

## Patton and Rommel: Men of War in the Twentieth Century

By

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“We all want to go home, but the quickest way home is through Berlin and over the Boche. And thirty years from now, when your grandson asks what you did in World War II, you won’t have to say, ‘I shoveled shit in Louisiana’” (p. 348).

Attack! Attack! Attack! - Patton

The losses of the German infantry particularly disturbed him. “The finest fighting man,” he wrote, “has no value in mobile warfare without tanks, guns and vehicles...This is not the case with position warfare,...which is always a struggle of the destruction of men” (p. 237).

*Angriff! Angriff! Angriff!* – Rommel



**Patton**

b. 11 Nov 1885

BG – 2 Oct 1940

MG – 4 April 1941

LG – 12 Mar 1943

GEN – 14 April 1945

d. 21 Dec 1945

**Rommel**

b. 15 Nov 1891

GM - 1 Jun 1939

GL – 1 Jan 1941

GO – 30 Jan 1942

GFM – 22 Jun 1942

d. 14 Oct 1944

## Truncated Introduction

This book reads like a novel. Once you get started he carries you along with such detail you will think you are at the beach, in the bocage, or pushing toward Mainz.

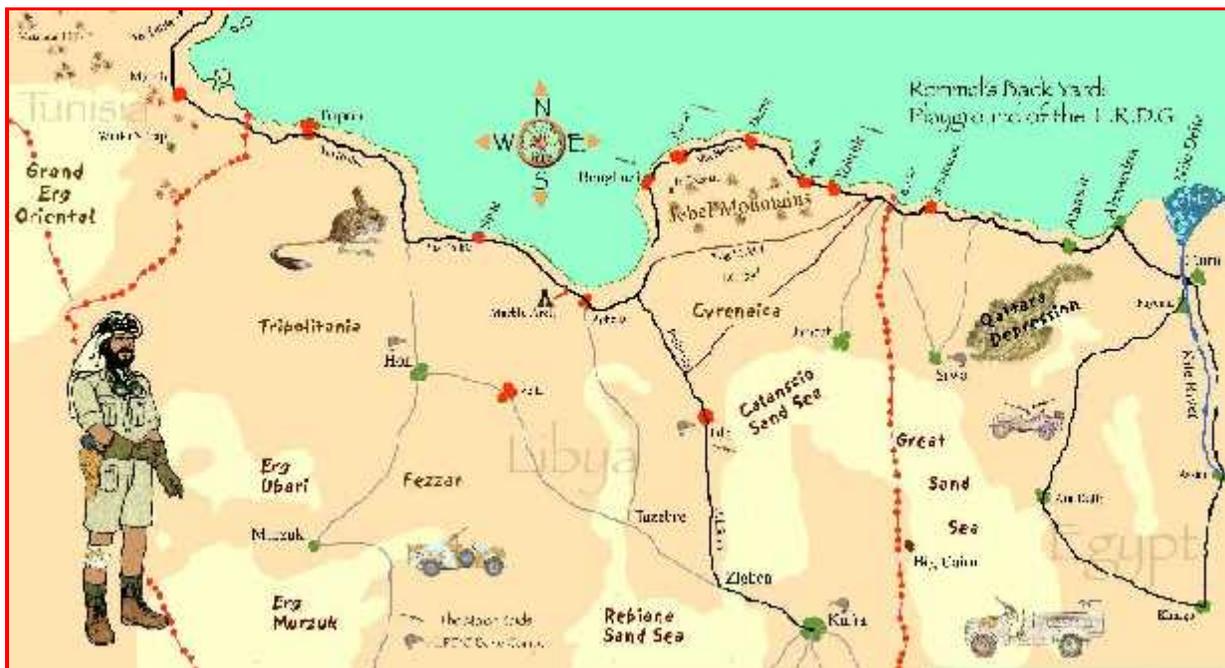
I shan't review the book or critique – don't want to spoil the ending - but may grandiloquently (pompously and eloquently) retitile some of the issues and questions Showalter brings to the forefront of this well written review of Patton and Rommel.

## Preparations

Showalter compares our two heroes in their early life, WWI, between the wars, and WWII. Of course, the emphasis is on the development of the tank and its guns. You will be pleased at the details. I am telling you, he puts you in the fight where you can see, feel, and smell the battle space.

## Journey

Have provided a map to look at with some of the names, for instance in North Afrika between Tunis and Alexandria. Just north of the Qattara Depression is where the Battle of El Alamein was fought. For sure the battle fields rattle across from Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Benghazi, Tobruk, to Es Sollum –don't forget Kasserine Pass in Tunisia (east of Tebessa, Algeria).



Rommel's Back Yard

## History

You may not believe the in-depth lesson on Rommel fighting with his *Deutsches Afrika Korps* (DAK) fighting from Algiers to Cairo and set up to continue on to the Baltics for the much needed oil.

Showalter makes it rather clear Hitler got just a tad spread out fighting in North Africa and Russia so Rommel had to be on the bottom to receive supplies and still won, till Montgomery showed up at Alamein. He fought with “pocket change.”

The author says Patton and Rommel showed up indirectly at el Guettar to ‘command against each other’ (p. 302). Patton thought he was fighting Rommel but most say The Desert Fox had already gone back to Germany – he had been there a long time and was really beaten up physically...I remember seeing pictures of him with ugly fever blisters.

### My Coda (concluding passage)

Was really pleased to see the term “Boyd loop” on page 62 and will correct Mr. Showalter as it is called “OODA Loop” by John Boyd<sup>1</sup> for “Observe, Orientate, Decide, and Act.”

This is called *Auftragstaktik* and has to do with maneuver warfare in mission-type orders “The superior agrees to allow the subordinate the freedom of judgment to determine exactly how that should be accomplished” (G. Heart Country, p. 101). So, I was pleased to see where the book was going. Boyd copied Rommel on the term. This is where Boyd learned the term – although I don’t know if Rommel used the *Auftragstaktik* term while commanding or not.

While reading note the times he uses terms like “inside loop” or “seek, strike, and destroy” or “surprise, speed, shock, pursuit, and exploitation.” Note where Rommel particularly will tell his troops what he wants done but not tell them how to do it – the very meaning of *Auftragstaktik*.

By the way, because we have both these “magnificent sons-of-bitches” fighting, note that Patton too, is doing the same mission type commanding – in his own words.

This book is amazing.

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<sup>1</sup> Go to [www.gheart.net](http://www.gheart.net) and look at “Introduction” for the last two lines. Then Chapter 8 on **John Boyd** and *Auftragstaktik*

Lastly (I lied about the Coda above)

Couple of comments on the author. I have never seen a history book written and only publish two footnotes. He does not even have a Table of Contents...I find this seemingly not academic for someone who majored in spelling and especially one who is an expert on German war history. Does he give fair play to both our heroes or does he favor one over the other? You tell me.

If he were still alive (he died in 2019) I would write to him like I wrote to Carlo D'Este on his book "Patton: Genius for War" and ask him especially about his comments on his extended coverage of Patton slapping a couple of soldiers (note the Nazis executed 50,000 troops!). Of course, I would want to know why he spent so much time on this – to say nothing of reminding us how General of the Army "The Soldier's General" treated Patton...and then there is Ike.

This means, and I may be missing his real 'intent' in making sure he covered his bases, like the five star general who covered his bases keeping one long line of breast to make sure they all got to Germany at the same time – meaning they couldn't slow Montgomery down. This only extended the war about seven months and cost no telling how many troops – on both sides. Does he take a side here showing his biases or not? Tell me.

I am showing my bias and am proud of it. The first quote in this paper will live forever - and it should. Patton was the general who won the war and he had to drag Bradley and Eisenhower to do it. He led the march and deserves full credit.

Actually, this book should be used in the 'Command and Staff' schools for all services. The students at these schools should sit around and talk about Showalter's questions set up all the way through the book noting the "What if?" questions on perhaps different things that were introduced in the battles...like Goering showing up with more Luftwaffe fighters to cover Rommel's Panzer Army (to say nothing of his lack in supporting the 6<sup>th</sup> Army in Stalingrad).

**Actually, the last line in the book shows the book sentiment for all of us.**

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Field Marshall Erwin Rommel who, like Patton, died a horrible death<sup>2</sup> - at the 'heist' of their government/army/leaders/whatever...

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/Rommel-Ulrich-Tukur/dp/B074JYHJYL> (1:58) A SPLENDID MOVIE – IN GERMAN!  
This is done well with the history, scenery, war, and uniforms. Watch Hitler, Gen. Hans Speidel, and the countess.



**The Desert Fox**