

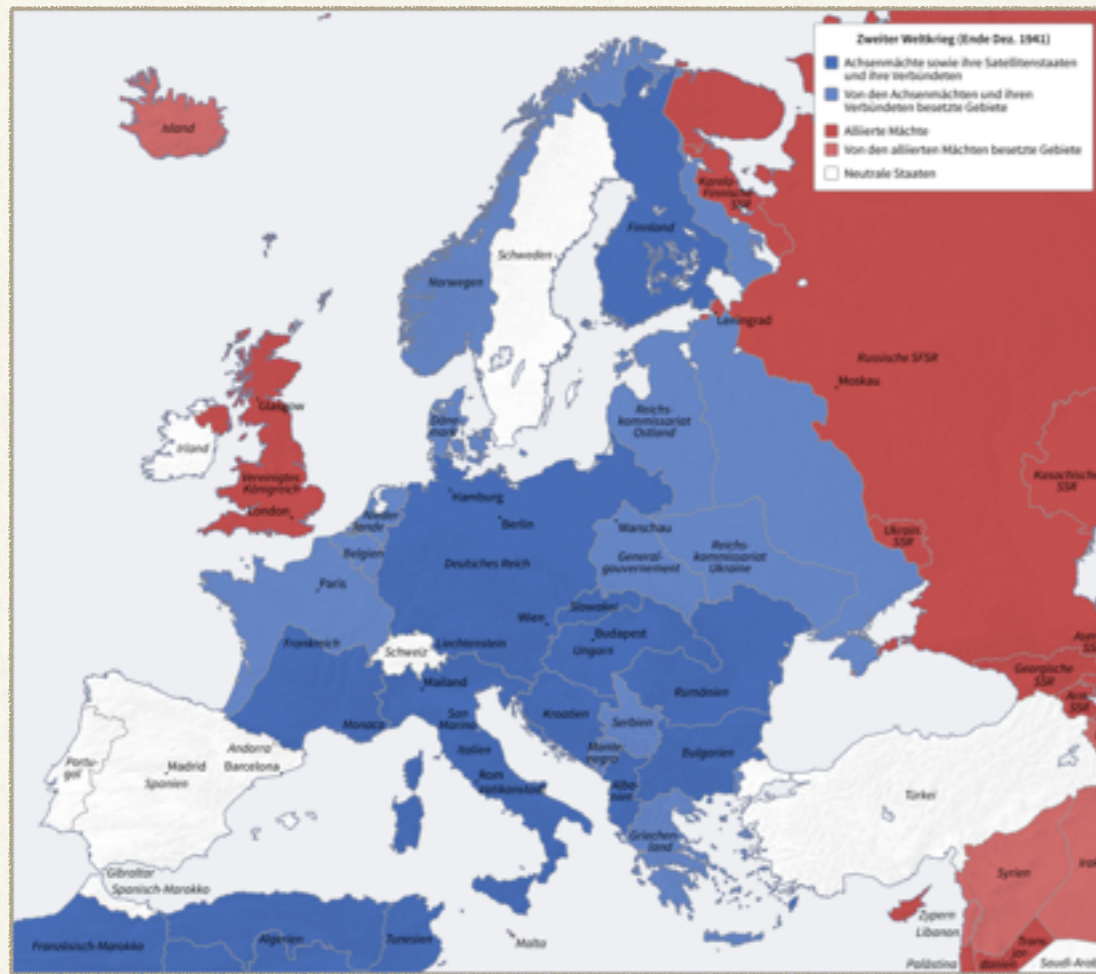
Chapter 1

NOVEMBER 1941

The Second World War is in its twenty-sixth month. In the first year of the conflict, Germany inflicted catastrophic defeats on two of its three most powerful enemies (Poland and France) and drove the forces of the third (the British Empire) off of the continent of Europe. In the summer of the second year of the war, Germany acquired two new enemies, the Soviet Union and the United States, each with a potential war-making capacity far greater than that of the British Empire. Thus, while the German armed forces continue to achieve considerable success on many fronts, the days of easy victories are over.



The War in Europe



November 1941

Areas in red are under the control of the enemies of Germany, particularly the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the British Empire.

Areas in dark blue are sovereign territory of Germany, its allies, and co-belligerents. Areas in light blue are occupied by forces of those powers.

Areas in white belong to neutral countries.

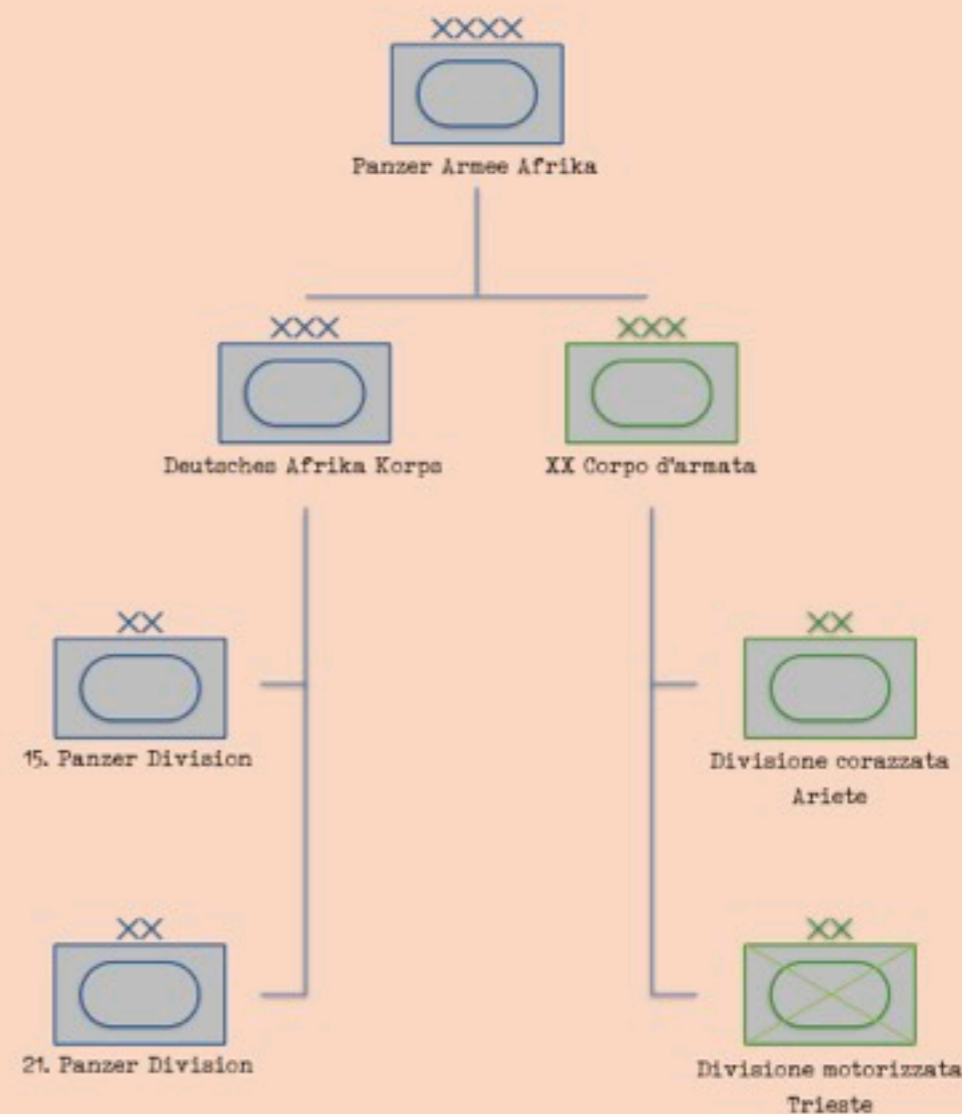
At present, the great event on the continent of Europe is the land war between Germany, its allies, and its co-belligerents, on the one hand, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on the other. (Germany's allies are Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, and Slovakia. Its co-belligerents are Finland and France.)

This great conflict began, on 22 June 1941, when the armed forces of Germany and its allies invaded territory occupied by Soviet forces and, soon thereafter, entered the sovereign territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. (At the same time, Finland sent its forces into the territory that had been lost to the Soviet Union in March of 1940.) Since then, Germany and its coalition partners have inflicted a series of devastating defeats upon Soviet armies, liberated millions of people from Soviet tyranny, and occupied a great deal of Soviet territory. Notwithstanding this great success, Soviet government remains in control of both its capital (Moscow) and the "Birthplace of the Revolution" (Leningrad.)

Chapter 2

THE AFRICA CORPS

The German Africa Corps (*Deutsches Afrika Korps*) is one of the two component armored corps of Armored Army Africa (*Panzer Armee Afrika*). The other is XX. Corps (*XXCorpo d'armata*) of the Italian Army. Each of these armored corps is a binary formation, with two component armored divisions. In the case of the Africa Corps, these are the 15th and 21st Armored Divisions. In the case of XX. Corps, these are the *Ariete* armored division and the *Trieste* motorized infantry division. In addition to its two armored corps, the German Africa Corps often exercises operational control over a number of additional units and formations of the German and Italian armies in North Africa.



**Mechanized Formations of
Armored Army Africa
Fall 1941**

SECTION 4



Organizational Activities

During June [of 1941], the *5th Light Division* had been re-named *21st Panzer Division*. During July [of the same year], the *15th Panzer Division*, which had been responsible for the Sollum front was relieved by the *21st Panzer Division*. The *15th Panzer Division* moved its headquarters to Bardia, the bulk of its troops were sent into a rest area near the front, west and south of Bardia, which would enable them to take immediate action in case of an enemy attack.

The *21st Panzer Division*, in charge of the Sollum front until the beginning of September, had the bulk of its troops assembled behind the western wing of the position, because in the meantime the troops of the Italian *Infantry Division Savona* had arrived and taken up positions between Sidi Omar and the Halfaya Pass.

At the beginning of September, the *Infantry Division Savona* took charge of the Sollum front and also of the German troops in the position. The two German *Panzer* divisions were moved into rest areas at the coast: the *21st Panzer Division* to Marsa Luch, and the *15th Panzer Division* to Marsa Belafarid.

As these areas were at the coast, the climactic conditions were more favorable for the troops than those in the desert high plateau to the south. Thus the German troops were given an opportunity for rest and replenishment, though on a limited scale.

In addition, *Panzergruppe Afrika* received further German troops in the course of the summer, which however were not meant for mobile operations but were to take part in the attack on Tobruk. Furthermore, five oasis companies with one battalion headquarters were received by *Panzergruppe Afrika* to operate on the Sollum front with the Italian troops of that sector.

The following troops were earmarked for the attack on Tobruk: the *Afrika Regiment* comprising three battalions, most of the rank and file being former *legionnaires* of the French Foreign Legion, and two more weak infantry regiments. All these units were given a temporary organization and placed under the command of *Division z.b.V. Afrika*. These units had been shipped to the North African theatre partly by air, partly on board fast warships, whilst their vehicles and heavy weapons were shipped by ordinary convoys and were taking a long time to arrive. For this reason, the troops were not fully

operational until late in the autumn. They relieved [the battlegroup formed around] Rifle Regiment 115 [*Schützen Regiment 115*] (three motorized infantry battalions and one artillery battalion, all from *15. Panzer Division*) on the south-west front of Tobruk. The bulk of these units were assembled behind the east front of Tobruk.

Panzergruppe Afrika

Simultaneously with the above-mentioned changes a reshuffle took place in the German command in North Africa. During June the staff of the German liaison officer attached to the Italian Commander-in-Chief in North Africa had been established in Germany. During July, this staff was reformed into the staff of *Panzergruppe Afrika*. [A *Panzergruppe* was a formation that, while larger than a corps, was smaller than a full-sized field army.] It took *Comando Supremo* until the end of July to approve of its employment in North Africa.

On 15 June, 1941, this new staff took over the command of *Afrika Korps*, including army troops and also including Italian *X. and XXI. Corps*. For the time being, the *Panzergruppe* established its battle headquarters at Beda-Littoria and soon afterwards in Ain el Gazala. [Both of these places are located on the coast of Libya.] An advance battle headquarters was established at Gambut between Bardia and Tobruk.

General Rommel assumed that the first aim of the British offensive which was supposed to be imminent could be the relief of Tobruk. Over and above that aim the British High Command would try to destroy the German-Italian troops in Libya. Even General Rommel watched with grave concern the supply position which was already precarious. In the opinion of the operations officer (Ia) of the *Panzergruppe* [Colonel Alfred Gause], Rommel did not, at that time, fully appreciate the limitations which the convoy situation imposed on the supply question. As was natural, he looked upon this problem more from the viewpoint of the person who makes the demands, and he believed that the possibilities of definite improvement were far from being exhausted.

It was General Rommel's intention to take Tobruk during September and to have all forces at his disposal to ward off the British large scale offensive which was bound to come.

For the execution of his tasks he was anxious to be given command over all Italian forces in Marmarica, including the Italian *Motorized Corps*. However, it proved impossible to achieve this end and to get the Italian *Motorized Corps* under Rommel's command before the British offensive was launched in autumn. Since General Bastico did not wish to lose his influence on operations and desired to maintain it by keeping the Italian *Motorized Corps* as a reserve in his own hands - an attitude which, after all, was quite natural.