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Robert M. Citino, *Death of the Wehrmacht: The German Campaigns of 1942*. Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2007. Pp. xiv, 431. ISBN 978-0-7006-1531-5.

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In his latest book concerning the German army, Robert Citino gives a concise picture of the Second World War in Eastern Europe and North Africa. As in his previous work, especially *The German Way of War*,¹ the focus is on the continuity of the way the Germans fought. In particular, Citino argues that, throughout time, the Germans and their predecessors the Prussians had a very specific way of fighting wars, for good or ill. The key word here, in German of course, is *Bewegungskrieg*, or a “war of movement” (Citino’s translation). To show that this was the driving doctrine behind all the German Army’s way of fighting, the book covers to the end of the Stalingrad and El Alamein campaigns.

Citino is ideally suited for this task, having written several authoritative books on German operational history. His seventy-three small-font pages of endnotes show that he has done his homework. Further, he never gets lost in seeing the Germans, despite their dizzying successes in 1941 and early 1942, as more than they were: he clearheadedly analyzes both successes and failings.

Death of the Wehrmacht is broken into an introduction and nine chapters. Besides stating the book’s broader thesis, the introduction explains key German terminology. The first chapter takes the reader, at a relatively fast pace, from the beginning of the war, through operations against Yugoslavia and Greece, to the end of Operation Barbarossa. As Citino makes clear, “Barbarossa” was the name only for the opening phase of the Russian campaign, not the entire event. The rest of the discussion of Russia concentrates on 1942: chapter two on the bloody fighting in the Crimea and chapter three on the great *Kesselschlacht* at Kharkov. The fourth and sixth chapters deal with Erwin Rommel’s arrival in Africa and operations there. Chapters five and seven take the reader through the summer and fall movements of the Germans in Southern Russia. Finally come the campaigns of Stalingrad and El Alamein and a brief conclusion. This is truly an operational history and the narrative remains with the army commanders and events transpiring at their level. It is not a look at the soldiers’ war or the leadership of Hitler. The book is best suited to those with a solid knowledge of the Second World War, especially on the Eastern Front.

Having described the mundane details, the reviewer can say that he found the work very informative: parts of it will change the way he teaches German operations in his Second World War elective. Citino’s thesis that the Germans were always fighting this same type of war—*Bewegungskrieg*—from 1939 to the end of 1942, and that it had been part of their doctrinal notion for centuries is most compelling. As the author repeatedly points out, the Prussians, and later the Germans, in order to overcome their bad position in the “center,” and their manpower and supply disadvantages, always chose to attack. Unable or unwilling to master the strategic art of logistics, they instead brilliantly mastered the art of opera-

¹ *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence: U Pr of Kansas, 2005).

tions. This did not always pay off; as a matter of fact, historically, the German military had a love affair with a rather cruel mistress, as seen in defeats during the French Revolution, the Napoleonic era, World War I, and World War II. Citino's analysis of Alam Halfa in North Africa shows this:

Whichever number one chooses, the Wehrmacht went to school at Alam Halfa in a new Allied way of war. Here the traditional German operational pattern met the Grand Alliance for the first time: sound British battlefield management married to nearly unlimited American industrial production. Besides winning the battle of materiel, the Allies had also won a decisive victory in the war of intelligence (221).

Despite this, the Germans never fundamentally changed the way they engaged in war. The detailed review of operations in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa all prove Citino's thesis. The German High Command developed overall strategic objectives, often without sufficient forethought, and then turned loose the Army commanders to realize them. This was the standard mode of operating, with little or no real control from the top. However, this came to an end in the second half of 1942 (Operation Blue I-IV and El Alamein), as Hitler and his immediate staff started to micromanage the armies.

It is unfortunate that Citino did not have more time for it, and perhaps this will be the focus for another productive study, but the seven pages he devotes to Yugoslav and Greek operations are eerily reminiscent of the American operations in Iraq in 2003. The mass of force brought to bear against a politically divided and hopelessly outclassed enemy allowed for a thunderclap victory. However, the Germans ran through the large Yugoslav army so fast that much of it escaped destruction, fading into the mountains to fight as partisans. As Citino shows, *Bewegungskrieg*, when it came to finishing military operations, often left lots of loose ends:

There is one last aspect of the quick and almost painless victory in Yugoslavia that deserves mention, especially as it reflects on the German way of war. Despite the totality of victory, this was a campaign with an extremely problematic aftermath Nevertheless, there is something incomplete about a way of war that relies on the shock value of small, highly mobile forces and airpower, that stresses rapidity of victory over all, and that then has a difficult time putting the country it has conquered back together again (26-7).

In Yugoslavia the immediate redeployment of the army to the Soviet border meant the quickly swelling insurgency had to be left to the Italians to handle, which they did poorly.

A few quibbles: the first is the bugbear of all operational histories—maps. The book has several maps both for Africa and the USSR, but they are not adequate. Those unfamiliar with the events of the war and some of the geography will have serious trouble following the narrative. Granting that maps are expensive, another six or ten, ideally with better topographical markings, would have been ideal. There are also several minor typos and misuses.² Finally, it would have been interesting to learn how *Bewegungskrieg* fit into the

² E.g., in the following sentence about German observations of Kharkov, "He [Mackensen] analyzed it, if fact, in traditional German terms, attributing it to low morale and bravery of the German troops ..." (110), read "high" instead of "low."

Luftwaffe's notions of war, as it was so critical to operational success, but that may be asking too much.

Citino's latest work achieves its clearly stated goals on two levels. First, without getting lost in details, it takes the reader very carefully through the strictly operational realities of the European war to the end of 1942. Second, it demonstrates that the "new" German form of war was not new, but rather a continuation of a Prusso-German ideal dating back over two hundred years. The failure of *Bewegungskrieg* at Stalingrad and El Alamein spelled its demise as an article of German military faith.