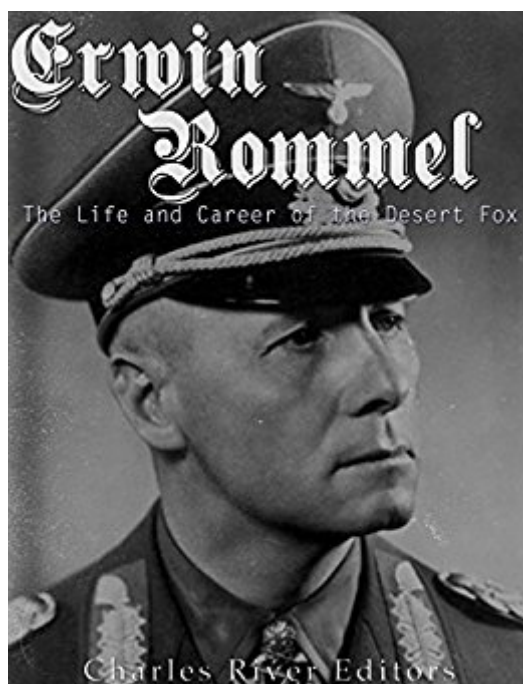


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Erwin Rommel: The Life And Career Of The Desert Fox



Synopsis

*Includes pictures*Includes Rommel's quotes about his life and the war*Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading*Includes a table of contents

Be an example to your men in your duty and in private life. Never spare yourself, and let the troops see that you don't in your endurance of fatigue and privation. Always be tactful and well-mannered, and teach your subordinates to be the same. Avoid excessive sharpness or harshness of voice, which usually indicates the man who has shortcomings of his own to hide.

Erwin Rommel

One of his biographers called him a complex man: a born leader, a brilliant soldier, a devoted husband, a proud father; intelligent, instinctive, brave, compassionate, vain, egotistical, and arrogant. As that description suggests, every account of Erwin Rommel's life must address what appears to be its inherent contradictions. Fittingly, and in the same vein, he remains one of the best remembered generals of World War II and history at large, despite the fact he was on the losing side, and he was defeated at the most famous battle of his career, the decisive Battle of El Alamein. Nonetheless, the Desert Fox has been a legend on both sides of the Atlantic for over 70 years, thanks to the crucial role he played in history's deadliest conflict. Before his legendary encounters against the British and Americans in North Africa, Rommel gained much fame for his role in the invasions of Poland and France before was sent to North Africa in February 1941. In describing Rommel, the Italian officer Alessandro Predieri talked about his two very rare and precious gifts:

The first is luck, which you will remember, Napoleon prescribed to his generals [The second gift is that of being able to keep his bearings in the midst of all the confusion of modern desert warfare. His instinct tells him immediately where a difficult situation is going to develop, and off he goes with his Kampfstaffel [Headquarters Group], which he treats like a Praetorian Guard, and puts things right, charging around like a junior officer.

With the Axis forces trying to push through Egypt towards the Suez Canal and the British Mandate of Palestine, American forces landed to their west in North Africa, which ultimately compelled Rommel to try to break through before the Allies could build up and overwhelm them with superior numbers. The Second Battle of El Alamein was a turning point in the two-year conflict between Allied forces and a combined German-Italian force in North Africa. While the scale of the battle paled in comparison to the battles of the Eastern Front, where the majority of German troops were concentrated, it still marked an important victory in World War II, especially from the British perspective. After leaving North Africa, Rommel spent much of the later part of the war strengthening German defenses across the Atlantic in anticipation of an amphibious Allied landing, which would come in June 1944. But the murky role he played in the notorious July 20 plot on Adolf Hitler's life in 1944, the closest an assassination attempt got to killing the Nazi

Fuhrer, would bring about the Desert Fox's untimely demise in October 1944, even as the Soviets and Western Allies were tightening the vise on Germany. Compelled to take cyanide by authorities, the Desert Fox insisted he was innocent until his dying day, and his popularity forced the Nazi government to claim his death was brought about by a heart attack or a cerebral embolism. In fact, Rommel was given an official state funeral, and Winston Churchill would go on to praise him, "He also deserves our respect because, although a loyal German soldier, he came to hate Hitler and all his works, and took part in the conspiracy to rescue Germany by displacing the maniac and tyrant. For this, he paid the forfeit of his life."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book portrays Erwin Rommel, the famous Desert Fox. The author seeks to wrestle with the legend, the myth and the reality of this controversial WWII German general. The book describes Rommel's early years and his role in the invasions of Poland and France before was sent to North Africa in February 1941. His North African campaigns are briefly described; the author focuses on the famous battle of El Alamein which resulted in an important British victory. Rommel's part in the

Normandy invasion is glossed over very briefly. The book includes good pictures and excellent battle maps (of El Alamein only). The majority of the book deals with the extent of Rommel's Nazi sympathies and his involvement, if any, in the July 20 attempt to kill Hitler. A significant portion of the book describes the plot itself along with the plans, execution, failure and aftermath. Although interesting, I felt that this much detail was extraneous and distracting. The author presents the various aspects of this complex man with scrupulous balance and objectivity which allows the reader to evaluate the different positions and themes and formulate an opinion. However, while I fully recognize the space limitations of the Charles River series, I was disappointed with certain omissions that I felt would have provided the reader with important context and perspective. For example, there was no mention of Rommel's victory at Kasserine Pass, no discussion of his role in defending Normandy, his growing disillusion with the war, and, most significantly, why a Rommel legend and myth was created in the first place. What differentiated him from other German generals? Why was he praised, in public, by Winston Churchill? What made Rommel special? I didn't get a sense of this key element of the story in this book.

This was a really good biography of Germany's most famous WWII general. It not only looks at his war record but tries to gain insight into what he thought about the Nazis, Hitler, other leaders, etc. Is he someone who stood above the fray among the rest of his brethren, or should he be considered just as complicit as any other high ranking Nazi? You be the judge.

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