

way to Cairo, which he visited again in 1937 in obvious preparation for his future tasks. His nonchalant, unconventional manner, his verbosity, his loud but cynical laughter, cleverly disguised his deeper qualities—the effect on his personality of years of study and of a turbulent career.

Rommel is a political soldier who has battled his way up with the help of party intrigues and personal-power politics. He could never boast the crimson stripe down his trouser legs which only staff officers—members of the famous German General Staff Corps—are entitled to wear. He cannot attach to his name the aristocratic “von,” which was the most important pass for entry into the higher ranks of the German Army. His family had no military tradition to pave his way to promotion.

Born in November, 1891, in Heidenheim, in Wuerttemberg, his character still shows the more flexible traits of the south German temperament. But his father belonged to the German bourgeoisie, which is often more militaristic than the professional soldiers. He handed down to young Rommel some of the mathematical and technical talents which made the father an outstanding lecturer at Munich University.

Rommel joined the ranks of the German Army in 1910. When the first World War broke out he was a lieutenant. This is what he wrote about his war service, using the egocentric phraseology which still characterizes him: “I was privileged to serve, with a short interruption through injury, as platoon commander in northern France and Belgium during the war of movement and later in the Argonne. I was further privileged to belong to an elite corps of the German Army, the Wuerttemberg Alpine Regiment, the achievements of which are particularly great. I commanded mixed units up to the strength of sixteen companies in the extreme front line . . .”

Although Rommel received the order *Pour le Merite*, the highest decoration in the last war, his achievements turned into bitter memory when he returned home after the defeat of Germany. There was no job for him, no place in the

corps of 4,000 crack officers who had been taken over by the new German Republican Army and who remain the backbone of the Wehrmacht to this day. He studied technology in Heidenheim and Munich, where, at the time, Adolf Hitler and his small Nazi party catered to ex-army officers and students who, like Rommel, were deeply disappointed and wanted rearmament as a means to new army jobs, to promotion, revenge, war, and glory. He soon became a friend of Hitler and a member of the party. Rommel, in fact, is one of the few German Generals who ever raised his hand in a Nazi salute.



Giving military training to the S.A. (Storm Troops) and later to the S.S. (Elite Guards) was his early party service. Then a niche was found for him in the German police force, on which the regular army relied as a reservoir for future officers. Even before Hitler came into power Rommel's ambition was realized and he became instructor for infantry tactics in German military academies.

Few Germans outside the army as yet knew his name. But thousands of young German officer-aspirants had faced in him an exacting teacher, a harsh disciplinarian, an ironical instructor, and an enthusiastic apostle of Nazi principles. They called his book “The Rommel.” He has taught them to regard that book as their Bible.

Captured German newsreels prove that he has retained most of his earlier qualities. They show him boastfully addressing an overawed crowd of German and neutral reporters after his African success. They reveal the warm look in Hitler's eye when he greets Rommel, who has often been called “the friend of the Fuehrer.”

It was at the outbreak of the war that the seal was put on this friendship. Rommel was commander of a mixed S.S. and Death's Head division which guarded Hitler's field headquarters in Poland. Together with Secretary Brueckner