbor was enclosed by barricades and overlooked by forts and shore batteries. The crew was fairly certain the French would not attack. This proved not to be the case, though. The first ship was almost immediately strafed upon recognition and lost power. Only one man on the bridge survived. The second ship momentarily grounded at the harbor entrance and was on fire and taking in water before finally freeing itself. A French destroyer then broadsided the ship and its ammunition began to explode as it sank. Almost half of the original 393 invaders were killed, and the rest were captured. The French garrison then proceeded to scuttle the harbor docks and ships.

While this disaster at the Oran harbor was occurring, the other troop contingents were preparing to land on either side of town. Three beachheads (X, Y, and Z) were to be taken and tanks released to help capture airfields. Then infantry would surround the city, preventing French reinforcements from arriving. Landing point Z was near the fishing port of Arzew. Rangers were sent in first to capture the two reinforced forts there. They found the French garrison asleep and took the fort in minutes. The higher fort withstood a short Ranger mortar attack before surrendering. The First Infantry Battalion (the Big Red One) was also set to land at Arzew but went off course and was attacked upon landing. Chaos reigned for a few minutes, before the beach was taken and troops moved inland. West of the city, at beach Y, Brigadier General Ted Roosevelt (son of U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt) led his 5,000 men ashore and met limited French resistance before capturing a French headquarters.

The airborne operation was the first American airborne operation of the war, and it went badly from the start. Inaccurate information caused some of the difficulties; the feedback from the land invasion was that the French resistance was passive. On top of this, navigation aids were ineffective and cloud-cover prevented landmark-based flying. Planes became scattered and landed in different locations, with some dropping paratroopers on Allied troops, some landing and being captured immediately, and others riddled by hostile fighters. Only one man reached the intended target by air. Several more came by truck later.

Eisenhower's team viewed Algiers as the key to taking Algeria (and later Tunisia). The easternmost Torch landing point was to be initially taken by Americans. The American envoy in Algiers, Robert Murphy, was to "secure the understanding and cooperation of" French officials. An insurgent attack initially succeeded in taking over the power station and official headquarters, and many Vichy officers stood down. Murphy approached the French commander, General Alphonse Pierre Juin, hoping he would cooperate. The two men talked and waited, but the main attack did not come. Slowly, the insurrections began to collapse.

Another badly conceived British plan to take the harbor was also underway; two old destroyers were charging the harbor. French shells incapacitated the first ship, *Malcolm*, almost immediately. The second ship, *Bloke,* made it into the harbor and deployed its troops onto the wharf before retreating under intense fire and sinking. The 250 stranded men soon surrendered.

Meanwhile, 33,000 troops were in the process of coming ashore on either side of Algiers, using tactics similar tactic to those of the Oran landing. Many landing craft went off course or overturned. Still, most French defenders surrendered. American reinforcements were late to back up the doomed harbor attack. The Iowa-based 168th Infantry hurried toward Algiers after finding their bearings; the general inexperience of the troops was showing.

Kent Hewitt's Task Force 34 was off the Moroccan coast deliberating how to proceed in turbulent seas, which made an amphibious landing very dangerous. Then the forecast came in for a return to calm seas, and the invasion was launched. The force split into three groups to take Safi to the south, Fedala (near Casablanca) to the center, and Mehdia to the north. The main central force was under the command of General Patton.

On shore, several insurrection attempts served no purpose other than to alert the French of the impending invasion. In calm seas and clear skies, landing craft still managed to become lost, and many men drowned when craft were dropped too far from shore. Others hit underwater obstacles. Still, all three groups managed to land most of their troops. At Safi, the beachhead was 5 miles wide by ? mile deep before early afternoon, when the French garrison surrendered and the city fell.

The reckless harbor attacks on Oran and Algiers show the lack of planning and overconfidence the British had in conceiving the assaults in the first place. There was no direct evidence that the French would simply surrender their ports (particularly since Mast had warned that the Navy would not be friendly!). The British just hoped for the best and a lot of troops died needlessly. While this attitude sometimes helps in actual combat, it serves no one well when used in contingency planning

The airborne assaults were also a disaster from the start. Commanders wanted to use paratroopers just for the sake of using them. Everything went wrong and the missions ended up serving no purpose (and in fact stopped valuable aircraft from being used later). Useful missions of the type planned here would not happen until later in the war.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

Most of the fighting for the Torch landings took place over three days, from November 8-10, 1942. At Algiers, several airfields were taken easily and elements of the 168th infantry soon entered the city itself. The Vichy Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Jean Louis Darlan realized that it was only a matter of time before the Allies had control. Over 30,000 Americans and British surrounded his 7,000 troops. He extended his sword to an American general to officially surrender. The French troops then went back to their barracks but were allowed to keep their weapons. General Giraud and Mark Clark arrived to take control of the French forces. After some negotiation, Darlan agreed to order all French North African troops to cease-fire.

Oran turned out to be much more difficult to take than had been expected. A French paramilitary force at St. Cloud (on the outskirts of Oran) kept American forces at bay for more than 24 hours before the regimental commander considered bombing the town. After several more failed attempts to take the town, Major General Terry Allen made the tactical decision to bypass the town and proceed to Oran, leaving a surrounding force at St. Cloud. The troops were hailed as liberators as Oran was readied to become a huge Allied supply depot. Together with the taking of Algiers, this greatly strengthened the Allied position in Algeria.

The battle for Casablanca quickly became a naval battle as French ships and shore batteries opened fire on the American fleet. Some of the fighting was long range, with the foes as much as 10 miles away from each other. American dive-bombers hit the harbor as French subs were being launched. Vichy destroyers pursued American troop transports. Vichy fighters were soon downed by American fighters who then strafed the French ships with devastating results. Sixteen French ships (including subs) were sunk or badly damaged.

Patton came ashore at Fedala, just north of Casablanca. His 20,000 troops faced a divided French force of 2,500 men and 46 artillery pieces. Most of the entrenched French forces were brought to bay by navy firepower. The next day, the sea became rough and all loading came to a halt. Many badly needed supplies were trapped at sea, and the attack on Casablanca proper had to wait until November 11. Patton planned to bombard the city starting at 7:30 a.m. He warned the French that they had three hours to surrender or face the consequences. The French surrendered some two hours later, with American bombers already in the air. The newfound allies celebrated with Bordeaux and Cognac. The Allies now had strong control over the Strait of Gibraltar area.

Taking the small town of Mehdia, north of Casablanca, was also proving more difficult than anticipated. Nine thousand Allied troops had surrounded the town and expected the smaller French force to surrender. Of the two emissaries sent to speak to the

French, one was killed and the other captured. The yard thick walls of the fort nicknamed the "Kasbah" proved very difficult to penetrate. A French counterattack scattered the Americans and small skirmishes continued to take place into the night. Eventually, Allied tanks succeeded in repulsing French reinforcements and allowed the beachheads to be fortified. A U.S. destroyer plowed up the shallow river towards the Kasbah and released a team of commandos that quickly seized the nearby runway. Three more infantry assaults on the Kasbah were repulsed before it was heavily damaged and taken after Navy dive-bombers attacked it.

Hewitt then made a fateful decision to leave many of his transport ships holding much-needed supplies off Fedala, instead of sending them to nearby Casablanca to unload. A German sub torpedoed three vessels that night, sinking one of them. Hewitt warned ships to be wary; troops were scheduled to arrive in the already crowded harbor the next day. That night, another German sub hit three full troop transports, incapacitating all three and killing 140 men. The remaining convoy was diverted to Casablanca. Hewitt sailed back to Hampton Roads.

In Algiers, Darlan again switched loyalties after learning that Germany had invaded Vichy France. He met with Clark and Eisenhower on November 13. They agreed that Darlan would be the North African High Commissioner while Giraud would serve as Chief of the French Armed Forces.

These initial battles had shown many critical errors and revealed that the army still needed to learn how to fight effectively. The over-optimism that caused many of the problems had not abated, however. The White House was told that Tripoli could be expected to fall within two months.

Major Terry Allen's eventual decision to bypass St. Cloud after having several attacks repulsed might seem obvious, but at the time, Allies were assigning too much importance to small side battles like this one. The mission for the troops was to take Oran as soon as possible. If St. Cloud took too many resources (which it did), it should have been bypassed. Having commanders thinking on the field as situations changed was an important factor; it was important to see the big picture and not get sidetracked by less important skirmishes.

The Allied over-optimism was buoyed by the fact that no "real" fighting had occurred yet. While some French units did fight back with intensity, the Allies were given the impression that this was as difficult as it would get. This was to be proven wrong in the months to come when they came up against experienced German troops for the first time.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

Hitler had decided that North Africa had to be held at all costs. He wanted Tunisia to be the staging ground for his offensive. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring was the Luftwaffe Commander in charge of all Axis air and ground units in North Africa. He planned to mount an attack to push the newly arrived Allied forces back to the sea. On November 9, German Luftwaffe fighters began landing at the airfield northeast of Tunis. Transport planes followed. The French forces surrounded the field but did not attack and eventually let the Germans leave the field. As more German troops arrived, they moved north to the port at Bizerte where the French "defenders" stood down and let the Germans take the city. Only one French commander (General Barre) remained loyal to the Allies and took his 9,000 troops out of the area to fight the Germans another day. He went into the hills to await Allied orders.

Spirits were very high as Allied troops moved east from Algiers towards Tunis. Deciphered Axis codes told Eisenhower how many Axis troops were moving into Tunisia, but he severely underestimated their abilities. Also, the Allies did not hasten their advance on Tunisia, even with the knowledge that the Axis numbers were still small, but growing. American armored units who had trained together were broken up and sent to assist the British, with no measures taken to integrate the troops. Eisenhower's planning also left much to be desired. Little transportation had been set up to take the large American forces east. Officers tried to purchase local antiquated vehicles or use the unreliable coal-fed trains to ship troops. Lieutenant General Kenneth Anderson became Commander of the British 1st Army on November 11. Eisenhower urged him to move east quickly.

British troops landed at Bougie in eastern Algeria on the same day. Their failure to also take a nearby airfield (due to weather) caused their air cover to be grounded for two critical days. Thirty German bombers attacked with impunity later that day, hitting several transports. They also attacked the following day. At Bone, 125 miles east, Allied commandos had taken the town unopposed but were powerless as more German planes bombed the town, alienating the locals' sympathies from both sides. British and American paratroopers did have successes in taking other villages ahead of the army's path, but the local villagers were becoming wise to the situation and did not welcome the troops, as they usually preceded German dive-bombers.

Anderson planned to break his forces into three groups that would then converge on Tunis with the goal of isolating it from Bizerte. Problems arose because the plan was not upgraded to account for new information that the Germans were moving west. Also, the British tanks were slow and severely lacking in firepower. As winter moved in, Anderson's troops were scattered across large areas and low on supplies. The single French commander who had led his troops out of Bizerte, General Barre, had placed his troops in the strategic town of Medjez-el-Bab. Barre requested reinforcements when the

Germans approached from the east. Sporadic firefights occurred between Americans, French, English, and Germans, until German Stuka bombers assisted in the taking of the east side of town. The French forces fended off a German attempt to ford the river, but when German and Italian reinforcements arrived, all Allied forces retreated, giving Medjez-el-Bab to the Axis.

The Germans were building up strength and moving much more quickly than the Allies in securing their positions. The Axis troops, estimated by Eisenhower to number around 12,000 were actually present in numbers more than doubling that figure. The enemy also had great air superiority due to its control of many close, well-maintained airfields. Allied planes were located much farther west and mainly used dirt fields, which proved almost useless as the winter rainy season moved in.

On November 25, the Allies closed in on Medjez-el-Bab to attempt to retake the town. They secured a high ridge before being repelled. Then a group of British soldiers was slaughtered as they wandered into a German ambush while trying to enter the village undetected at night.

The smaller central force included both American and British tanks and was approaching Bizerte well behind enemy lines. The American tanks were light General Stuart M-3's with 37mm medium guns. The group located a German airfield at Djedeida and caught the enemy by surprise. Soon, the field was blazing with more than 20 German plane wrecks.

The Germans had received incorrect information that the American tanks were only five miles from Tunis. Kesselring hurriedly pulled troops back from Medjez-el-Bab to regroup, and the Allies moved back in. They waited to take advantage of the situation and slowly advanced.

In late 1942, the Allies threw away a golden opportunity to stop the war in North Africa quickly by knocking the Germans out of Tunisia before they could build up significant strength. Allied troops made the mistake of moving slowly toward Tunisia, even though they had the knowledge that every day brought more Axis troops to the area. There was also an occasion where the Germans thought the Allies had advanced much more than they actually had. The Allies were actually in sight of Tunis, and this momentum could have carried them to the brink of success, but instead they waited yet again. If the Allies had made plans to have sufficient air cover to counter the German Stukas and had pooled resources to have units attack in more concentrated strength, it could very well have made the difference in the early skirmishes. It would have shortened the campaign and probably saved many lives on both sides.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Eisenhower moved his headquarters from Gibraltar to Algiers in late November 1942. This was meant to be a temporary HQ, until it could be moved closer to the front - some 400 miles to the southeast. Even so, the Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) quickly grew to encompass 11 buildings housing a total of 400 officers. The total staff would eventually reach 16,000 personnel. This gave way to the cynical troop expression, "Never were so few commanded by so many from so far." The city of Algiers strained under the weight of the influx. Prices for everything from oranges to beer to prostitution skyrocketed. Troop discipline quickly became a major concern.

Eisenhower was frustrated by the continued lack of Allied air support even as far west as Algiers. German planes still controlled the skies. The "Darlan" issue also worried him. Still considered a traitor by many, he had imprisoned thousands in camps as High Commissioner. Many of the prisoners had been supporters of the Allies. Darlan had also refused to strike down the anti-Semitic Vichy laws. Eisenhower refused to deal with the subject, though, considering it "someone else's business." In spite of this attitude, the issue did rise to scandalous proportions in the American and British press.

Near Tunis, the relentless Luftwaffe attacks were wearing the Allies down. The Germans had retaken Djedeida airfield and the Stukas were averaging one attack per hour on some Allied positions. Most road traffic moved at night; troops warily scanned the skies and frantically dug deeper trenches. A rare Allied sortie over Medjez-el-Bab had mistakenly opened fire and decimated a company of American tank destroyers, further lowering morale. "Friendly fire" incidents would become all too common in the following months; one furious commander ordered his troops to shoot down anything in the air.

Despite this, the Allies were still moving closer to the contracting German lines. The advance was still measured and slow, though, allowing the Axis troops more time to dig in and reinforce. The first tank battle of the war occurred on November 26, when an American tank company came under fire from enemy tanks of the 190th Panzer Battalion. Captain Siglin, the Allied commander, ordered defensive actions to buy time. He quickly found that his Stuart tanks were no match for the MK IV Panzers, which had massive 75mm guns (previously unknown to the Allies) that ripped through the lightly armored Stuarts. Even near misses by the large guns caused massive damage. The Stuart's much smaller gun was ineffective against the Panzers; one hit a German tank 18 times with no effect. Half of the Stuarts were destroyed in minutes, but in their zeal, the Germans failed to notice another American unit coming in from behind. They quickly found that the Panzers were vulnerable from the rear, where their armor was much thinner. They were also much less maneuverable than the smaller Stuarts. Seven Panzers were quickly destroyed, and the Germans fled. The first armored battle of World War II had ended in a dead heat, which did not succeed in giving the Allies a much needed morale boost.

On the south flank, the British captured Tebourba on November 27. From a hill overlooking the town, Tunis could be seen in the distance. German Panzers attacked the next day, though, and the British valiantly held them off with field guns until they retreated. Two battalions then pushed forward after the retreating Germans to take the town of Djedeida--but not before wasting a precious day to make the decision. The Americans sent larger, better-armed General Lee tanks armed with 75mm guns into the small town. The Germans ambushed with anti-tank weapons, and five Lees were already burning when Stukas attacked from the air. The Allies retreated back to Tebourba. Another American battalion, not having heard the order to retreat, also attacked Djedeida. Again the Germans were waiting and the Americans retreated after taking heavy damage.

Meanwhile, the British were still driving hard towards Bizerte. At Jefna, the road went through a narrow valley with steep hills on each side. Germans were waiting there with anti-tank weaponry. With no advance scouts, the first British company was taken completely unawares and was annihilated when Axis guns took out both the front and rear carrier on the narrow road, trapping the group. Another company was pinned down and only escaped under the cover of night. A British group of 4,000 men had been routed by a sly German contingent only one-tenth their size.

Commandos were also sent behind enemy lines by both sea and air in an ill-planned mission to create distractions and meet the Allied offensive near Bizerte (an offensive which, of course, would never come). Maps were missing or wrong, though, and the undergrowth was impenetrable. Many of the 1,000 commandos were captured or killed before a small group straggled back to Allied lines a week later.

By this point, Eisenhower was beginning to have doubts about Anderson's leadership abilities. He agreed in the decision to stop the offensive, but wondered privately about pulling American troops out from under British command. For the moment, he felt Allied solidarity was more important. The intelligence failures were particularly bothersome to him, though. The pre-Torch estimates of German airpower had been nearly 50% low, and consequently the Allies only had several dozen operable planes to counter them. In addition, the American rationale of not putting tanks into action against tanks had to be reexamined. German armor and firepower were vastly superior to anything the Allies had, and the rear armor weakness of the Panzers was not useful in most battle situations.

The Germans then decided to attack Tebourba in order to throw the Allies off guard and give the Axis troops more time to build up. It was a daring gamble; all but 30 troops were pulled from Tunis for the assault planned for December 1. German General Walther K. Nehring was to lead the attack. Thanks to code decryption, the Allies knew of the attack two days early, but there is no evidence that this information reached anyone on the front lines. On schedule, Panzers hit Chouigui (4 miles northwest of Tebourba), broke up an Allied tank battalion, and kept on going. Only a British artillery bombardment stopped them momentarily just outside Tebourba to the west. Then German infantry attacked from the east, and by morning, the town was surrounded on three sides. British Major General Evelegh sent for reinforcements.

Colonel Paul Robinett arrived on high ground near Tebourba just in time to see the Allies decimated. From his vantage point, he saw in a nutshell the problems with the Allied formation: disarrayed attacks, no command structure, and lack of air support. He recommended an immediate Allied retreat so they could regroup. This did occur; the Allies fell back to Medjez-el-Bab as Tebourba fell on December 4. Several English regiments saw over 70% casualties. The British lost 53 of 74 field guns, and the Allies as a whole lost 55 tanks. Colonel Robinett summed up the ordeal in a letter that eventually made its way to Eisenhower.

The Germans sensed weakness and did not pause in their attacks. New MK VI Tiger tanks with 4-inch front armor and 88mm guns were debuted at Djedeida, where they tore through the British line. Stukas bombed and Panzers overran American positions 3 miles southeast of Tebourba. Reinforcements were called in but arrived late, and entered the area blind only to be torn up by the Germans. Morale plummeted as the troops cynically renamed the Medjerda area "Stuka valley." Commanders bickered over abandoning Medjez-el-Bab altogether. Evelegh's weary troops were to pull back and leave fresh British troops to hold the town.

American tanks did stop a Panzer advance towards Medjez-el-Bab on December 10, but another group of Panzers soon attacked the town from the rear. The Germans were slowed, but panic gripped the town. Some Allied troops, believing that an attack was imminent, mistook a group of British troops for Germans and destroyed their vehicles. The Combat Command B Unit (CCB) was declared no longer combat ready due to the amount of troops and tanks it had lost.

Many logistical problems added to the woes of the Allies. Commanders were receiving detailed information, but not passing it along to the front line units that needed it. Generals were second-guessing their subordinate officers in the field. In many cases, battle outcomes might have been altered if commanders had immediately sent reinforcements when asked to do so. Also, the experience of the Germans (and the inexperience of the fresh Allied troops) was showing. The Germans sent out scouts, picked optimum field locations, and knew good ambush sites. The situation at Jefna showed this effect, when a battle-hardened German knew how to badly damage a much larger British force that walked right into his trap.

The Allies needed a long period of trial and error before they determined how to successfully engage a German heavy tank. The American tanks were too lightly gunned to even damage the German tanks unless they were lucky enough to get at them from the rear (which was difficult in most cases). Also, the German heavy guns were so powerful that they could take out large numbers of American tanks in minutes unless they could get under cover. American "heavy" tanks like the General Lee were so cumbersome and slow that they made easy targets. The Germans had simply out-engineered the Americans when it came to tank technology. Later, the American Sherman tank was introduced; this tank did have an advantage in that it was much quicker than its German counterpart. The Germans also had much more experience in anti-tank weaponry, and it took the Allies months to catch up in that domain; when the first shipment of Bazookas showed up, Allied troops didn't even know how to use them.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

In mid-December 1942, there was a lull in the battle. The two armies dug in seven miles from each other with the intervening area forming a "no-man's-land." Logistics were still a major issue, as was shown by the fact that 180,000 Americans had arrived in North Africa, but only 12,000 had managed to make it to the front by December.

In spite of Nehring's many successes, Hitler replaced him with Colonel-General Hans Jurgen Von Arnim after he failed to take Medjez-el-Bab. The Allies and Axis troop levels were actually about equal at this point, but Axis still had the great advantage of air superiority. Arnim decided to go on the offensive again.

Anderson planned to resume the offensive late on December 23. A German position on a high hill in between the two armies was the preliminary target. Unfortunately, the British misjudged the German strength on the hill (named Longstop), and they were unaware of the fact that there were actually two hills. The British 2nd Battalion took the first hill in the dead of night only to realize at daybreak that a second hill existed a half mile away and was heavily fortified by Germans. Americans replaced the British, and then the Germans attacked and retook the hill. Reinforcements bogged down on the slopes as rain came in. Then the British managed to retake the hill. Due to the weather (it was the start of the rainy season) and morale, it was decided to suspend all offensives, with the exception of Longstop. Much bickering ensued when the British blamed the Americans for not holding the hill to begin with. Terry Allen (Commander of the U.S. First Infantry Division) ripped up a British report detailing American incompetence.

Traveling toward Tunisia, Eisenhower feared that a stalemate had been reached. He had been ordered to give his complete attention to Tunisia by U.S. Army Chief of Staff Marshall. There were many issues to worry about on his end. Logistics were still a nightmare, with French soldiers refusing to obey American orders per General Giraud.

Back in Algiers, the controversial Darlan was assassinated on December 23. Clark was notified by the phrase, "They shot the little son of a bitch!" Over 8,000 people filed through Algiers for his funeral. Giraud would succeed him.

Another German counterattack on Christmas morning took back Longstop. The Allies retreated towards Medjez-el-Bab and the Germans promptly renamed their new prize "Christmas Hill."

The Longstop offensive was a good example of bad decision-making, preparedness, and strategy. First, to attack a hill and find it is actually two hills is to openly invite tragedy. No scouts had been sent ahead, and the troops who took the first hill in the night didn't even realize until morning that there was another hill behind it. They also

failed to properly reinforce the hill the first time they took it, and consequently had to retake it at much greater cost. The simple strategy of war is that it is much easier to defend a location than to attack it. The Allies seemingly failed to learn this lesson over and over again.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary and Analysis

In late 1942, George Patton personally oversaw modifications to one of the grandest houses in Casablanca. Steel shutters were added to fortify against strafing, as well as a bomb shelter where the swimming pool had been and a ramp to the front door. Patton hated being so far from the action at the front lines. He wrote home to his wife, "Personally, I wish I would get out and kill someone." These preparations were being made to house a high level conference including President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, Eisenhower, and the American and English Chiefs of Staff. Roosevelt arrived early in the morning on January 14, 1943. Eisenhower spoke of setbacks in Tunisia and the upcoming plan to attack from the south and open up the German front - Operation Satin. He hoped that it would divide the Axis forces. British General Allen Brooks had experience with the Germans from Dunkirk and thought Satin was ridiculous. Some Americans agreed. Support for Satin waned, along with Eisenhower's reputation. As for taking Germany out of the war, the British wanted to attack through Italy, while the Americans still favored a cross channel invasion. The British also would not discuss Japan, which irked the Americans since they wanted to keep pressure on the Japanese. The British, though, felt strongly that Germany and Japan could not be defeated at the same time. The representatives of the two countries bickered about the "whens" and "whys" of invasion, and the session concluded with an agreement to postpone a cross channel invasion for at least one year. Privately, Eisenhower assured Roosevelt that victory in North Africa could be achieved by June 1943.

Roosevelt took time to visit Patton and the troops and then had a press conference with Churchill, DeGaulle, and Giraud where he announced that the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan would be the only acceptable resolution to the war. Churchill agreed. Later, Roosevelt and Churchill traveled south towards Marrakesh under tight escort to another hastily upgraded estate. The British and Americans were slowly developing camaraderie. The two men celebrated, and then Roosevelt flew back home.

With the rainy season miring any attempt on Tunis, Operation Satin was to move quickly across drier southern Tunisia. The mission had three goals: to deny Rommel access to Tunisia from Libya, to stretch the Axis front, and to actually trap Rommel between Montgomery in Egypt and the new contingent, the II Corps. Eisenhower chose Major General Lloyd Fredendall to command Satin and the II Corps. Fredendall then selected a remote area near the Algerian/Tunisian border at Tebessa as his staging ground. It was quickly named Speedy Valley. Major General Orlando Ward was to lead the attack. He developed an immediate dislike for his commander Fredendall.

Eisenhower's Operation Satin was a good plan in theory, but in execution there would have been many issues that had not been worked out. Logistics would have been the main concern. There were still many troops needed on the weakened lines facing Arnim's troops in northern Tunisia. Where would the additional men for Satin have come

from? Granted, there were still tens of thousands of troops in Algeria, but the transportation was still not available to take them east in any prompt fashion. Also, if the II Corps could have moved to southern Tunisia and attacked en masse, they would have had a good chance. Up to that point in the conflict, though, good strategies like attacking in force hadn't been normal Allied practice. More common had been the inefficient technique of throwing small units against larger, well-fortified enemy forces. Again and again, Allied commanders led premature assaults instead of attacking with units working in conjunction with one another.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary and Analysis

After the high level conference, Satin was officially cancelled and Fredendall was relegated to the task of conducting raids to confuse the enemy. Eisenhower was distracted, giving ambiguous orders, and was not closely directing the troops. When Orlando Ward easily took an Italian force at Seney Station, but in doing so scattered his forces over a hundred miles, General Von Arnim saw opportunity and attacked the vital Faid pass just to the north.

General Juin's 35,000 undersupplied French troops held the strategically important Faid Pass, located on the Eastern Dorsal, a mountainous region that separated east from central Tunisia. After several German attacks, French casualties were appalling. The French defenders frantically called Fredendall for assistance. He responded with only limited support, finally sending General McQuillin, who delayed his attack by stopping for the night only seven miles from the French location. When he finally attacked in the morning, the glare of the rising sun blinded his troops to the waiting Germans. He also ignored reports of German 88mm guns above the pass. The first American force was pinned down while attempting a flanking move. The all too real 88mm guns quickly knocked out half of the American tanks, and the attack rapidly turned into a retreat. The commanders blamed each other. The allies had lost the Faid Pass and the Eastern Dorsal with it.

During the failed attack at Faid, Fredendall had infuriated General Ward by circumventing him to change the battle group's travel orders three times in two days. Eisenhower's orders to concentrate troops and armor were not being followed. He pushed for his Combat Command D Unit (CCD) to attack Maknassy, after passing through Sened Station. The 1st Battalion moved to retake Sened after a devastating Stuka attack. Another battalion to meet the 1st somehow missed linking up and ended up under heavy mortar fire at Sened. The "pass through" village required a full day of heavy fighting to retake. The battered CCD pressed on and was between Sened and Maknassy when a combined Stuka/Panzer attack caused a panic that quickly turned into a rout. A small group of Americans made it within 6 miles of Makinassy before being mistakenly attacked by their own planes and forced to retreat. Morale plummeted again as commanders once more pointed fingers.

Rommel was now in Tunisia and planned to reinvigorate his sagging reputation by taking on a new foe: the Americans. He was the "Desert Fox" and his exploits in North Africa were notorious, but he had been retreating westward from British General Montgomery since his defeat at El Alamein. He was still seen as a great leader, but worried constantly and suffered from deteriorating health. He knew better than anyone how brittle the Axis hold in Africa was. His greatest problems were his lack of support from Germany when it came to reinforcements (Hitler was favoring Stalingrad) and his reliance on unskilled Italian troops, which made up a considerable portion of his army. In

reality, Rommel was tired and considered a pullback to Europe sensible, but Kesselring wouldn't hear of it. He saw the Allied troop numbers growing rapidly. A double-pronged plan was devised for Arnim to attack through the Faid Pass in Operation Fruhlingswind and Rommel to strike further south to Gafsa in Operation Morgenluft.

Back at Sened Station, Allied troops were training with new weapons. The Axis supply problems were well known, and based on that information, Eisenhower assumed they would not be going on the offensive anytime soon. His divisions were still spread out very thinly along the front, and there was still a high level of confusion on the front lines. Some troops had been moved around so much they didn't know who their commanders were. Morale was dismal for the most part. General Ward felt he had lost his command and was despondent. Fredendall drafted orders on how Ward was to fortify the area around Faid on the basis of reading a map back at Speedy Valley. Ward's men were on cold rations and limited water by that point. His alert system to warn of impending German attack consisted of rock filled cans on a strand of wire stretched across the pass opening.

General Brook was finally successful in wrenching away some oversight power from Eisenhower. He now had British Deputies handling operations. Eisenhower's new assistants were given authority to act without his approval. He complained, and then accepted the situation as he was awarded his fourth star. He met with Fredendall and Anderson in Speedy Valley on February 13. Fredendall's Intelligence Officer feared an imminent attack by Rommel. He actually predicted the two attack points, which had already been chosen by the Germans, but Anderson called him an alarmist. He felt that any attack would come in the north, even though Ward and Robinett also weighed in about southern weaknesses. On the same day, intercepted radio transmissions told of an attack to come the following day - although there was no specific location given. Anderson issued a warning, but no scouting was conducted toward Faid Pass, and the massing German tanks went undetected.

In hindsight, the arrogance of Allied commanders in light of all of the available evidence that the Germans would attack through Faid Pass was inexcusable. Anderson was so certain an Axis attack was coming from the north that he refused to listen to any information telling him otherwise. Troops near Faid Pass itself were not reconnoitering east to see if there was any danger imminent, even though this should have been standard practice. Allied troops were still disorganized and spread out over vast areas, making them less useful to fight. Also, given that the Germans had shown themselves willing to take risks and attack at unexpected times), Eisenhower still assumed that the Germans would act tentatively (as the Allies continued to do).

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

At dawn on February 14, over 100 German tanks sped undetected toward Faid Pass as part of Operation Fruhlingwing. An American infantry squad was taken by such surprise that they didn't even have time to shoot a warning flare. At the pass, Allied tankers were caught outside their tanks and quickly overrun. Then the German force split, half to take the hill and half to proceed to nearby Sidi Bou Zid. American howitzers fired at such close range that their shells went over the Germans. Only one gun was saved as the troops retreated. The Germans took out American units one by one. Panic ensued, with some units fleeing into German lines, only to be captured.

A reinforcement group of 36 Sherman tanks was quickly destroyed by Stuka and Panzer fire. The 21st Panzer division also arrived from the south, hoping to entrap the Americans. In twelve hours, 46 of 52 Shermans were lost and Sidi Bou Zid taken. Lieutenant Colonel John Waters was captured trying to hold high ground near the town. Colonel Drake (commander of the 3rd Battalion of the 168th Infantry Regiment) was also being overrun and slowly surrounded by Germans. He described the mayhem around him via radio and requested permission to withdraw. From Speedy Valley, 100 miles away, Fredendall declined his request--then downplayed the disaster to Eisenhower. While quick thinking had allowed hundreds to escape the trap, thousands were already hopelessly encircled, dead, or taken prisoner.

The Allies were up against very experienced desert trained troops, and Rommel's attack hadn't even started yet. Still fearing an attack from the north, Anderson made the fateful decision to evacuate Gafsa in the south. The Germans moved in the following day. Allied High Command was still in denial about the magnitude of the disaster at Faid/Sidi. Anderson actually proposed sending a single tank battalion to retake the area. Ward's depleted battalion was ordered to counterattack, and Ward did not contest the order. A group of Allied officers gathered on a nearby hill to watch the battle. Lieutenant Colonel James Alger led the charge. Stukas slowed Alger, but he pressed on toward Sidi. Of course it was a trap. As the Germans attacked, Alger gave a play-by-play of his forces being systematically destroyed until his radio was hit. Burning Shermans littered the landscape. None of the 56 Shermans returned.

The Germans were surprised by the ease of their success and the handing of Gafsa to them (making Rommel's first attack unnecessary). They heard terrified Allied troops on the radio and decided to press the offensive. Rommel entered Gafsa and looked to attack Tebessa, but Arnim disagreed, preferring to attack to the north. Rommel was ordered to cut off Anderson at Le Kef.

The town of Sbeitla was overrun next. More panic ensued as the ammunition dump was prematurely destroyed. Even Fredendall ordered Speedy Valley evacuated, although the Germans weren't near him. Ward engaged Arnim at Sbeilta, and Anderson finally

admitted that Faid was the main German attack point and pulled reinforcements from the north (including Robinett). The Germans paused, giving the Americans much needed time to reinforce as Robinett's men linked up with Ward's. When the Germans did attack, the Americans managed to hold them off for much of the day and inflict moderate damage before falling back. Another tactical error was made at this , though, when the Allies moved back toward Tebessa instead of to the natural defensive position of Kasserine Pass, 25 miles to the west. The single engineering regiment defending the pass had dug in on the valley floor instead of the high ground on the sides. Rommel was now heading towards Kasserine en route to Le Kef with his forces divided. Too late, Fredendall sent members of the 1st Division to reinforce Kasserine. The Germans arrived at the Kasserine Pass near the same time as the Americans and began to take the undefended high ground. Badly outflanked, the American defense began to collapse the next day. An "uncoordinated withdrawal" ensued. Kasserine was lost.

At this low point in the Allied campaign, British General Harold Alexander was introduced as Commander of the 18th Army Group. He had great reservations about the quality of the American troops.

Rommel's advance to Le Kef was finally stopped by British artillery, and his counterattack also failed. He did destroy a British force near Kasserine, but afterwards, his divided troops were too weak to press on. Rommel then led his forces west toward a rugged area known as Djebel Hamra. Robinett had predicted this and had his forces waiting. As Panzers entered the area, American howitzers inflicted heavy damage on them, and the Germans retreated. The Germans then managed to outflank Robinett and take some high ground. They were 23 miles from Tebessa, and that was as close as they would ever get. The Americans fired more than 2,000 shells to finally drive the enemy back.

Rommel then fought a protracted battle with the British and was underway to take Thala (the last defense before Le Kef) when Americans arrived with artillery and drove the Germans back yet again. Rommel was beaten, and he realized that further attacks would be futile. His troops withdrew and the allies followed cautiously toward Kasserine. They found it abandoned. The retreat of Rommel had turned what could have been a major Allied defeat into merely a temporary setback. Allied troops had fought valiantly and realized that Rommel could be beaten.

Eisenhower's appointment of Fredendall proved to be a disaster. Fredendall adamantly refused to listen to what his front line officers were telling him in nearly all circumstances. He had no sense of how to command, often issuing contradicting orders or changing his mind constantly. He had many opportunities to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, but never was decisive enough to follow through with anything. If he had put real effort into reinforcing the French at Faid Pass to begin with, the Germans probably wouldn't have broken through and started the disastrous chain of events that was to come. The man refused to consider facts that didn't fit his notion of how events were happening. He also abused his subordinates, including Ward. Ward was part of the problem himself, though, since he followed Fredendall's orders almost blindly, even when he knew they were wrong. There were several instances in which Ward should

have disobeyed irrational orders from Fredendall, but chose instead to sacrifice his troops at the expense of his reputation (which ended up being ruined anyway).

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

In early 1943, the war hit home in southwest Iowa, where a disproportionate number of the devastated 168th Infantry had been stationed. Telegrams started arriving in early March; they began with the statement," The Secretary of War desires me to express his regret that..." The town mourned, then pressed on. *Life* magazine did a story about the particularly hard hit town of Red Oak, which had lost 45 out of a total of 5,600 residents.

In the fallout from Kasserine, Rommel moved back to the east to regroup and engage Montgomery, Arnim prepared to advance again, Anderson's II Corp waited for direction, and Eisenhower started looking for scapegoats. His intelligence officer was the first victim, followed by Stark and McQuillin (of Faid Pass fame). Finally, Fredendall was "promoted" with a third star and sent back home to the "States." His replacement was Major General Omar Bradley, assigned to serve under George Patton. Eisenhower wanted Patton to stay out of harm's way, since he would soon be transitioning to Husky (the upcoming Italian invasion). Patton immediately went to work on the II Corps. He said he needed commanders who could "sweat, get mad, and think at the same time" and maintain an "adequate hatred of the Germans." He started enforcing military regulations to the letter, requiring the wearing of insignia, leggings, and the fastening of helmet chinstraps. His nickname of "Old Blood and Guts" soon mutated into "Our Blood, His Guts." Morale did improve as the reorganized units trained together and began to show cohesion for the first time. Logistics improved, and Ted Roosevelt reveled at the sight of clean clothes and hot food.

Troops were also simply wearing out under combat situations. Nervous breakdowns were becoming much more common. Army doctors found that the average soldier reached his peak at about 90 days and was burned out by 180. Of course, Patton would have none of it; his intolerance of mental "illness" was well known. He considered it just plain cowardice.

On February 26, Operation Oshsenkopf commenced with Arnim attacking in nine locations on the British line. Tactically it was a success for the Germans; their lines were moved 20 miles forward in the north and 10 miles forward in the central region. The lack of German reinforcements was beginning to tell, though. Arnim could not exploit his victory. The Allies had actually lost more tanks than the Germans, but Arnim's Panzers could not be replaced. Rommel seethed at the stupidity of the attack and the wasted resources. He was speeding south toward Medenine to take on Montgomery's 8th Army. His Operation Capri was meant to stop the British offensive.

In this case, British intelligence had done its work well. Rommel's plan had been accurately decrypted, and Montgomery was ready. He had already reinforced his single division at Medenine to 300 tanks, and he had double Rommel's air support. As a result, Rommel's 6:00 a.m. attack on March 6 mired by 10:00 a.m. the same day. Realizing

that he had lost the element of surprise, Rommel retreated. He had lost one third of his tanks and sustained 631 casualties to Montgomery's 130. He saw contracting the Axis lines back to Tunis as the only hope of beating back the Allies. The German High Command wouldn't accept that scenario, though. Rommel said goodbye to his troops and flew back to Rome. He would never again set foot in Africa.

Eisenhower felt invigorated now that he had given his generals more free reign. Other men more in tune with the action at the front were making decisions, and he was getting the credit. His attitude was excellent and he felt certain of victory, so he turned a majority of his attention northward to Husky.

One of Rommel's truisms was that, "the battle is fought and decided by the quartermasters before the shooting begins." This was certainly the case on the North African front. As Berlin broke promise after promise concerning supplies and reinforcements, the American industrial juggernaut was coming into its own. U.S. Engineers constructed five new airports in just three days. A plant in Oran had Spanish laborers putting together Jeeps from parts in nine minutes, and Eisenhower's much-needed transports had finally arrived from the United States: 5,000 heavy trucks, 2,000 cargo trailers, 400 dump trucks, and 80 fighter planes. In just one spring month, 84,000 troops arrived in Africa. Although the Allies had lost more troops and armor than the Germans, they were being replaced at an accelerating (and already rapid) rate. The Germans simply did not have this option. One general noted, "The American Army does not solve its problems, it overwhelms them."

The eastern front was also taking its toll on the Germans. A majority of their North African supplies depended on the unreliable Italian fleet. Because of the frequent Allied air attacks, the Sicilian channel was soon considered "the most dangerous sea passage in the world."

Bernard Montgomery was a leader in the true sense of the word. His 8th Army was 200,000 strong and did believe in him. His victories over Rommel at Alam Halfa and then at El Alamein made him a British hero. He was very opinionated; he disliked the French almost as much as the Americans. His thought on Eisenhower was "Good chap, no soldier!" He also distained many of his British counterparts, such as Anderson, whom he deemed "unfit to command an army."

Montgomery moved further north into Tunisia, where the Germans had orders to hold the fortified Mareth line. This ridge was manned by 85,000 Italians. Still, Montgomery felt he had the troop superiority and the intensity to punch through the line. His first attempt took many casualties and was repulsed. The British then fought hard to establish a shallow bridgehead almost 2 miles deep, but a German counterattack took most of it back as well. Montgomery was furious. Having been fighting in the desert for the past year, he was not familiar with mountain-style strategies. At the Tebaga Gap, he ordered a flanking move to the west reinforced and then switched it to the main attack. The British took the location but were delayed long enough to allow most German troops to escape. Montgomery didn't get the decisive victory he had wanted, but the

Germans lost more irreplaceable troops and tanks. Montgomery called it "the most enjoyable battle I have ever fought."

Logistics did win the North African campaign for the Allies. Both Arnim and Rommel were very talented, experienced German generals who usually made correct decisions. Even they came to a point where the rapid rise of Allied troops overwhelmed them, though. The Allies were losing more troops and materials in combat, but they were being replaced almost as fast as they were destroyed. The Germans at this point were already worrying about conserving tanks and fuel.

Operation Oshsenkopf was a success except for the fact that Arnim simply didn't have the troops to consolidate all of the victories he had gained. He spread his lines so thin that he couldn't supply all of his troops anymore. Rommel had experienced the same difficulties before, when he split his forces near Kasserine and ended up losing a chance to take several key objectives.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

General Alexander ordered the Americans under Patton to liberate the town of Gafsa, again. He wanted Patton to push Axis forces back to allow Montgomery to make the killing blow. Not pleased to play second, Patton was nevertheless happy just to be in the fight at last. As it turned out though, there was no fighting. The Axis forces pulled out in the night and the Allies marched untouched into Gafsa on March 17. Patton made the best of the moment, hosting press dinners and garnering publicity. Following all this, one radio broadcast stated: "Apparently the Nazis saw him coming and ran." Two days later, Patton was given orders to move east, take Sened Station (again) and then move on to Maknassy.

Allen's Big Red One was to move on the area of El Guettar. Italian troops were heavily fortified in this long, rough gorge. Aware of this, Allen had rangers circle behind the defenders to outflank their position. The rangers hit the unsuspecting Italians at dawn, catching many in their underwear. White flags began to flap, and the battle was over by noon. The Americans had taken over 2,000 square miles with only 57 casualties. This state of affairs soon altered, though, when over 100 Panzers counterattacked with Stuka support. Two Allied artillery battalions were immediately imperiled, as they had been set up in offensive (not defensive) positions. The big guns were spiked (destroyed) as the troops retreated. Brutal hand to hand fighting ensued. Finally, the Germans had enough of the constant artillery barrage and retreated as American troops cheered. The Panzers attacked again, but more tentatively this time. The American gunners were now trying out more advanced techniques. They used ricochet fire to sweep the battlefield. They also had time fuse artillery shells, which exploded before hitting the ground to maximize destruction. These were extremely effective against enemy troops hiding behind a narrow hill. After a few overhead barrages, the Germans ran, but didn't get far. Even Patton was impressed. "My God," he said, "it seems a crime to murder good infantry like that." The 10th Panzer Division had been decimated. The Americans had engaged and defeated a seasoned German army.

Forty miles away, Patton's other offensive had the Axis troops retreating as well. Orlando Ward took Sened Station and moved on to Maknassy, but failed to immediately seize the high ground to the east. German troops and tanks quickly reinforced Italian defenders. Ward was ordered by Patton to take the hill, but his troops were repulsed again and again. Patton was furious. The stalemate at Maknassy continued, and Ward was while leading yet another failed charge, and then fired by Patton. The German commander later admitted that if Ward's first attack had been immediate and more aggressive, the battle would have ended much sooner.

On March 20, II Corps was ordered to move southeast of El Guettar to cut off retreating Axis forces. They found a very strongly defended high point in their path, Djebel Berda (which included American-named hills 772 and 369). The steep cliffs were very resistant

to attack, and the first Allied thrusts were chaotic; one unit became lost for over a day while another attacked the wrong hill twice. After incurring heavy casualties, the Allies finally took the hills. Several soldiers that went on to fight brutal battles in Europe later said that the Djebel Berda offensive was the hardest combat they experienced.

Patton was furious at the lack of Allied airpower, especially when his aide was killed in an air raid. Allied raids were taking a toll on the Axis airfields, though. Stukas were rapidly disappearing from the battlefield.

The U.S. 34th Division was to meet up with the British IX Corps and French Troops to take the town of Fondeuk and cut off the retreating Germans. Italian General Meese had replaced Rommel and was moving north to join Arnim's army. British Lieutenant General John Crocker was preparing for an assault on two entrenched German forces at Djebel Rhorab. He ignored a French general who was familiar with the area and recommended attacking from the rear. Instead of following this advice, Crocker sent forces directly into the German lines. Wave after wave of troops and tanks were cut down, until the Allies finally took the first hill thirty-four hours later. A tank assault also took heavy casualties, but soon took the second hill. It was a victory, but not a decisive one; Meese's army had slipped by in the night. Crocker complained to the press about American troops. Meese began to dig in his forces to the north at Enfidaville.

At this point in the campaign, troops who had been "green" only 4 months earlier were finally becoming "hard" - developing the killer instinct that Patton had always talked about. Troops walking through fields and hills had stopped seeing their beauty and started breaking down the terrain into survivability grades instead. Fields meant vulnerability, while hills equated to more easily defensible territory.

"Dirty" fighting also started taking place at this point. Axis troops would wave a white flag, and then attack the unsuspecting troops. For this reason, no prisoners were taken for a time after these incidents occurred. The author allows the reader to infer that all enemy soldiers were being shot, whether they surrendered or not.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

On April 11, 100,000 Americans headed north to join in taking the last Axis stronghold in Tunisia. The plan was to have all 300,000 Allied troops attack in three separate thrusts: Bradley from the west, Anderson from the southwest, and Montgomery from the south. Patton himself was phasing out of the African campaign to focus on the upcoming invasion of Italy.

Omar Bradley arrived at Beja to replace Patton on April 22. He already was showing a determination to think for himself that previous commanders had lacked. In fact, one of his first commanding acts was to ignore an order from Eisenhower to take a route to Bizerte that his group was certain was a trap. Bradley had already meticulously studied terrain maps from Beja to Bizerte and had even impressed some of the British with his foresight.

By this time, the air campaign had shifted and was widely in favor of the Allies. Bizerte had been bombed into ruins, and over 30 Axis transports had been sunk in the Sicilian Straits in March. In a three-week period, the ratio of Axis to Allied planes lost was 432 to 35. There were still 250,000 Axis personnel in the area, but only about a third of them were combat troops. Most remaining Panzer Divisions were severely understaffed. Ammunition and fuel were scarce. A plan to evacuate some of the more experienced troops was scrapped by Hitler himself. Arnim was forced to use cooks and clerks to man the front lines.

Montgomery's inexperience in mountain combat (and his ego) was showing as he moved towards Enfidaville to take on the entrenched Germans, who had manned a series of hills. One hill was taken at great loss before his offensive stalled.

Anderson's IX Corps were also bogged down near Medjez-el-Bab. His V Corps had somewhat better luck at Longstop, where the hills were retaken after fierce fighting. However, the V Corps soon stalled at Djebel Bou Aoukaz, a fearsome ridge east of Longstop. Casualties on both sides were heavy.

Omar Bradley's first assault also started badly, but the Americans pressed on. His artillery was a decisive factor as his troops went hill by hill in fierce mountain style fighting. Some locations were taken, lost, and taken again. "One more hill," was the rallying cry. Then the II Corps came across Djebel Tahent, Hill 609 on the American maps. This was the "lynchpin" and most heavily fortified of the German defenses in the area. Lesser surrounding hills provided the Germans with crossfire. The slopes offered no cover for the attackers, and Bradley's troops took heavy casualties in overtaking two adjacent hills. An attack on 609 was repulsed and the Allies' relentless bombardment continued. Finally, troops following behind Sherman tanks took the summit of 609. The peak was littered with German corpses.

The German army retreated with Bradley in pursuit. Front troops radioed back, "road to Bizerte wide open." On May 7, the Americans moved into the demolished city. Troops began to celebrate, and the Americans took 41,000 prisoners. Tunis was being taken at the same time. French crowds celebrated, while remaining Germans began to destroy their weapons to keep them from falling into Allied hands. Eventual prisoners numbered over 200,000. Many surrendering Germans were drunk. Arnim and Meese surrendered on May 12. The next day, Alexander sent Churchill the following message: "Sir, it is my duty to report than the Tunisian campaign is over. All enemy resistance has ceased. We are masters of the North African shores."

It cannot be stressed enough that the Allied campaign started turning around when Eisenhower stopped "over-managing" his officers from his headquarters 400 miles away. Once he started letting his talented personnel use their abilities, the intuitive commanders started thinking on their feet. Omar Bradley provided a great example of this; in addition to having the nerve to ignore bad orders, he was not afraid to stick his neck out and take chances. The war may have been fought by thousands of troops, but the acts of individuals often determined the outcomes of battles, and in that way contributed to the eventual outcome of the war itself.

Characters

Dwight David Eisenhower

Erwin Rommel

Winston Churchill

Theodore "Ted" Roosevelt Jr.

Jean Louis Darlan

Terry de la Mesa Allen

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Albert Kesselring

Kenneth Anderson

Hans-Jurgen Von Arnim

Lloyd Fredendall

Benito Mussolini

Adolf Hitler

(Henry) Kent Hewitt

Harold Alexander

Objects/Places

Blitzkrieg

A term that describes the rapid, overwhelming attacks of German tanks against stationary ground troops. These were very effective in the German invasion of Europe in 1939-1940.

Torch

The Allied codename for the invasion of North Africa

Tunisia

A North Central African country just east of Algeria. Tunisia was the site of the majority of North African fighting in Operation Torch.

Morocco

A Northwest African country directly south of Spain. It was used as a landing site by westernmost Torch units.

Algeria

A North Central African country located between Morocco and Tunisia. It was a major landing area for Torch and the kickoff point for the attack on German-held Tunisia

Vichy French

Term for German-allied French forces.

Strait of Gibraltar

The narrow opening between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

Big Red One

A Nickname for the U.S. First Infantry Battalion.

Stuka

A German dive bomber that proved very effective in North Africa.

Stuart

A light American tank that proved more effective against enemy troops than tanks.

AFHQ

Allied Forces Headquarters.

Luftwaffe

The German Air Force.

Panzer

A heavy German tank that initially proved nearly impervious to Allied light tanks.

Tiger

A heavy German tank with more armor than that Panzer and heavier gun power.

Speedy Valley

The U.S. II Corps staging ground under Fredendall. Speedy Valley is located in a remote area near the Algerian/Tunisian border at Tebessa.

Eastern Dorsal

A mountainous region that separates east from central Tunisia.

Faid Pass

A narrow valley that was critical to passing through the Eastern Dorsal.

Sherman

A medium armored American tank. The Sherman proved very versatile against the better armored but slower German tanks.

Kasserine Pass

A narrow valley through the Grand Dorsal, a mountainous region in western Tunisia. The Kasserine Pass proved to be a critical battle site.

Themes

Personality and Ego

Many of the characters that served in the North African campaign had very strong personalities. Good examples are Patton, Montgomery, and Eisenhower.

Patton was a fiery, passionate man who had both good and bad qualities. On the good side, he was decisive and not afraid to take chances. On the bad, he often made these decisions out of passion and emotion, without really thinking through the repercussions of his actions. Once he made a decision, he expected it to be followed without question, even if the situation changed. For example, he ordered Orlando Ward to lead his troops on a mission to take the high ground at Maknassy, even after Ward had explained that such a mission would come to no good. Ward obeyed and was nearly killed. Patton also felt very passionate about officers leading their troops. He even thought that from time to time it was a good thing for the enlisted men to see an officer die in battle, so they would remember that they were all in it together. In his speeches he threatened his officers with death if he saw them retreat following any wound received in battle.

Montgomery's personality was marked by a strong ego. He had a great dislike of the French and Americans, which didn't help when he met up with them in Tunisia. He also disliked some of the British commanders, including Anderson. He sacrificed many of his troops by refusing to heed advice from his peers who had been fighting in the Tunisian mountains for six months while he had only desert (flat terrain) experience. He was very full of himself and found it difficult to listen to the opinions of others.

Eisenhower was more of a politician than a tactician. He constantly worried more about bad press and his political career than what might befall troops taking his orders. His greatest problem was that he couldn't give up power enough to let his highly qualified subordinates make some of the decisions. He finally was tricked into giving his subordinates more power toward the end of the campaign, and once he got over the shock, he was ecstatic at not having as much responsibility. Bradley was one of the first Generals to have the self esteem to stand up to Eisenhower and not follow his orders blindly, as was shown when he avoided the "mousetrap" - the dangerous route Eisenhower wanted the II Corps to follow to Bizerte.

Strategy, Experience, and Planning

One of the most amazing things about Operation Torch was the total lack of reason and common sense used in the preparation for the invasion. This necessary planning process was replaced by misguided optimism and plain bravado. The huge assumption that the French would not fight was based on nothing more than ego and hope. The "harbor storming" operations were planned on this assumption, and they resulted in

disaster. Important information was not distributed to the commanders who most needed to know, often with catastrophic results.

The idea that British and American troops would just fight alongside each other with no official command structure was also absurd. Instead of creating a combined stronger force, this led to infighting and finger pointing when things went wrong. Units of troops who had trained together were separated from their leaders and broken up. There were soldiers who had been moved around so much that they didn't know who their commanding officers were.

Logistics were another huge issue that no one seemed to have prepared for. Getting 300,000 troops ashore in Algiers didn't do the Allies much good when there was no way to get them 300 miles east to the front. Sending bazookas without tank projectiles was another great mishap. Knowledge of how great a role tanks and aircraft would play was a major lesson that was learned the hard way by the Allies. The early battles could very well have turned in the other direction had the Allies had more tanks, anti-tank weapons, and planes at their disposal. The fact that the light Stewart tanks were useless against a frontal Panzer attack showed great lack of foresight in battle planning. In addition, it is inconceivable that Americans didn't consider tank versus tank battles probable. They did have the heavier Jeb Stewart tank, but its lack of agility and high profile made it a poor match against German tanks and anti-tank weapons. The German 88mm (3-1/2 inch) gun was a very formidable weapon, especially when used on a tank; the Allies initially had nothing to compare to it. Also, arbitrary American weight restrictions kept tank weights below 30 tons, in contrast to the big, heavily armored Panzers and Tigers that weighed in excess of 60 tons. In head to head fighting, German 88mm near misses could destroy Allied tanks whereas a direct 35mm hits to a Panzer would cause no damage, unless the hit was in the rear.

By late 1942, there were many German troops and commanders who had been actively fighting for almost 3-1/2 years. This experience made a huge difference in initial battles with fresh American and British troops. Many Allied units walked into German ambushes due to simple lacks in preparedness, such as not keeping in touch with other friendly units and not sending scouts ahead.

War Humor and Cynicism

Americans did learn a lot about the British wit when fighting along side them in Africa. There was probably a certain attitude that was necessary to handle day-to-day life. Troops were attacked by their own planes, shot at by their own troops, sent blindly into ambushes, dropped in wrong locations, short supplied, lied to, and sacrificed for the greater "good." The British had a peculiar (but sometimes necessary) trait of looking for the bright side of a bad situation. The Americans also had their own knack of using cynical or "dark" humor. For example; when the Americans were having a hard time trying to take Hill 609, Terry Allen asked his division commander, Charles Ryder, how much longer it would take to capture Hill 606. When asked by Ryder if he meant Hill 609, Allen said that his artillery had put enough fire on the hill to knock it down by three

meters. The GI's also wrote sarcastic songs to detail their plight, such as "The Third Time We Took Gafsa" and "There'll be Stukas over the vale of Tebourba. Tomorrow when I'm having tea. There'll be Spitfires after, ten minutes after. When they're of no bloody use to me."

While the British could point out something nice even when being torn up by enemy machine gun fire, the Americans could ridicule both how well the Germans could fight and how badly the Allies could screw almost anything up. In describing how confusing it was to be switched from unit to unit, one officer wrote, "We have served under everything but the Rising Sun and the swastika."

Style

Point of View

An Army at Dawn is told in the second person. The point of view is taken from press accounts, interviews and troop letters home (the notes section at the end of the book is extensive). It is a play-by-play account of how the war in North Africa came to transpire and the character interaction that occurred between the leaders.

Setting

The story follows the North African conflict of World War II and is set in the countries of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. The locations of the Allied landings are discussed in detail, as well as the battle sites themselves. Although North Africa is the main site of action, the book also includes side events that transpire all over the world, from Berlin to the United States.

Language and Meaning

Atkinson moves rapidly from an overview of event planning by commanders to actual troop transcripts, which he then pieces together to show how reality actually panned out. The contrast between decision makers and the men who made it all happen is fascinating. Understanding how soldiers viewed their leaders also runs the spectrum from amusing to upsetting. Atkinson details the glory as well as the horrors of war. He also describes many of the colorful characters in the campaign, including Patton, Eisenhower, Rommel, Robinett, and Darlan.

Structure

An Army at Dawn is divided into twelve chapters, a prologue, and an epilogue. Chapter 1 details the decision making process as to how Operation Torch came about. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the build up and the actual invasion of North Africa. The Allies initial easy push to the east is reviewed in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 detail the first full Allied/German encounters and the stalemate that ensues. Roosevelt's visit to Casablanca and the rise of Fredendall is taken up in Chapter 7. Chapters 8 and 9 detail Allied setbacks and the change in German fortunes after Kasserine. Montgomery enters the Tunisian campaign against Rommel in Chapter 10. Chapters 11 and 12 showcase the emergence of U.S. General Bradley and the fall of Tunisia.

Quotes

"Sir, all I want to tell you is this - I will leave the beaches either a conqueror or a corpse." Chapter 1, pg. 31

"Give me generals who are lucky." Chapter 1, pg. 36

"When you get to high places in the Army, this business of warfare is no longer just a question of getting out and teaching the soldiers how to shoot or how to crawl up a ravine or dig a foxhole - it is partly politics, partly public-speaking, partly essay-writing, partly social contact... A fellow wishes he could just get into a hammock under a nice shade tree and read a few wild west magazines!" Chapter 2, pg. 114

"I will go anywhere to talk to anyone who wishes to surrender Algiers to me." Chapter 3, pg. 118

"The beach was a mess and the officers were doing nothing....As a whole the men were poor, the officers worse. No drive. It is very sad." Chapter 3, pg. 139

"November 8, we fight everybody. November 9, we fight the Germans. November 10, we fight nobody. November 10 (noon), we fight the Germans. November 11 (night), we fight nobody." Chapter 4, pg. 165

"People who fight a war like that will be hard to beat." Chapter 5, pg. 211

"Damned if I'm not about ready to quit. If I could just command a battalion and get into a bullet battle, it would all be so simple." Chapter 6, pg. 248

"Where are the Germans? I want to get shot at." Chapter 7, pg. 268

"Corporal of the Guard! I have a feller down here who claims he is the prime minister of Great Britain. I think he is a goddamn liar." Chapter 7, pg. 287

"It's two years to-day since I arrived on African soil. Two years of heavy and stubborn fighting, most of the time with a far superior enemy...I have endeavored to do my duty, both in my own sphere and for the cause as a whole...." Chapter 8, pg. 318

"Germans have absolute superiority ground and air... Unless help from air and armor comes immediately, infantry will lose immeasurably." Chapter 9, pg. 346

"It is pardonable to be defeated, but unpardonable to be surprised." Chapter 9, pg. 357

"It appears futile to continue the attack in view of the constant reinforcing of the hostile forces, the unfavorable weather, which renders the terrain impassable off the hard roads, and because of the increasing problems caused by the mountain terrain, which is so unsuited to the employment of armored units. All this add[s] to the low strength of out organization." Chapter 9, pg. 386

"You might have gotten killed. When I want you to get killed, I will tell you." Chapter 10, pg. 402

"He knows nothing whatever about how to make war or to fight battles; he should be kept right away from all that business if we want to win this war." Chapter 10, pg.419

"Fortunately for our fame as soldiers, our enemy is worthy of us. The German is a war-trained veteran - confident, brave, and ruthless. We are brave. We are better-equipped, better fed, and in the place of his blood-glutted Woten, we have with us the God of Our Fathers Known of Old... If we die killing, well and good, but if we fight hard enough, viciously enough, we will kill and live. Live to return to our family and our girl and conquering heroes - men of Mars." Chapter 11, pg. 433

"As I gain in experience I do not think more of myself but less of others. Men, even so-called great men, are wonderfully weak and timid. They are too damned polite. War is very simple, direct, and ruthless. It takes a simple, direct, and ruthless man to wage war." Chapter 12, pg. 485

"One arm was sticking straight up, we couldn't get it in the shallow grave. Every time we forced it down, it jumped up again, a gleaming white hand in the darkness. It is terribly hard to break a dead man's arm." Chapter 12, pg. 499

"Looking back on the last six months, it seems as if one has been holding one's breath, and you have just let it go for the first time." Chapter 12, pg. 525

Topics for Discussion

Describe the difficulties in organizing the troop deployment at Hampton Roads.

What were the proposed landing sites for Operation Torch? What went wrong with the landings?

Why did the Americans want to mount a cross channel offensive as soon as possible in 1942?

What incorrect assumptions did the British make about the French defending North Africa?

In late 1942, could the Allies have stopped the Germans from massing troops in Tunisia to create the bridgehead that kept them from taking the country for another six months?

Explain the difficulties an American Stuart tank would have in facing a German Panzer tank.

Was Fredendall a good or bad commander? Explain why.

Compare the strategic differences in defending a flat desert area versus a mountainous area.

When Eisenhower started delegating some of his responsibilities to his subordinates, how did the campaign change? Would Eisenhower be considered a micromanager in today's terms?

Contrast Bradley's commanding style with Fredendall's.