
The Round Tablette

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HAPPY NEW YEAR! And Welcome to the January meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight, Robert Citino, Professor of History at the University of North Texas and the author of *The Wehrmacht Retreats: Fighting a Lost War, 1943*. German veterans of the eastern front will join Dr. Citino in discussing how the influence of fighting on multiple fronts led to the German defeat.

The year 1943 began badly for the German Army. On January 10th the 6th Army surrendered to the Soviet Union at Stalingrad. This defeat on top of the defeat of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's forces at El Alamein marked the end of the Third Reich's drive for European supremacy. The defeat at Stalingrad and El Alamein also marked an end to the German view on the nature of warfare.

The centuries old "German way of war," best described as *Bewegungskrieg*, or a war of movement, began during the reign of Frederick Wilhelm II. It stressed maneuver with large formations, such as divisions, corps, or armies. This was seen as a way to avoid the long drawn out wars of attrition that were thought to be too expensive for Germany to afford. This "way of war" finally met the constraints imposed by industrialization. From 1943 onward, the Third Reich would no longer be fighting a war of maneuver.

In 1943, the Third Reich was fighting a "multi-front" war on the Eastern Front, in the Mediterranean, in the air, and on the sea, as well as the war against the Jews. All of these strained German manpower, resources, and logistics to the extreme, and hastened their demise. Only occasionally in the literature are these varying fronts shown to be interrelated, and one of the most obvious cases is *Operation Citadel*, the German offensive against the Kursk salient north of Kharkov.

For most veterans of the war in the east,

the campaign in Italy was of no importance. If they thought of it at all, they probably envied the soldiers who had warmer weather to fight in. For the German veterans of the Italian campaign, it was certainly better than the eastern front, and for the Allies, it was a side show. After OPERATION HUSKY - the invasion of Sicily, Gen. Marshall and FDR opposed further military adventures in the Mediterranean; they preferred a more direct route to Berlin via the Channel beaches. Churchill favored indirect attacks, nibbling at the edges, and calling the Med the "soft underbelly" of the Nazi empire, wanted landings in Italy and perhaps Greece, but not northern France.

In May 1943, at the TRIDENT conference, Churchill and FDR agreed on a limited military campaign in Italy, a campaign that would not interfere with the planned operations in northwestern France in 1944. With the conquest of Sicily, Mussolini's regime collapsed, raising the possibility of taking Italy out of the war. During the August 1943 QUEBEC conference, they agreed on limited strategic objectives for the Italian operation: first, to attract German forces into Italy and pin them down so they could not be used elsewhere; and second, to capture Naples, and the Foggia and Rome airfields for use by the 15th Air Force in strategic bombing of Romanian oil fields.

For the Allies, already fighting two semi-separate wars against Germany, Italy would be a limited drain only on western European main thrust resources. It would have no impact on Soviet forces and resources. As the Germans responded to Allied initiatives, they lost control of the battle space, and what tactical advantages the Wehrmacht might have possessed were seriously reduced by overwhelming Allied military power.

By the end of 1943, most of the perceptive German officers knew the war was lost, yet Hitler had no trouble keeping their loyalty. After the war, the surviving generals tried to blame Hitler and his erratic strategies and decisions for the loss, but we must remember that they followed him without question. They are as responsible

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for the destruction of Germany as the Führer. Citino argues that there are important linkages between the two fronts. Murray and Millett think that Hitler terminated the Kursk offensive “not only from tactical defeats but from the Anglo-American invasion of Sicily and the threat of Italian collapse.”

UNTERNEHMEN ZITADELLE ended in mid-July with frightful casualties. Bouyed up by Lend Lease shipments which made Red Army logistics easier, the Soviets were able to use their manpower reserves to bring overwhelming force to bear at times and places of their choosing. The Wehrmacht needed every man, gun, and tank it would muster to hold the Red tide back, so any diversion to Italy or France would be felt immediately and continually on the eastern front.

Further Reading:

- Robert Citino, author of *The Wehrmacht Retreats: Fighting a Lost War, 1943* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012)
- Robert Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008).
- Carlo D'Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).
- David M. Glantz, and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999).
- Walter Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's headquarters 1939-45* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1964)

Announcements:

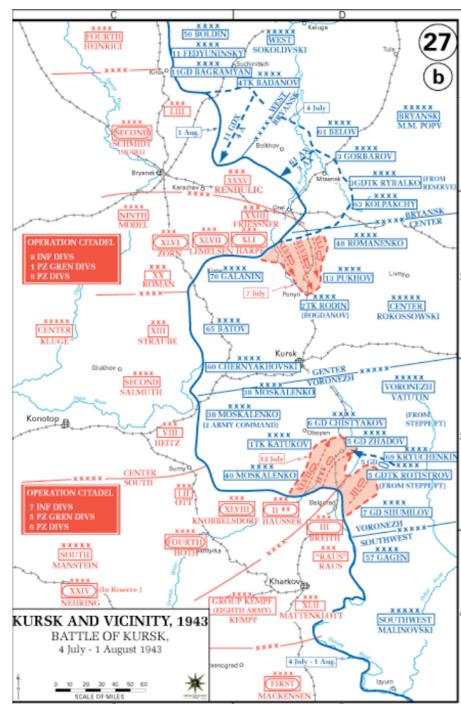
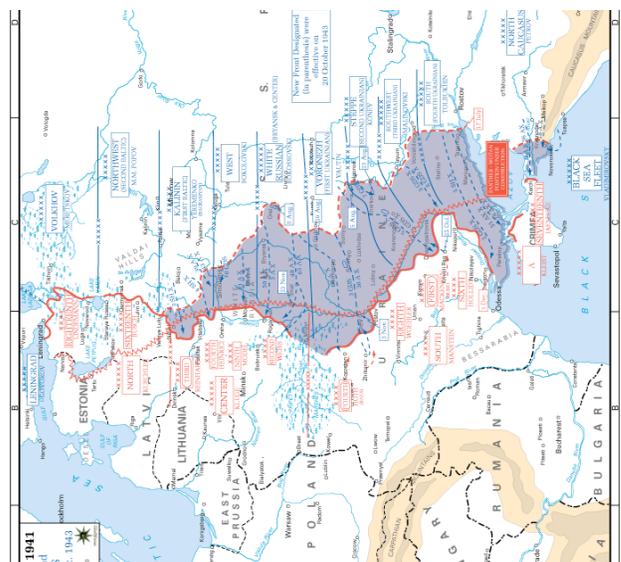
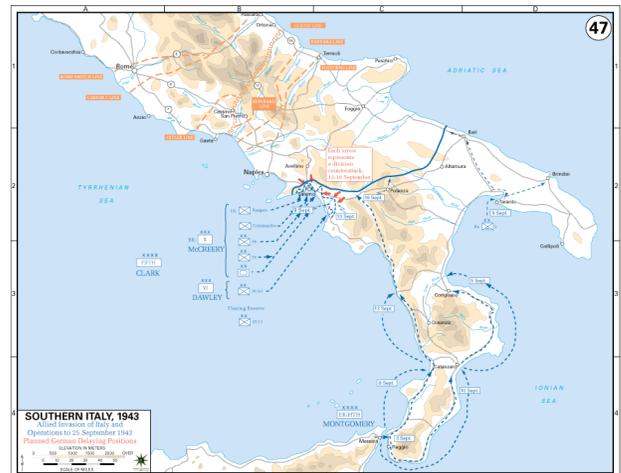
- Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** - Jan. 15, 2013 Civil War Refugee Crisis www.tccwrt.com - info @ tccwrt.com
- St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** - Jan. 28, 2013 3rd MN at Wood Lake- Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268 - rossandhaines@comcast.net
- Rochester WWII History Round Table** -507-280-9970; www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org
- Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium** 13 April 2013, <http://www.tccwrt.com/symposium.html> or tccwrt@yahoo.com
- Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
- Air Show - Eden Prairie** - July, 13-14, 2013; <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100
- Honor Flight** - Jerry Kyser - [crazyjerry45@hotmail](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) - 651-338-2717
- CAF - Commemorative Air Force** - www.cafmn.org or Bill at 952-201-8400
- Minnesota Air Guard Museum** - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
- Friends of Ft. Snelling**, www.fortsnelling.com
- Fagen Museum** in Granite Falls, www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org. 320-564-6644
- World War II Weekend**, Historic Fort Snelling, 8-9 June 2013, fnselling@mnhs.org

Civil War Weekend, Historic Fort Snelling, 17-18 August 2013, fnselling@mnhs.org

Round Table Schedule 2013

- 14 Feb. Emergence of Viet-Nam from WW2
- 14 Mar. Military Intelligence Language School
- 28 Mar. WW2 in the Middle East
- 11 Apr. Hitler's Breakwater Fighting in the Baltic
- 9 May Kampfgruppe Peiper at Malmedy

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com



USMA History Department Map Atlas online

If you liked tonight's program, view our Sept. 2007 [Operation Husky: The Invasion of Sicily](#), Jan. 2008 [Kursk: The Largest Tank Battle](#), Jan. 2010 [The Leadership of the Russian Military](#), or Jan. 2011 [The Forgotten Year on the Eastern Front](#) programs. You may order them tonight for delivery next month by seeing Rob at the desk, or online at: www.barros.us/online-store.cfm or contact Rob at (763) 639-3399