

Summary of African Campaign, from El Alamein to Cape Bon

October 23, 1942 : Terrific artillery barrage signalled the opening of the Battle of El Alamein. After ten days, the defeated Axis forces speedily withdrew westwards.

November 13 : Tobruk once again in Allied hands.

November 21 : Benghazi officially occupied. Forward elements entered the town on the previous evening.

November 27 : British troops in contact with the enemy between Agedabia and el Agheila.

December 14 : Axis troops resume retreat westwards.

December 25 : Sirte was occupied.

January 23, 1943 : Tripoli fell. While the Union Jack was being hoisted over Tripoli, Mr. Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt were meeting in Casablanca, 1,500 miles to the west.

January 24 : Eighth Army again moving westward.

February 1 : Zuara, last port in Tripolitania, fell. Mr. Churchill, speaking to the Press in Cairo, said : "Rommel, the fugitive from Egypt and Libya, is endeavouring to present himself as the deliverer of Tunis. We shall see how that new character fits him."

March 1 : Both sides getting into position on the Mareth Line. Rommel diversion had been repulsed with heavy losses. The following days saw the Allied blitz increasing in intensity.

March 6 : Rommel attacked in a vain attempt to delay the Eighth Army.

March 21 : Battle of the Mareth Line began. "The Axis is caught like a rat in a trap," General Montgomery told his troops. For four days the Mareth Battle raged. New Zealanders, the shock troops of the Eighth Army, led by their V.C. Commander, General Freyburg, outflanked the line. This decided the battle.

March 27 : Early in the morning American infantry launched an attack in the direction of Fondouk, making excellent progress.

March 28 : Fondouk captured by American forces. French and American troops converging on Kairouan.

March 31 : Eighth Army rushing past Gabes with the Afrika Korps in flight. Eight thousand prisoners were taken. Navy joined by shelling Sfax and the coastal road.

April 1 : Eighth Army's artillery pounding Axis troops in the Wadi Akarit.

April 6 : Hole punched through the Axis Wadi Akarit defences and the Germans and Italians on the run back to Sfax.

April 8 : American troops and British Eighth Army link up.

April 11 : Eighth Army beyond Sfax and heading for Sousse.

April 12 : Sousse fell. Simultaneously, Kairouan, the holy Moslem city of Tunisia, was captured by the Allied Army in the west.

April 14 : General Montgomery up against the main Axis defences on a 35 mile front at Enfidaville. Rommel left Tunisia and Von Arnim took over.

April 19 : U.S.A.A.F. fighter pilots deliver crushing air defeat to Axis, shooting down 75 enemy planes over Straits of Sicily.

April 21 : Initiative switched from the Eighth Army to the First Army. The Axis, with backs to the sea, launched counter-attack after counter-attack against every Allied advance. German armor exhausted itself and lost many tanks.

April 28 : "Victory is now certain," said General Alexander in an Order-of-the-Day to the French troops under his command.

May 1 : Allies smash their way through until the second line of Axis defences on the whole of the Tunisian front has been reached.

May 3 : Mateur fell to the Americans.

May 5 : Closing in on Bizerta, Americans near Ferryville.

May 6 : Final onslaught began.

May 7 : Bizerta and Ferryville captured by the American 2nd Corps, while at the same time Tunis falls to the British.

May 8 : Heaviest fighter plane assault of war by Allied Air Forces made on enemy troops fleeing along road to Cape Bon.

May 9 : 400 bombers raid Palermo, 50,000 prisoners taken. End of "organized resistance."

May 10 : Non-stop strafing of Axis small ships attempting to evacuate from Cape Bon.

May 12 : All Axis resistance in Tunisia has now ended. General Von Arnim captured in Cap Bon. 175,000 Axis prisoners taken in Tunisia.