

Patton Douglas

Missouri

It was the month of May in the year 1943. The Allies have just won North Africa, with the Axis powers sustaining 250,000 casualties in Tunisia alone. Debates rose up through the past few months regarding the liberation of Europe from third world fascist powers. It was decided to invade the island of Sicily instead of a large-scale channel-crossing to the northern faction of Nazi-occupied France. Since the Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome, Sicily was known to be a major route to mainland Italy. Controlling Sicily would be a major step into the campaign of liberation for third world controlled Europe.

In order to divert German troops, British Intelligence initiated a small-scale espionage code named Operation: Mincemeat. Using a suicide victim dressed as a Royal Marine, they sent him adrift towards the Sicilian shore with a briefcase attached to his wrist, which was filled with fake intelligence papers, stating a counterfeit plan to invade Sardinia and Corsica. In lieu of these events, Hitler moved all but two German divisions from Sicily to the aforementioned Mediterranean islands. With Operation: Mincemeat a success, the Allies moved forward with the amphibious assault on Sicily, which they code named Operation: Husky.

Weather played a key role in the invasion. Much like the future invasion of Normandy, a storm interfered with the paratroopers' landing and nearly derailed the assault. On July 10, 1943, Operation: Husky commenced just before sunrise, on the southern shore of the island. Over the course of three days, around 3,000 ships, 4,000 aircraft (including C-47 Dakotas, C-60 cargo planes, B-25 Mitchells, and CG-4 gliders), and 150,000 ground troops landed along the Sicilian shore, bringing along 600 of Lt. General George S. Patton's M4A4 Sherman tanks. General

Patton landed with the 7th Army at Gela, while British General Bernard Montgomery landed with the 8th army. Montgomery was ordered to advance east towards Messina, with Patton protecting his flank, while moving northwest to Palermo, where he would then move east to join Montgomery at Messina. Hitler still believed this was just a diversionary attack, and the main wave would land at Sardinia and Corsica. When he finally understood he was set up, it was too late to fight back. So, on August 17, 1943, when Patton and Montgomery closed in on the northeastern Port of Messina, they were surprised to find that Mussolini and Hitler had evacuated their troops across the Strait of Messina to mainland Italy.

On July 24, 1943, Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy, was arrested; Pietro Badoglio was then elected as the new prime minister. Badoglio then started secret negotiations for peace between Italy and the Allied forces. In 38 days, the Allied forces secured the first major step in the liberation of Sicily, mainland Italy, and soon, Nazi-occupied Europe.

Unfortunately, the Allies sustained 23,000 casualties. Among the killed, wounded, and missing, were 9,700 American troops, 2,400 Canadian troops, 11,000 British troops, and approximately 100 French troops. The Axis suffered 165,000 casualties, which was close to the amount lost in North Africa. Of those 165,000 casualties, 30,000 were killed or wounded in action, while 135,000 became prisoners of war. 30,000 of these men were German. The Germans, in their haste to evacuate, also left behind scores of tanks and armored vehicles, as well as hundreds of artillery pieces.

A lesson that can be learned from this engagement is: planning concisely. In the Allies' excitement to liberate Sicily, they had not planned for weather to affect their goals; but in all reality, their intentions were nearly derailed on account of high winds and little visibility. It then took them a few days to get a sure footing in the invasion against German and Italian troops on

Sicily. If the Allied superior officers had devised several contingency plans, they might have been able to seize an advantage earlier in the amphibious and aerial assault.

If Americans had not fought and died in this engagement, World War II might have dragged on even longer, as even a small difference in men can change the entire outcome of the battle. The Allies might not have been able to take Sicily, which was a major step in the liberation of Italy, later helping in liberating all of Europe. If the Allies had not taken Sicily, they might have had to cross the northern border of Italy, through the Pyrenees Alps, which might have ended with even greater repercussions and casualties, possibly losing the war. On top of that Italy might've still been run by a fascist regime and dictatorship in the present day.

We should be extremely grateful for the sacrifices that were made by all the Allied soldiers involved. Especially for those who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom.

## Bibliography

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