

Collier's

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THE BEGINNING OF VICTORY

Photographs for Collier's
by Robert Capa



An American big gun, carefully camouflaged, throws death and destruction into the Axis positions near El Guettar. The squatting soldier who is pictured at the left, with headphones, is in communication with the battery's observers. Incidentally, the man shown at the right lost his glove



This picture, showing the last ridge before El Guettar in the background, was taken during the early stages of the great tank battle which preceded capture of the position by American troops. When the fighting was in full swing, such points of vantage as that shown in the foreground, where a group of American soldiers await orders to move up to the front, were occupied by commanding officers and observation crews

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American soldiers here shown find shelter in a ravine from dive bombers and German artillery fire. They are scattered to minimize losses in case of a hit



Half a dozen soldiers of an American patrol crouch behind a ridge on the road to Maknassy while their commander scans the desert for sign of the enemy

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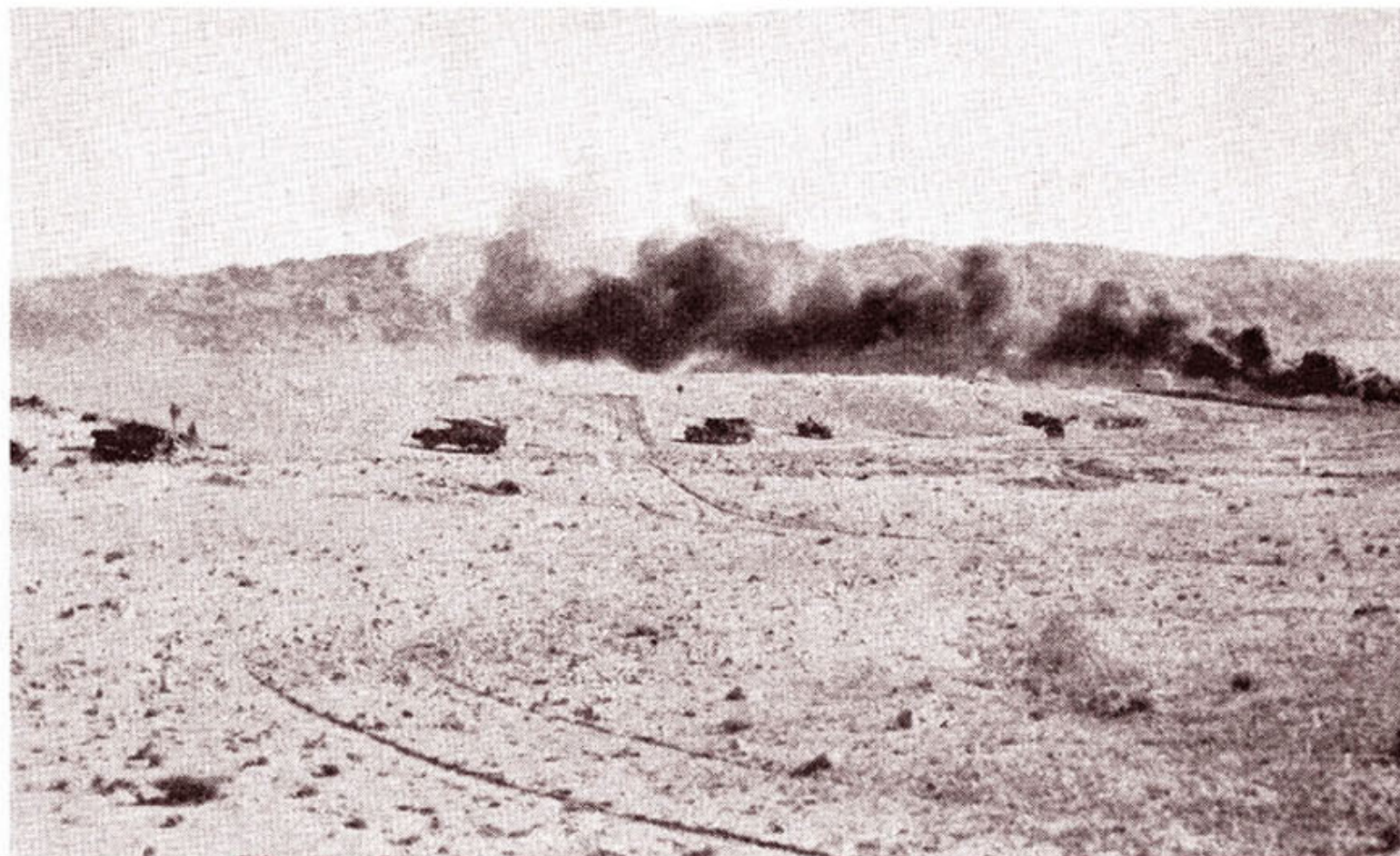


Discovering the screaming death dropped by Stukas, an American soldier moves calmly across the battlefield to his command post



Breakfast on action station. Pvt. John Rusniski of New York is enjoying his can of beans, but he gives most of attention to his job of watching the sky for early morning german and Italian raiders

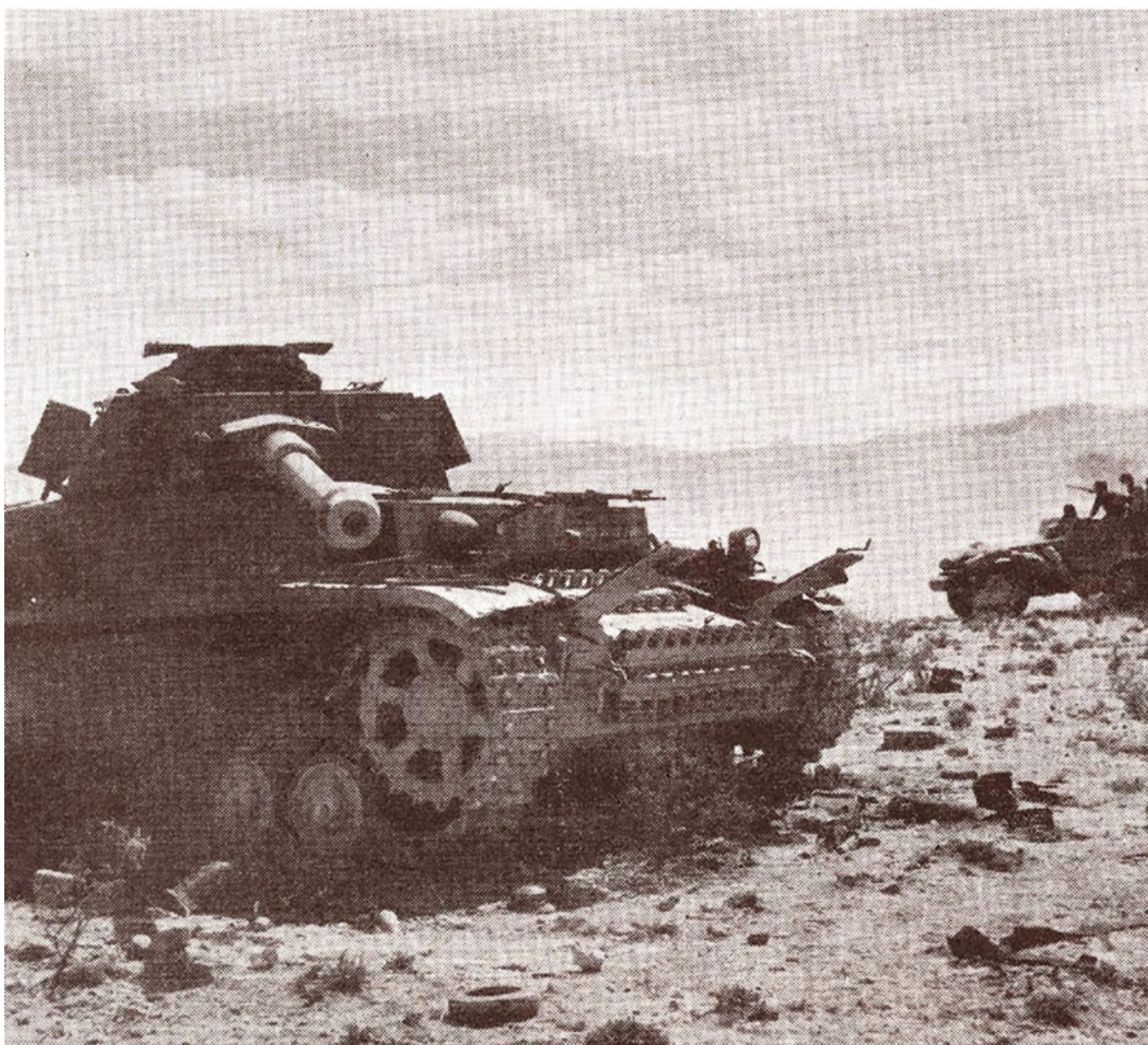
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The explosions appearing in the distance in this picture were caused by American shells. Italian prisoners described our artillery as "accurate and terrible"



The soldier pictured above is perched precariously atop a camouflaged American tank, shooting at German dive bombers and low-flying strafing planes



Past ruins of a tank, with a mounted 88-mm. gun hit by our fire, an American half-track loaded with soldiers moves up to the line

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Italian prisoners frequently had to crouch in shallow ravines when their own planes came over. The American soldier with the tommy gun hopes that the plane will fly low enough to give him a fair shot



Here is Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, who always turns up in the hottest spots, posing for Collier's photographer in an advanced infantry command post

An American gun crew, awaiting orders, kills time with a card game, while one man, with headphones, keeps in touch with the command post. The game they're playing wasn't identified (could be blackjack)



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In the midst of battle, stretcher bearers bring in the wounded. Below, Corporal Michael Petrangola, born in Philadelphia, Pa. of Italian parents, stops for a moment beside the grave of an Italian soldier



ALL these photographs of the American Army in action in Tunisia were taken by Robert Capa during the first three days of the fighting in the El Guettar, Sened and Maknassy sectors in the latter part of March. All are front-line pictures, and many were taken at considerable risk; on one of the three days, Mr. Capa had to seek shelter from German dive bombers thirteen times, and spent several hours crouched with his cameras in slit trenches and dugouts. "I got a

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lot of dirt in my lenses that day," he wrote, "and was very scared in my stomach."

The operations at El Guettar, Maknassy and Sened were carried out by the same American troops which had failed, about a month before, to check Rommel's armored forces at Faid Pass and Kasserine Gap. They marked the first important success of the Americans against the Germans and helped pave the way for the total defeat of the Axis armies and the capture of more than 200,000 prisoners and enormous quantities of material. Planned as a two-pronged drive through El Guettar and Sened, the actions began soon after the unopposed occupation by the Americans of the Tunisian town of Gafsa. At El Guettar, the Germans put up a stubborn fight, but broke after a tank battle which was one of the most spectacular encounters between armored forces in the North African campaign, and in which American equipment, marksmanship and tactics proved superior. The Italians defending Sened, however, offered little or no resistance; they fled in such haste as the Americans approached that our troops found plates of spaghetti and meat balls, still warm, on the tables in the officers' quarters. ★★★

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