

# Selected Documents on the Life and Campaigns of Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel

from the private research collection of David  
Irving

Contents of the microfilm collection

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SELECTED DOCUMENTS ON THE LIFE AND CAMPAIGNS OF  
FIELD-MARSHAL ERWIN ROMMEL

Reel Contents

A publication of many important and hitherto unavailable documents relating to the life and campaigns of Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel. The material, mostly in German, was arranged and selected for filming by David Irving from his own private research collection of documents, letters, war diaries, newspaper and magazine articles as well as interview notes and other items which he gathered together for a published biography on Rommel entitled "The Trail of the Fox".

Reel 1

- 1 File AL.451 entitled "Top Secret". Personal File of Field Marshal Rommel and copy of his Wehrpass. The contents are dated from 1910 to 1944 covering his entire military career.
- 2 Rommel's Personalakte, 1929-1942.
- 3 Romel's own Gefechtsbericht vom 9.11.1917, relating to the capture of Longarone. With sketches.
- 4 Battle Reports of the Konigl.Wurttemberg. Gebirg-Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1917, relating the exploits of Rommel's troops in the Julian Alps.
- 5 Fourteen top-level Chefsachen, (Top Secret command-level messages, drafts, memoranda, letters etc.) dated between 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1943 and 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1944. Assembled by Rommel after that date with the evident intention of establishing that he was not to blame for the loss of France subsequent to the Allied Invasion of Normandy in June 1944.
- 6 Rommel documents on the Battle of France, mid-March 1944 to 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1944. These original documents include a handwritten and typed draft letter from Rommel to Hitler dated late March 1944, on the subject of the defence of France; a situation appreciation dated 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1944; Rommel's observations dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1944 explaining why the invasion succeeded, together with a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1944 sending the document to Kluge, the new C-in-Cwest; a signed copy of Rommel's observations dated 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1944 with a covering letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1944 sending the documents to Kluge and the original typed letter from Rommel to his wife on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1944 expressing his relief that the plot on Hitler's life had failed.
- 7 The private Diary of Wilfried Armbruster, who was Rommel's personal interpreter (German/Italian) covering the period 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1941 to 21<sup>st</sup> March, 1943.
- 8 Typed transcript of the above private diary of Wilfried Armbruster which was prepared by David Irving in 1976 and corrected by Signor Armbruster.
- 9 Draft transcripts of parts of the diary kept by Luftwaffe General Otto Hoffman von Waldau, who was Fliegerfuhrer Afrika 1941/1942, then commander of a unit in Crete. His diary is very illegible, blue carbon copy of a pencil diary, and can be seen on microfilm DJ 15A, also published by Microform Academic Publishers. David Irving continued the transcribing begun by others in the 1950's (Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr), and rendered useful parts of the 1942/1943 diaries. These fragments are the periods 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1939 to 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1940

(transcribed by von Waladau's widow) and 26<sup>th</sup> February, 1942 to 18<sup>th</sup> December, 1942 (transcribed by David Irving).

- 10 Transcript diary of Generalleutnant Otto Hoffmann von Waldau as Fliegerfuhrer Afrika during the desert war period 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1942 to 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1942. Also on this film are the diary of a British Officer captured at Bir Hacheim for the period 30<sup>th</sup> May to 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1942 and Waldau's assessment of the events of 1940, written at the end of that year.

### Reel 2

- 1 Complete and original war diary of Rommel's headquarters, Heeresgruppe B, during the first two weeks of the Allied Invasion of Normandy, 1<sup>st</sup> June to 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1944.
- 2 Copy of the typed transcript prepared by Vizeadmiral Friedrich Ruge of his shorthand diary (Gabelsberger system) dated 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1943 to 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1944. Ruge was Rommel's Naval aide in 1944.
- 3 Diary of a British army captain, Alastair Bannerman, 28<sup>th</sup> May to 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1944, on which day he was captured by the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division at Caen. The diary is translated into German.
- 4 Complete copy of the daily telephone notes in German typescript, maintained by the G-2 Intelligence Officer attached to Rundstedt's staff as in C-C West (OB West) in Paris. This officer, Oberst I.G. Wilhelm Meyer-Detring, evidently wrote detailed notes on all his telephone conversations. They provide vital information on the course of the fighting in Normandy, resistance operations, political events, police and ASS operations, Intelligence and counter-Intelligence. They commence at 1.40 a.m., 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1944, and are complete for June 1944 and early July. Only part of the July volume is included in this copy and the rest can be seen at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, file RH 19-IV/142.
- 5 Fragmentary transcript of the personal diary kept by Hauptmann der Reserve Hermann Kaiser, January to August, 1943. Also included is a two-page analysis by Heinz-Gunther Guderian Jr of some of the code-names and blanks left in the diary.
- 6 An American translation of excerpts from the diary of the Italian chief of the supreme command, Comando Supremo Marshal Ugo Cavallero, relating to the fighting in North Africa between 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1942 and 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1943.

### Reel 3

- 1 Illustrated propaganda book by Rommel's family following the official line that he had died of his "injuries received". Issued 1944/45, on instructions.
- 2 Selected documents relating to the issue of the non-Alarming of the Invasion Defences in Normandy on the night of 5/6<sup>th</sup> June, 1944. Consists primarily of correspondence with Rommel's the G-2 officer (intelligence, Ic) Colonel Anton Staubwasser and officers on the staff of Rundstedt in Paris (OB West).
- 3 British army documents relating to a July 1944 plan to assassinate Rommel. A small SAS (Special Air-Services) team was parachuted into France for the purpose, but they were already too late, as Rommel had been injured by air strafing on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1944.

- 4 A small number of papers and statements from the former army Major Anton Ehrnsperger, the officer who accompanied the two general Burgdorf and Maisel to Rommel on the day Rommel was obliged to commit suicide, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1944.
- 5 Documents and working papers related to the topic of how Rommel was misled by German Intelligence officers on the Allied reserves still awaiting shipment to Normandy, June-July, 1944. This badly hampered his strategic planning as he was forced to anticipate a second landing near Calais. Basically, the Allies fed false, inflated figures to Germany and Fremde Heere West multiplied these figures for their own reasons; Rommel's own staff also added on to the FHW figure, for no explicable reason.
- 6 Professor Dr. Kurt Hesse's essay written in 1945 on the personality and role in history, of Rommel. German text, 26 pp. Hesse was a colleague of Rommel's in the Potsdam Military academy in 1938 and met him again in France in 1940 and 1944.
- 7 Six page letter by General der Panzer Truppen Heinrich Eberbach (retired) dated 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1967 on the subject of the personal knowledge of General Heinz Guderian.
- 8 Text of a Lecture by Lieutenant-General Johannes Streich (retired) entitled, Erinnerungen en Afrika (memories of Afrika). In 1941 Streich was the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Division in North Africa under Rommel's command.
- 9 Captured British map showing the Libyan and Egyptian desert from Sollum (Salum) to Tobruk. This was in the possession of Rommel's staff officer, Baron Constantin von Neurath.
- 10 Copies of David Irving's notes on his interviews of members of Rommel's family, friends and staff, which were conducted between 1975-1977.
- 11 A series of manuscripts, approx 300pp, by people associated with Rommel. They are nearly all from the Foreign Military Studies (MS) series of the US army and include manuscripts by Vizeadmiral Friedrich Ruge, Alfred Gause, Geyr von Schweppenburg, Prof. (Oberst i.G.) Kurt Hesse, Oberst Bodo Zimmermann, Walkter Blumentritt, Field-Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, Walter Walimont, Rudolf von Gersdorff, Heinz Guderian Sr., Max Pemsel, H. von Buttlar, and others.
- 12 Paper relating to the controversial non-commitment of the 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division to the fighting at the Normandy bridgehead between 6<sup>th</sup> June and 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1944. Statements relating to a conspiracy theory, and papers relating to the division's movements are by Schwerin (Division Commander), Heinz-Gunther Guderian, Memminger (Division Historian), speidel and Geyr von Scweppenburg and members of Scwerin's personal staff at the time, Holtermann and Lademann. Also included are manuscripts by General Voigtsberger.

#### Reel 4

- 1 Personal papers from the files of Generaloberst Hans Salmuth who commanded armies in the campaigns against Russia and in France. These are mostly in the form of diaries written in captivity after the war, recalling episodes from the war years. Much of the important material relating to the 1944 campaign has been transcribed into typescript by David Irving and this is also included.

- 2 Documents relating to the involvement of Lieutenant-General Hans Speidel in the conspiracy against Hitler and in the attempts to win Rommel for that conspiracy. Speidel was Rommel's Chief of Staff, 1944.
- 3 Statements, papers, studies, drafts and final typescripts by generalleutnant a.D. Hans Speidel, Rommel's Chief of Staff from March to September, 1944 and one of the leading Paris figures in the plot against Hitler's life.
- 4 Selected papers relating to the role of Lieutenant-Colonel Caesar von Hofacker who tried in 1944 to win Rommel for the anti-Hitler conspiracy, then linked him with it under interrogation by the Gestapo, before he was hanged in 1944.
- 5 Approx 200pp of items of miscellaneous interest, including newspaper and magazine articles, statistics on the Africa campaign (supplies and casualties), interrogations not conducted by David Irving, a Shaef Report on "Operations in support of Neptune", (Cover & Deception) June 1944, studies by Bayerlein, Westphal, Gause Weichold, Heggenreiner, Manfred Rommel, Warlimont and the *London Gazette* Supplement dated 4th September, 1946 on the D-Day landings in 1944.

#### Reel 5

Approx 1300pp of copies of documents chronicling Rommel's military career from 1917 to the end of 1941. These documents are from war diaries, letters, telegram files, German Army High Command (OKW) files, Fuhrer's HQ files, First World War histories and other sources.

#### Reels 6, 7 and 8

These reels contain some 2500pp of copies of documents in approximate chronological sequence, chronicling Rommel's military career from early 1942 to the date of his death, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1944.

#### Reel 9

- 1 Comprehensive listing of the known diaries of Rommel which were kept either by him or for him from early 1941 to June 1944. Copies or typed transcripts of these diaries are contained on reels 9, 10 and 11 of this publication.
- 2 A working list of names of officers, ships, desert places, maps, etc., compiled from various sources used in the deciphering and transcribing of the Rommel diaries in shorthand for the period 1941-1943.
- 3 Photocopies of handwritten notes by a member of Rommel's staff in Africa, written during the Summer of 1941. These are hastily jotted down notes on conferences between German and Italian generals.
- 4 Draft transcripts by David Irving of the handwritten notes in item 3 above. The page numbering of the transcript corresponds exactly to the page number of the original handwritten notes.
- 5 The Rommel diary for 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1941 and 19<sup>th</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1942 as dictated daily to his secretary, Feldwebel Albert Bottcher, either by Rommel himself, by his adjutant or Ordonnanzoffizier Lieutenant Alfred-Ingemar

Berndt, or by other unknown staff members. Entitled sometimes "Tagesberichte", daily reports, they describe Rommel's movements and decisions on an hour-by-hour basis.

- 6 This is a typed line by line transcript of item 5 above and the original pagination is retained for comparison purposes. The final transcript was partially checked by former Lieutenant Hans-Otto Behrendt of Rommel's staff. Some place and person names are transcribed phonetically.

#### Reel 10

- 1 Two loose-leaf notebooks filled with the shorthand record of Rommel's diary for the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 24<sup>th</sup> October to 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1942 and for the 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1942 to 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1943.
- 2 A typed transcript of item 1 above. The pagination numbering is the same as the pagination of the original shorthand pages and the line by line layout has been copied as far as practicable. As in item 6 on reel 9 the pages were checked by Lieutenant Hans-Otto Behrendt of Rommel's staff and some place names have been transcribed phonetically.

#### Reel 11

- 1 Part of a further shorthand notebook kept by Rommel's secretary, Feldwebel Albert Bottcher. A trial sample transcript revealed that these 38 pages were his dictation for reports on important conferences attended by Rommel on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1942 with Bastico, and on 28<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1942 with Hitler and Goring. Almost identical transcripts of these notes existed in the appendices of the war diary of Panzer Armee Afrika and these transcripts are included in item 2 of this reel.
- 2 A selection of important military conferences attended by Rommel with Hitler and Mussolini from 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1942 to 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1943. These records are either from the Rommel family papers or the war diary of the Panzer Armee Afrika or the Italian Comando Supremo files.
- 3 Shorthand dictation taken by Rommel's secretary, Feldwebel Albert Bottcher, consisting primarily of letters dictated by Rommel to his family, friends and fans from about November 1942 to February 1943. Also included are letters from Berndt to Lucie Rommel relating to Rommel's alleged depression.
- 4 A typed transcript of the letters in item 3 above. The pagination is identical to the pagination of the original.
- 5 Rommel Diary, 9<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1943. This is a typed transcript by David Irving.
- 6 Rommel Diary, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1943 to 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1944.
- 7 Rommel Diary, April-May 1944, kept by his Ordonnanz Offizier, Hauptmann Hellmuth Lang.