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Editorial

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The papers in this issue were originally presented at the conference "Seventy Years On: New Perspectives on the Second World War," held in early autumn of 2009 at Lake Louise, Alberta. The core purpose of the conference was to bring together scholars from around the world who are using new methodologies and recently available archival sources to ask new questions or to revisit established narratives about the Second World War. Each of the following articles speaks to that purpose.

This series is divided into three chronological periods: the years of German victory (1939-1941); the years of German defeat (1942-1945); and how the war is remembered. Keeping these periods of the war in context is important; until Japan decided to make the United States an active belligerent, an Allied victory was more a matter of faith than fact. These early years were a heady time for the Axis. Yet, the limitations of Axis doctrine, together with the influence of ideology on operational effectiveness, and the weaknesses in their alliance, meant that victory could last only until the Allies figured out how to beat them. And figure it out they did. In the desert, key lessons learned early about the integration of air power set the basis for later success, as did the operational research conducted on strategic bombing. Morale in the British Army was a problem, but institutional and leadership changes turned the corner before the decisive victory at El Alamein. By the Battle of the Bulge the power of the Allies (with the help of good weather), left the German aims unachieved. In the wake of

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war, it remained for nations to pick up the pieces. Case studies on German POWs in Italy, and the perpetuation of the ANZAC myth in Australia, illustrate the very different ways in which countries did so.

The first group of articles examines the years of German victory. The section is named after a concept offered by the author of the first paper. Robert Citino's "The War That Hitler Won? The Years of German Victory, 1939-41" argues that blitzkrieg was not, contrary to popular and historical belief, a novel concept at the outbreak of the Second World War. Rather, German operations during their years of victory from 1939-1941 were an expression of the "German way of war" developed by the Prussians. Historically surrounded by larger, richer states, the Prussians' only hope had been to knock out their enemies quickly and impressively. To do so required bold attacks, aggressive leaders, and movement. Logistics, intelligence, and strategic vision were not required—and might even divert resources from their only viable option: immediate victory in decisive battle. What the Germans did in 1939, then, was to modernise this tradition by adding tanks, fighter planes, and motorized transport. And it worked. Operating in or near Central Europe the Germans were able to overwhelm the Poles, Danes, Norwegians, French, British, Yugoslavians, and Greeks because the defenders could not react or regroup in time to overcome the initial German advance. In fact, the Germans won every *initial* encounter with their enemies.

Citino uses the German invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia as a case study. The Greeks and Yugoslavians had very large armies, and in the Greek case, they also had strong defensive fortifications. The Greeks also had the assistance of Allied forces, which landed with two divisions. Yet the German attack was a complete success. They overwhelmed the Greeks, chased away the British and Commonwealth forces, and beat the Yugoslavians so convincingly that Germany suffered barely 500 casualties against Yugoslavia's 35 divisions. Yet the Nazis' political and strategic objectives stretched the German army beyond its capabilities. The invasion of the Soviet Union in particular required logistics and strategic thinking far beyond the strictures of the German way of war. Thus, although Germany won its war to December 1941, the strategic realities of the global conflict laid the groundwork for German defeat. Since German victory was predicated on swift knock-out blows, their eventual defeat lay in the remaining Allies' success at not losing. The essence of this logic becomes clear in microcosm in the following article.

Charles Melson's "German Counterinsurgency Revisited" examines German counterinsurgency in Yugoslavia. Melson traces German counterinsurgency strategy as far back as Clausewitz, who argued for the importance of irregular warfare but without addressing how to suppress it. This was left to experience. Indeed, in the midst of the Second World War the Germans had to introduce a course for officers on counter-insurgency because up to then there had been no formal teaching or doctrine on the matter. What German commanders inherited at the outbreak of the war was anecdotal experience derived from colonial conflicts dating back to the nineteenth century—uprisings put down relatively easily by a ruthless policy of violent recriminations; policies against local resistors from the Franco-Prussian war which led the Germans to urge an easing of the convention restricting extra-judicial killings; the perceived behavior of the Germans against Belgian resistors; and, of course, a racial-national Nazi ideology to help "interpret" these past examples.

In practical terms, the Germans placed themselves in a desperate position by invading the Soviet Union, and their ruthless policies of genocidal extermination there meant that resistance in any occupied territory was regarded by its very nature as a threat to the German race. Furthermore, a combination of the necessity to get as many troops to the front as possible, and the territoriality of the different German organs meant that occupied territory was staffed by police and the SS. Hitler and the Nazi leadership threw out the few rules the Germans abided by and urged anti-partisan commanders to do whatever it took to achieve results, including the murdering of women and children. This often had the effect of increasing resistance. As a consequence, the Wehrmacht often found itself called in to clean up this mess and at the same time to carry out similar atrocities. Ultimately, Melson exposes the contradictory nature of Germany's actions versus its interests.

In contrast to Germany's racial ideological occupation policies in Yugoslavia, Italy pursued an old fashioned imperialism. While the Germans focused on defeating the insurgency, the Italians, argues Nicolas Virtue in "Occupation Duty in the Dysfunctional Coalition: Italian Independence of Command in Occupied Europe, 1941–43," were focused on building their empire, creating a viable puppet state, and excluding Germany from the spoils. Indeed, Virtue's article offers a detailed autopsy of the operation of the Axis coalition in occupied Croatia. Historians often blame Germans

for the failure of the Axis coalition to successfully occupy regions, yet Virtue shows that the minor partners in the Axis were more than capable of undermining coalition success in pursuit of their own gains. In the case of Croatia, the Italians' primary goal was to solidify the regions along the Dalmatian coast which they had annexed from the now "independent" Croatian state, while at the same time expanding their influence wherever possible in the rest of Croatia.

The Italians expected the Croatian government to recognize them as the great power in the region, as a cultural force, and to subsume their own interests to the Italians and act as their puppet. When they did not, the Italians showed no scruples about doing whatever it took to still expand their control over Croatia. They studiously avoided allowing German troops into areas controlled by the Italians because it risked undermining Italian prestige. This had an important military consequence; it meant that the border between the Italian and German regions became somewhat porous for partisans, allowing them to operate more freely and effectively. This unwillingness to cooperate continued through almost the entire period of Italy's Balkan occupation. Virtue shows that the Italians generally blamed the Croatians for their problems, while the Germans were busy elsewhere and were satisfied to leave the Italians to their scheming so long as they could maintain a semblance of control. It was a decidedly dysfunctional coalition.

Matters did not fare much better for the Italians when left to their own devices. Problems with the Italian military structure and leadership, similar to those described by Mr. Virtue in Croatia, were apparent in North Africa, as exposed by Craig Stockings in "'Something is Wrong with our army…'Training, Leadership and Italian Military Failure on the First Libyan Campaign, 1940-41." Stockings aims to reassess the failure of the Italians in Operation "Compass" by doing away with the normal ethnic stereotyping of the Italians, prevalent not only in the literature which criticizes the Italians but even in some of the writings which purport to defend them. Instead, Stockings argues that the Italian leadership was defective from top to bottom for reasons which were entirely military in nature and would have affected the soldiers of any army in a similar way.

Italian command was distant from the men for reasons necessitated by the low quality of the officers; their poor training and equipment meant that often the only protection they had from losing control of the men was the prestige of their rank. The

Italian command system was structured in a way that incentivized indecision, excessive caution, and obsolete tactics. Commanders could not expect to be promoted for success or creativity, their only worry was being blamed for failure. Promotion came through seniority and personal connections. As a result, at all levels, the Italian command was characterized by mutual mistrust and intrigue. Another Italian weakness resulted from their lack of acceptance, or even knowledge, of modern doctrine—not to mention kit. While there were elements within the Italian Army familiar with armoured warfare techniques, they were not in command and had no way to force change on the generals.

Throughout the article, Stockings juxtaposes the Italians with the Australians they were facing, and finds nearly the exact opposite in every case. Australian and British leadership was experienced in modern battle, open to new techniques, creative and aggressive. The democratic idealism of the Australian army meant that the officers were closer to their men—they had to be to have a chance at earning their respect—and the army was stronger for the flexibility it showed in promoting officers from the ranks. For the Italians this would have been unthinkable. In short, the two systems promoted virtually the opposite effects, and the results were self-evident in "Compass".

Together, the first four papers reveal some of the doctrinal, structural, political, and ideological ways that the Axis alliance was built for quick victory—or none at all. Certainly, as Citino and Melson point out, the Germans deserve significant credit; neither the "German Way in Warfare" nor their counterinsurgency doctrine were conducive to the successful, long-term campaigns they ended up fighting. But the role of Germany's alliance partner, Italy, cannot be ignored. As Virtue and Stockings illuminate, the Italians actively schemed to the detriment of their alliance with the Germans in order to forward their own longer-term political objectives in Croatia, but without having the strategic vision or ability to contribute to long term victory. Despite these structural weaknesses, by late 1941, the Axis seemed to be on the verge of victory, with the Soviet Union reeling, the disappointment of the "Crusader" operation in North Africa, and little sign of the Americans.

In 1942, the Axis advance ground to a halt and the initiative shifted to the Allies. Yet the learning curve would be a slow, bloody process. The war in the air was in particular constantly evolving. Not only did improved technology frequently change

what was possible, but experience often shattered theory once the battle commenced. Air and morale were intricately linked, though while the former was easily quantifiable, the latter was often only measurable in light of defeats. The following section traces the development of Allied air doctrine from the tactical level in North Africa to the strategic bombing campaign in Europe. It also demonstrates the links between the air war and morale, on both Allied and Axis forces. It concludes at the Battle of the Bulge, when the desperate Germans hurled the remnants of the Luftwaffe at the overwhelmingly superior Allied air forces.

In "A Stepping Stone to Success: Operation Battleaxe (June 1941) and the Development of the British Tactical Air Doctrine", Mike Bechthold reassesses the development of Allied tactical doctrine by reviewing its origins in the western desert. The traditional view holds that General Bernard Montgomery and Air Marshal Arthur Coningham developed and introduced a revolutionary new system of tactical air doctrine in the Western Desert in 1943. This system demonstrated an improved air-ground cooperation while ensuring the independence of both branches of service. Much of the system they developed is still used by western air forces today. One of Coningham's main successes was to convince the Army not to resist his plans.

Bechthold investigates the extent to which Coningham actually broke new ground when he took over the western desert Air Force, and how much he simply improved on a system he inherited from the famous Canadian fighter ace, Raymond Collishaw. The article traces Collishaw's role in defeating the Italians in Operation "Compass." By maintaining an aggressive posture and undertaking offensive operations at all times, Collishaw was able, with inferior numbers, to keep the Italians on the defensive. The combination of effective and efficient offense, skillful and lucky improvisation to keep aircraft within striking distance of the enemy in a highly fluid theatre, the establishment of targeting priorities, and the effective use of bluffing all served to help the RAF attain air superiority and greatly aided the troops on the ground.

During Operation "Battleaxe," Collishaw's efforts were more mixed, but this was largely as a result of orders passed down to him from the theatre commander Arthur Wavell. Forced by Wavell to hold many of his air forces back to give the ground troops an air umbrella, Collishaw lost the tactical advantage he had built up against the Italians. Ultimately, Air Marshal Tedder used the apparent ineffectiveness of the RAF in

"Battleaxe" to replace Collishaw with his own man. But Collishaw had already laid the foundation for future air/ground cooperation. The positive example established by his tactics in "Compass," reinforced by the relative ineffectiveness of the RAF in the hands of Wavell's orders meant that Coningham, and later Montgomery inherited the basis for an effective tactical system proven in combat.

RAF adaptation was not limited to tactics, as strategic bombing was also evolving. Randall Wakelam in his article "Sir Arthur Harris and Precision Bombing – No Oxymoron Here" argues that Arthur "Bomber" Harris' role has been misassessed. Not only did he not seek out opportunities for area, or city, bombing, he aimed to mitigate civilian deaths where possible. The article begins by showing Harris' leadership in adopting—and innovating—new technology in the Middle East during the 1920s. Harris not only showed a keen interest in the accuracy of bombing, especially night bombing, but he actively pioneered new methods, including the setting of target beacons by his best crews.

During the strategic bombing campaign over Germany, Harris continued to seek accuracy, and to inform his superiors when their expectations were unrealistic. Despite his efforts, he continued to receive orders to hit targets that were too deep, too small, or too close to civilian populations to allow for the sort of accuracy needed to avoid unnecessary collateral damage. Nevertheless, Harris continued to improve the accuracy of his bomber crews. He used analytical teams to collate the data after each mission in order to improve on targeting and to increase efficiency. This process allowed him to learn, for instance, that the more accurate and persistent the lead group was on a mission, the more concentrated the following bombers would be, and the more successful the overall mission.

During preparations for Operation "Overlord," Harris received orders to drop fantastical amounts of bombs with unheard of accuracy on targets far too small and/or far for such methods to offer even the possibility of success. He said so to his superiors. But the targets had to be bombed, and that is the essence of Wakelam's point; Harris did his best to reduce civilian casualties while still carrying out the bombing necessary to take the fight to the heart of the enemy and damage his ability to carry on the fight. That, while bombing in the darkness of night, Bomber Command was able to hit its

targets with greater accuracy than the Americans, is a testament to the efforts and skill of Harris, his scientists, and the crews which flew the missions.

The difficulty of rectifying political objectives with operational capabilities and equipment limitations was compounded by the challenge of man management. Jonathan Fennell sheds new light on the effect of morale at the battle of El Alamein in his article "'Steel my soldiers' hearts': El Alamein Reappraised." He argues that morale was a decisive factor in Allied victory there and offers both new evidence and a reassessment of the extant historiography to show that a combination of new leadership and better—and more—weaponry improved morale; the resulting heightened sense of duty brought about victory. He defines morale as the willingness of the soldier to carry out the wishes of his commanders, even in the face of likely injury or death. Fennell's main evidence comes from weekly censorship reports compiled by the Eighth Army which analyzed the sentiments of the soldiery as expressed in their correspondence.

Fennell argues that these censorship reports show unambiguously that the British forces suffered a serious morale crisis in the summer of 1942, and they are supported by quantifiable indicators including sickness and surrender rates. That the British had superior material strength over the Axis by the summer, on its own, not enough to win because morale was low. These reports demonstrated a clear correlation between Montgomery's policies of informing the men of the Army's overall objectives, their unit's expected contribution, their level of training and faith in equipment, their own individual role, and a boost in morale. Contrary to the accepted narrative that morale was not the key factor of victory in North Africa, Fennell argues that the Allies were able to win at El Alamein because morale was high and the men were willing to use their superior equipment to win the battle by breaking the enemy's will to carry on the fight.

Harold Winton applies a recent construct, the concept of Effects Based Operations (EBO), to the Battle of the Bulge in, "Airpower in the Battle of the Bulge: A Case for Effects-Based Operations?" EBO were first suggested by an American Air Force officer during the First Gulf War. The concept seeks to assess air power operations not for their success in hitting a specific target, but for longer term and broader effects—in this case study, the role of air power itself in the Battle of the Bulge. Winton applies EBO to a past battle for the dual purposes of helping establish the utility

(or not) of the concept as an analytical tool, and to use that analytical tool to offer a fresh analysis of a famous battle.

In attempting to assess the applicability of EBO in the Battle, Winton opts to view the air effort holistically. From the heavies rubbling cities, towns and junctions to gliders landing to resupply, he shows that air power was perhaps the key element in turning back the Germans. He cites German generals who attest to the destruction caused by the Allied air action, not so much for the direct damage it did to units or vehicles, but for the way it tied up large numbers of rear area personnel attempting to clear road and rail; for the massive traffic jams caused by bombs merely damaging key junctions—even when they failed to knock out a bridge, for example, they could slow traffic volume by 50 or 75%; and for the destruction caused to the Luftwaffe in trying to stop it.

Even if Allied victory was extremely likely once the German attack faltered in 1942, it was by no means inevitable. Neither was how fast and how effectively the Allies could win predetermined. The preceding articles demonstrate that the Allies were in many ways everything the Germans were not: they managed to innovate and apply their operational doctrine; establish an effective alliance, while also weathering political interference. The Axis system was incapable of these adaptations, nor was it intended to need to make them. Allied adaptability played a key role in hastening the end of the war, and undoubtedly saved lives in doing so.

As the war ended, bringing an end to the chaos proved difficult and time consuming. Of particular interest, and often overlooked by historians, was the memory of the war in places with ambiguous war experience. The erstwhile Nazi Allies in Italy had been knocked out of the Axis in 1943, "joining" the Allies in their battle against Hitler. Lost in the Italian story was the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Germans captured in Italy. Their experience was difficult, but given Italy's troubled role in the war, and Germany's clear guilt, few have bothered to write about these former Axis troops held by another former Axis land. Australia too, had a complicated Second World War experience. Heroes even in defeat at Gallipoli during the First World War, the Australians, conversely, seemed to lose even when they performed well in the Second World War. As such, Australian memory of the Second World War was slow to

embrace a military experience that consisted of defeat in Greece, siege in North Africa, and catastrophe in Singapore. Even when they won, as in the advance across New Guinea, they were limited to secondary importance. For a generation, the response in both Italy and Australia was to forget.

In his article, "A neglected story: German prisoners of war in Italy (1945-1947)," Federico Niglia brings the experience of German POWs in Italy to light. Up to now the historiography has had little to say about this matter. The victors have had little interest in the inconveniences of former Axis soldiers. Treatment of the topic has varied from completely taboo to plainly uncouth. In most countries, German prisoners were put to work repairing war damage, clearing waste, and generally doing the jobs that the locals did not care to do. This was convenient, as many of the able bodied men were either off fighting with the Allies, occupying Germany, or overseeing the prisoners. Italy was different. Dealing with a now ostensibly Allied former member of the Axis, Allied leaders had no blueprint to follow, instead improvising. In many Italian provinces they tried to put the Germans to work, but this only exacerbated the unemployment problems resulting from demobilized Italian soldiers looking for work in an economy shattered by war and 20 years of an incompetent, parasitic government.

Niglia's article makes a close examination of the effect these German soldiers had on Italian society. He shows that in most cases the Allies were very receptive to Italian complaints about the use of German labour; sometimes they left the Germans idle, and in other cases found loopholes in the Geneva Convention to put them to work, for instance, clearing mines. However, in places where German prisoners were put to work, the Italians were provoked to organize themselves and riot. The use of German prisoners to rebuild Italy was equally problematic for the Italian government. As a former belligerent on the losing side, Italian prisoners were being held in Russia, and if they allowed Germans to be used for labour, the same could be done to Italian prisoners. Yet, Italy was also being occupied, and needed to do as the Allies wished. Ultimately, while the Allies and parts of the Italian government sought to use German labour, it proved to be more trouble than it was worth in almost every case (save for minesweeping), and all but the most recalcitrant fascists were sent home early.

Despite Australia's worst fears of Japanese invasion in 1942, the country not only survived the war intact, but had grown up. From a nation that had not signed the Statute of Westminster in 1939, Australia had grown into a country with an

independent foreign policy pursuing its national interests. Despite this dramatic coming of age, Australia's memory of war, and epicentre of its national identity, has remained centred on Gallipoli in 1915. Joan Beaumont, in her article, "The second war, in every sense: Australian memory and the Second World War," argues that the subordinate place of the Second World War in Australian national consciousness is linked directly to the Anzac legend of the First World War, where, despite fighting a losing battle—or perhaps because of it—Australian national identity was forged. The relegation of Australia's Second World experience to a distant second place in popular memory was largely attributable to the nature of Australia's war fighting. Defeats and transfers in North Africa were followed by collapse in Singapore. It was only natural that many people would prefer to remember the gallantry displayed at the nation's "founding" moment on the shores of Gallipoli. Gradually, though, with the passage of time—and, sadly, of the veterans themselves—popular consciousness embraced the Second World War. Of particular note was the way in which the captivity of Australian POWs emerged as a major source of interest. Thousands of Australians trekked to steamy jungles to visit, and even to walk in the steps of their relatives and countrymen. Australian memory of the Second World War thus evolved to accept and even embrace these long suffering POWS as a centrepiece of popular memory.

The articles contained here offer many new insights into diverse topics of the Second World War. They explore all levels of the war, from grand strategy to troops at the sharp end, and from heavily armed soldiers to civilian women and children. Traditional assumptions about such matters as Arthur "Bomber" Harris' bloodlust, the causes of Italian ineptitude, the nature of *Blitzkrieg,* and where and when morale changed are all explored—and sometimes debunked—in detail. We hope that these articles, when taken as a whole, will offer refreshing new perspectives on the war. As they show, our societies shape how we learn from the experiences of battle, whether we can adapt, and how we cope with setbacks. Memory too, is shaped by the happiness or tragedy of experience. As we saw in the final two papers, it can take time to restore and maintain the full experience of the war in public memory. It is important that we work to do so, lest we forget.