

ROMMEL - THE MAN WE HAVE TO BEAT

Favourite of Hitler and a political soldier, his task is to turn back the Allied tide of invasion.

By WILLI FRISCHAUER, former Austrian journalist and diplomat, London, in the *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1944.

FIELD MARSHAL General Erwin Eugen Johannes Rommel used to be called "Rommel Africanus" by the German press and German people. Although associations with Africa have now no pleasant ring in German ears, Nazi propaganda has been careful to preserve the fame and reputation of the man whom Hitler has chosen to perfect the defences of Europe against invasion.

Rommel has remained the "glamour boy" of the Wehrmacht, and defeat in Africa has hardly affected his personal popularity among his own people and the flattering judgment which his leading enemies in Britain and America have pronounced on his abilities. Defeat, indeed, has qualified him for his present position of Inspector-General for the defence of Europe. This appointment, typical of German Army practice, follows the precedents

of General Heinz Guderian, Inspector-General for the Panzers, and Luftwaffe General Galland, Inspector-General for Fighters.

The German General Staff argues that the earlier German successes against the Allies in France, Norway, Greece, and Crete were achieved against a half-baked and inadequately equipped British Army, the commanders of which had little experience of modern warfare, of the integration of air and land power, of tank technique and the general idea of total war. Rommel, in defeat, has learned more about the final qualities of the Allied armies at the peak of their power than all his victorious fellow-

Generals together. Prime Minister Churchill paid him high tribute, and General Dwight D. Eisenhower has said that, though he is no superman, he is a great general.

That "great general" has now completed his tour of inspection through Italy and the Balkans, through Norway, Denmark, Holland, France, and Belgium. He has toured all the coastal areas

which could feasibly become objectives of a "second front" and has communicated his own experiences and his views on Anglo-American strategy to the local commanders — Kurt Gerd von Runstedt, Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, and Hermann von Hannecken. His new job makes the defence of Europe virtually his sole responsibility. The qualifications which he brings to it are not as great as Hitler would want the world to believe. But he is no mean

opponent.

When I met Rommel in Vienna way back in 1935 there was little to distinguish him from the typically Prussian officers in whose company he travelled. He was young for his rank, a little livelier and noisier, perhaps, than his proverbially silent and tight-lipped seniors. There was already the appearance of the cocksure egotist who likes to stick his chin out and to throw his head back like a colt which has just won the Derby. But as soon as he put on his monocle he just looked the picture of the scholarly soldier which is the pattern of most members of the German officer class.

It turned out later that he was on his

