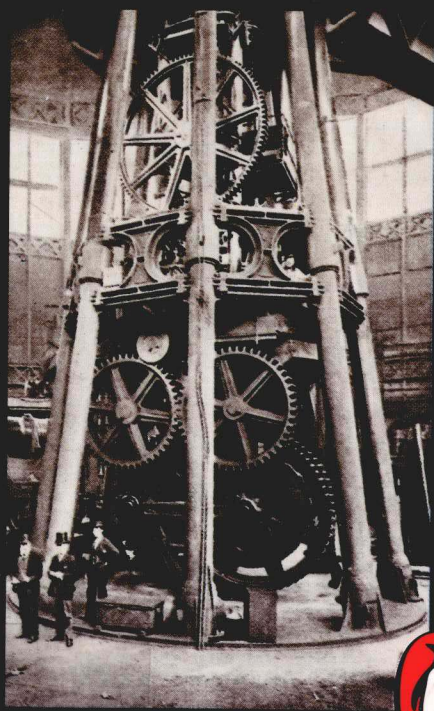


THE NEW PENGUIN

DICTIONARY OF MODERN HISTORY

1789-1945

DUNCAN TOWNSON



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INTRODUCTION

This book covers the same period as the earlier *Dictionary of Modern History* by Alan Palmer and is primarily a dictionary of political and economic history. It begins with the French Revolution, an event of European significance, and ends with the Second World War, which had major repercussions throughout the world. The present dictionary differs from its predecessor in that there are many more extra-European entries and more too on topics which cut across national boundaries, such as **nationalism** and **Industrial Revolution**. To make this possible, entries on individual countries have been omitted. As in the previous dictionary there are no entries on scientists, artists, musicians or literary figures. Entries have been arranged alphabetically, according to the key word in the title: the **battle of Waterloo** appears as **Waterloo, battle of**. Kings, queens and emperors are given in their English form (e.g. William II, not Wilhelm II). For Chinese names pinyin, the official romanization system in the People's Republic of China, has been used. As the Wade-Giles system will be more familiar to many readers (*Chiang Kai-shek* rather than *Jiang Jieshi*), many entries are given first in pinyin, followed in brackets by the Wade-Giles equivalent. Russians used the Julian calendar up to February 1918, so Russian dates are twelve days behind those in the West in the nineteenth century and thirteen days in the twentieth century up to 1918. When a word or phrase appears in bold type this indicates that the subject has an entry of its own.

I am deeply indebted to Dr Nigel Townson, who wrote all the entries on Spain and Portugal and some on Latin America; to Dr David Killingray, who gave me considerable assistance with the entries on Africa; to Ian Walker, for his help with British history; and to my wife, Lesley, who did all the typing. She had the onerous task, which she performed impeccably, of deciphering my illegible

script, though in the process she became convinced that the days of slavery were not yet over.

Duncan Townson

Sevenoaks
January 1994

Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud (1880–1953). Founder of the state of Saudi Arabia. In 1902 he took control of Riyadh and proclaimed himself *imam* ('leader') of the **Wahabis**, a puritanical Islamic sect. In 1912 he founded the *Ikhwan* ('Brothers'), whom he sent among the bedouin to persuade them to lead strict, ascetic lives according to the *sharia* (Muslim law). With his followers, Abd al-Aziz began a systematic conquest of Arabia which involved him in fighting **Husayn**, sheriff of Mecca and ruler of the Hijaz, from 1919–25. In 1924 he captured Mecca; Husayn was forced to go into exile and in 1926 Abd al-Aziz proclaimed himself King of the Hijaz. Britain recognized him as King in 1927 and in return he recognized the Hashemites, Abdullah and Feisal (sons of Husayn), as rulers of Transjordan and Iraq. In 1932 he assumed the title King of Saudi Arabia, with control of the whole peninsula except for the British-protected Gulf sheikhdoms and the mountainous kingdom of Yemen. Once Abd al-Aziz became King the *Ikhwan* were an embarrassment, as they objected to modern innovations such as motor cars and telephones, and came into conflict with Britain in their fanatical campaign against unbelievers in Iraq and Transjordan. Abd al-Aziz therefore destroyed the movement he had created: most of the *Ikhwan* were killed at the battle of Sabila in 1929. Yet the *sharia* continued to be the basis of the Saudi state and modernization took place within this framework. The most backward of the Arab countries (its oil wealth was developed only from 1938), Saudi Arabia under Abd al-Aziz was the only one to gain full independence between the two world wars.

Abd al-Qadir (c. 1808–83). An Algerian military leader who led the fifteen-year resistance to the French in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1830, French military forces occupied Algiers, several other ports on the Algerian coast and a small inland zone. Resistance among Arabs

Abd al-Qrim

and Berbers began in 1832, mainly in western Algeria around the city of Oran, where Abd al-Qadir organized an army of 12,000 men. The son of a marabout ('holy man') from Morocco, he declared a *jihād* against the French and assumed the title of 'Commander of the Faithful'. His aim was not simply to resist the infidel invader by forming a temporary coalition of tribes, but to found a Muslim state governed strictly according to the laws laid down by the Prophet Muhammad. For nearly ten years he was able to unite some of the Algerian tribes, hold back the French and extend the region under his control. The French ruthlessly and systematically crushed resistance, but to do so they had to increase their army from 18,000 men in 1831 to 108,000 in 1846. In 1847 Abd al-Qadir was captured, and he went to live in exile in Damascus. The war led to great bitterness between Algerians and French, which was increased by the arrival of 100,000 French settlers who took the fertile coastal lands. Abd al-Qadir is regarded as one of the founders of the Algerian nation, and identified with resistance to the French, which did not cease until 1879, by which time the French army had subdued all tribes between the sea and the desert.

Abd al-Qrim (c. 1880–1963). Berber chieftain who fought the Spaniards and the French in the Rif war of 1920–26. The son of a chief in northern Morocco, he resented the harsh Spanish rule established in 1912 and raised a revolt in 1920. His first operations were guerrilla strikes from the Rif mountains, but in July 1920 his forces inflicted a disastrous defeat on the Spanish army at the battle of Anual, killing 12,000 Spaniards, indirectly bringing down the Spanish government and enabling **Primo de Rivera** to become dictator. Abd al-Qrim then began to organize an independent Rif republic in the mountains. The French intervened when it seemed as if he might become the leader of a movement to liberate Morocco from French control. In 1924 **Lyautey**, the French Commander, moved his troops into the southern Rif, where they clashed with Abd al-Qrim's forces. By September 1925 French and Spanish armies totalling nearly 500,000 men and backed by tanks and aircraft, under the command of General Primo de Rivera and Marshal **Pétain**, took the offensive against the Rif republic. Within eight months Abd al-Qrim was defeated and surrendered. He was

deported to the island of Réunion, where he remained until 1947 when he was given permission to live in France: at Suez he escaped from the ship that was carrying him, and spent the rest of his life in exile in Egypt.

Abdication crisis (1936) resulted in King **Edward VIII** surrendering the British throne. Since 1934 his closest companion had been Mrs Wallis Simpson, an American who was already divorced when she married Ernest Simpson in 1928. Edward mixed openly with Wallis after becoming King in January 1936, and in August accompanied her on a cruise along the Yugoslav coast, an event widely reported in the American and European press. Newspapers in Britain maintained a self-imposed censorship and, with sycophantic zeal, falsely portrayed Edward as a hard-working King. In November 1936, Edward made it clear to Stanley **Baldwin**, the British Prime Minister, that he intended to marry Wallis as soon as she was divorced from Ernest Simpson. As Edward was Supreme Governor of the Church of England, which did not recognize divorce, Baldwin, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leaders of all the major political parties agreed that Edward should not marry Mrs Simpson. As he wanted both to retain the throne and marry Wallis Simpson, Edward suggested a morganatic marriage, whereby Wallis would not be Queen and any children resulting from the marriage would forfeit the right of succession. This proposal was rejected by the Cabinet and by the Prime Ministers of the **dominions**, who were also consulted. Edward was therefore left with the options of either renouncing Wallis, abdicating, or marrying her and causing a constitutional crisis in which the existence of the monarchy would be at stake, as the government would resign and the opposition parties would refuse to take office. On 10 December 1936 he abdicated; one day later, as Duke of Windsor, he left England for the Continent, where he spent most of the rest of his life. When James Maxton, leader of the **Independent Labour Party** (ILP), proposed an amendment to the Abdication Bill that the monarchy should be abolished, it was defeated by 403 votes to five.

Abduh, Muhammad (1849–1905). Egyptian religious leader and reformer. For supporting **Urabi Pasha** he was exiled and subsequently joined **al-Afghani** in Paris but their views differed, so

Abdulhamid II

he left al-Afghani and went to Beirut, where he lectured in theology. He was allowed to return to Egypt in 1888 but did not take an active part in politics. Unlike al-Afghani he did not believe in revolution and did not actively oppose the British occupation of Egypt. Lord **Cromer**, the British Consul-General, warmly approved of him and supported his becoming *mufti* (Chief Justice) in Egypt in 1889, a post he held until his death. Abduh wanted to reconcile Islam with modern science and thought, by preserving the essentials of Islam whilst discarding the additions which had been made over the centuries. He accepted the Quran and the *hadith* (reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad made by his companions), but he thought that individual reason should be applied in matters which they did not discuss specifically. Abduh did not believe that Islam should provide a detailed, rigid and eternal blueprint for society which could never be changed, but general guidelines which should be reinterpreted in each age. His liberal and humane ideas led Cromer to regard him as 'the chief hope of Liberal Islam in Egypt'.

Abdulhamid II (1842–1918). Ottoman Sultan (1876–1909). He became Sultan when his brother Murad V went mad, and on condition that he granted the **Ottoman Empire** a constitution. A liberal constitution was therefore issued which limited the Sultan's autocratic powers and provided for the election of a legislative assembly. Within a year Abdulhamid had dismissed his reforming Grand Vizier, Midhat Pasha, and in 1878 he dissolved the assembly and suspended the constitution. For the next thirty years he ruled as an autocrat, keeping all power in his own hands and ending the autonomy of local governors. Hard-working and intelligent, he was prone to nervous collapses and was intensely suspicious. His main appeal to his Arab subjects was as a leader of Islam: he revived the title of Caliph, protector of Muslims throughout the world. Strict in his religious observances, he surrounded himself with *ulama* (religious leaders), built mosques and supported Muslim missionary activity in Asia and Africa. He did not show the same concern for his Christian subjects. When the Christians in Armenia demanded autonomy, he decided to annihilate them and began the Armenian massacres of 1894–6, in which tens of thousands of Armenians were

killed. During his reign the Ottoman Empire became increasingly dependent on foreign loans. By 1882 it could no longer pay the interest on its debts and had to accept a foreign debt administration: henceforth foreign bankers controlled the Ottoman economy. The Empire continued to decline in size: after the **Russo-Turkish War** of 1877–8 Abdulhamid had to recognize the independence of Serbia, Montenegro and Romania, and the loss of part of the Caucasus to Russia, at the Treaty of **San Stefano**. Later in 1878, at the **Berlin Congress**, Austria was granted military occupation of the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The **Young Turk** revolution of 1908 compelled Abdulhamid to restore the constitution of 1876 and an elected parliament; when he attempted a counter-revolution a year later he was deposed.

Aberdeen, George Hamilton Gordon, 4th Earl of (1784–1860). British Prime Minister (1852–5). A ward of **Pitt** the Younger, whom he greatly admired, Aberdeen became an earl in 1801 and therefore never sat in the House of **Commons**, the training ground for most politicians. He entered the **Lords** as a Scottish representative peer in 1806 and remained there for the rest of his life. As Foreign Secretary (1828–30) in **Wellington's** government, he helped to create an independent kingdom of Greece in 1830. In **Peel's** second administration (1841–6) he was again Foreign Secretary; he fixed Canada's boundary with the USA (and in so doing settled the **Oregon boundary dispute**) and restored good relations with France, rejecting the confrontational policy of **Palmerston**. A devoted follower of Peel, he resigned with him in 1846 following the split in the **Conservative Party** after the repeal of the **Corn Laws**. When Peel died in 1850 Aberdeen became leader of the Peelites and formed a coalition government of Peelites, Liberals and Radicals on the collapse of **Derby's** government in 1852. Aberdeen knew that he was not suited to be Prime Minister, as he was a poor speaker and not forceful enough to control a wayward Cabinet, but his strong sense of duty led him to accept the post. His ministry was dominated by the **Crimean War** (1854–6), for which he must bear some responsibility, as he gave Russia the impression that Britain agreed with her and did not indicate early enough that he was prepared to go to war. He allowed Britain to

Abolitionists

drift into a war he did not want and then waged it incompetently. Aberdeen resigned when the Commons appointed a select committee to inquire into the conduct of the war, but from 1855 until his death in 1860 he played an active if unobtrusive role by seeking to ensure that **Gladstone** became leader of the **Liberal Party**, which emerged from the fusion of **Whigs** and **Peelites**.

Abolitionists. People in the United States who demanded the complete abolition of slavery. Abolitionism first became a powerful political force in 1831 when William Lloyd Garrison founded his magazine *The Liberator* in Boston. Southern politicians blamed abolitionist propaganda for Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831 and some, like John C. **Calhoun**, said that it might be necessary for the South to secede from the Union if the abolitionists were not silenced. Southerners loathed abolitionists, but even in the North the abolitionists were denounced as 'nigger-lovers' whose actions threatened the existence of the Union. They remained a comparatively small group until the 1840s, when the extension of slavery to new territories became a burning issue. Many moderates found themselves on the same side as the abolitionists in opposition to the annexation of **Texas** in 1845 and the **Mexican-American War** of 1846. In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe depicted the struggle against slavery as one of good against evil in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This sold 1.5 million copies within a year and deeply affected public opinion in the North. Slavery was now regarded as a moral rather than a political or economic issue. The **Republican Party** was founded in 1854, largely in opposition to the expansion of slavery, and in 1860 its candidate, Abraham **Lincoln**, was elected President. In 1863, during the **American Civil War**, he signed a proclamation freeing slaves in the rebel states. At the end of the war in 1865, the abolitionists saw their cause triumph when the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution banned slavery in the USA.

Aborigines. An Australoid people who lived in Australia and Van Diemen's Land (later called Tasmania) before white convicts and settlers arrived. There were possibly 750,000 in Australia and 50,000 in Tasmania, who spoke 200 languages and lived by gathering food, catching fish and killing kangaroos. They came into conflict with whites, particularly on the open grasslands to the west of the

Bluc Mountains, as sheepowners and Aborigines competed for the same land. The struggle was one-sided, as spears were no match for firearms and the tribes did not unite but fought each other as well as the whites. Massacres took place on both sides: the most famous was that at Myall Creek in New South Wales in 1838, when at least twenty-two Aborigines – men, women and children – were tied together and executed. The incident became well known, not because Aborigines were killed but because, unusually, seven whites were tried for their murder and hanged. This did not stop the killing of Aborigines, which continued until 1928 when police shot thirty-one in the Northern Territory. Though many whites in the south and east were outraged, no one was brought to trial. The highest estimate of the number of Aborigines killed in conflict with the whites in the nineteenth century is 20,000: many more died from European diseases such as smallpox and measles, so that by 1900 the Aborigines were reduced to about 50,000. In Tasmania they were wiped out completely, the last Aborigine dying in 1888. In the 1930s Reserves were set up in areas where labour was scarce, in which Aborigines were compelled to live unless they were granted permission to take up employment with whites. The government separated children who had Aborigine mothers and white fathers from their parents, in a brutal attempt to integrate them into white society. Aborigines were not recognized as Australian citizens until 1948: until then they did not receive old-age pensions or any of the benefits which were reserved for whites.

Abysinian War (1935–6), see **Ethiopian War**

Action Française. An extreme right-wing nationalist movement, founded in 1899 to promote **anti-Semitism** and reflect the views of those who opposed **Dreyfus**. It had supporters in the middle and upper classes but its main appeal was to the *petite bourgeoisie* (the lower-middle classes) and it made no attempt to win over the working class. Its influence was due mainly to the writings of its leader, Charles **Maurras**, and his journal, *L'Action Française*, which became a daily newspaper in 1908. The movement was never important in parliament and its advocacy of a violent overthrow of the **Third Republic**, to be replaced by a monarchy, had few adherents. It anticipated and inspired many Fascist ideas (see

Adams, John Quincy

Fascism) but suffered a severe set-back in 1926, when Pope **Pius XI** publicly condemned the organization. Action Française was banned in 1936 but its newspaper was allowed to continue: it opposed France's entry into the **Second World War** and, after the fall of **France**, supported collaboration with the Germans. The movement revived under the **Vichy** regime, which it supported, but came to an end with the Liberation.

Adams, John Quincy (1767–1848). Sixth President of the USA (1825–9). He was a son of the second President, John Adams, and a typical New England Puritan, with strong principles, yet self-righteous and overbearing. A representative of his country abroad from 1794–1802 and again from 1808–17, at the Hague, Berlin, St Petersburg and London, he helped to draw up the Treaty of Ghent (1814), which ended the **Anglo-American War**. On his return he became President **Monroe**'s Secretary of State from 1817–25. He was very successful: he made a treaty with Britain which fixed the border with Canada as far west as the Rockies; he persuaded Spain to cede Spanish Florida to the USA in 1819; and he was the inspiration behind the **Monroe Doctrine**. **Jefferson** and **Madison** favoured an informal alliance with England, suggested by the British in 1823. Adams was against this. His views prevailed with **Monroe**, who issued a declaration stating that the USA no longer regarded the Americas as a legitimate field for European colonization. Adams was an expansionist, who believed that providence intended the USA to possess the whole North American continent.

Adams's brilliant run of success came to an end when he became President in 1825. He appeared to be the best-qualified candidate to succeed **Monroe** but the vote was split in the electoral college amongst four candidates, none of whom had a majority. Adams became President only with the support of **Henry Clay**, whom he made his Secretary of State. This laid Adams open to the charge of being corrupt. His reputation under attack and faced with a hostile Congress, he could do little as President and was defeated by **Andrew Jackson** in 1828.

Aduwa. A battle in southern Ethiopia in 1896 in which the Ethiopian army of King **Menelik II** defeated an invading Italian force. The Italians occupied the coastal region of Eritrea in the mid-

1880s and hoped to extend their control over the Ethiopian interior. Menelik came to the throne of Ethiopia in 1889 with Italian help and two years later signed a pact of friendship, the Treaty of Ucciali (Wichale), with Italy. The Italian version of the treaty was different from the Amharic one: in the Amharic version, Italy agreed to help Ethiopia in her relations with foreign countries; according to the Italian version, Menelik recognized an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. Menelik subsequently denounced the treaty, and this led to war between the two countries in 1895. The Italians invaded Ethiopia with an army of 20,000 men. At Aduwa, on 1 March 1896, they were decisively defeated by an Ethiopian army of 110,000. In October 1896, in the Treaty of Addis Ababa, Italy agreed to recognize Ethiopian independence.

African National Congress (ANC). The first nation-wide African political organization in South Africa. It was formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress, and changed its name to the ANC in 1923. It opposed the racist laws of the white Union parliament, and hoped to end racial discrimination by educating white opinion and petitioning parliament. Its leaders were part of the small black middle class, who stressed moderation and gradualism, looked down on the lower classes and wanted to make themselves acceptable to the whites. They rejected revolution and mobilization of the masses, and had little influence in the 1920s and 1930s. A younger generation, incensed by **Hertzog's** 1936 bill which ended the Cape franchise for non-whites, was more militant and in 1943 formed the Congress Youth League. Among its members were Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, but the leading influence was that of Anton Lembede from 1944 until his death three years later. He wanted blacks to be proud of being black, rejected co-operation with whites and wanted Africans to win liberty by their own efforts. It was largely due to Lembede that the ANC adopted a Programme of Action in 1949 (the **National Party** had come to power in 1948, pledged to apartheid) which committed it to strikes, boycotts and civil disobedience.

Afrikaners. A name applied in the twentieth century to white South Africans whose language is Afrikaans. In the nineteenth century they were often called Boers (Afrikaans, 'farmers'). They

Aga Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah

were descendants of mainly Dutch, but also French and German, immigrants. Calvinists, they believed that they were God's chosen people, superior to Africans, and sought to maintain their identity by a deep devotion to the Dutch Reformed Church and by adherence to their language, Afrikaans. Some sought to escape British rule in the **Great Trek** in the 1830s and formed the independent republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal in the interior. They fought against Britain in the **South African Wars** of 1881 and 1899–1902. In the twentieth century they have formed between 54 and 58 per cent of the white population and have been a dominant influence in South African politics since the Union of 1910.

Aga Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah (1877–1957). (Turkish *aga*, 'master' and *khan*, 'ruler'.) Aga Khan is the title held by leaders of the eastern branch of the Ismaili sect of Shiite Muslims. The first Aga Khan (d. 1881) fled to Sind after leading an unsuccessful revolution against the **Qajars** in Iran in 1838. The third Aga Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah, played a crucial role in Muslim politics in India. He was closely associated with the Aligarh movement of **Sayyid Ahmad Khan**, and was co-founder of the **Muslim League** and its first President (1906–13). There was, he wrote, no hope 'of a fair deal for us [Muslims] within the fold of the Congress Party or in alliance with it . . . we asked that the Muslims of India should not be regarded as a mere minority but as a nation within a nation'. He resigned from the presidency because he disapproved of what he saw as the League drawing closer to the mainly Hindu **Indian National Congress**. When the Congress boycotted the Simon Commission in 1928 as there was no Indian representative on it, he returned to political life, demanding separate electorates for Muslims and Hindus and rejecting the Nehru Report, with its demand for a strong central government. 'Each Indian province', he declared, 'should have the freedom to proclaim independence.' He was the leading Muslim delegate to the Round Table Conference (1930–32), whose discussions resulted in the **India Act** of 1935. An Anglo-ophile, the Aga Khan was best known in England for breeding racehorses, five of which won the Derby. The British government made him India's representative to the Disarmament Conference in

1932, and to the Assembly of the **League of Nations** (1932, 1934–7), of which he was President in 1937. He then retired from politics, spending most of his time in Europe, where he died in 1957.

Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din (1839–97). Islamic reformer. A Persian Shiite by birth, he claimed to be an Afghan Sunni (hence his name) so that he could appeal to the majority of Muslims. He saw Islam as a rational religion: the Quran should be interpreted according to reason and was open to reinterpretation by individuals in every age. Deploring the passivity and resignation of Muslims, he wanted a dynamic and secular approach to the problems of the age and has been regarded by some as an agnostic. ‘The centre of attention’, he wrote, ‘is no longer Islam as a religion; it is rather Islam as a civilization.’ Al-Afghani wanted all Muslims to unite in a Pan-Islamic movement to resist European expansion, but he realized that this idea was too abstract to be popular, so he emphasized loyalty to one’s homeland and the danger of adopting a foreign language and culture. His revolutionary methods, including assassination of despots, made it impossible for him to stay in one place for long. From 1871–9 he was in Egypt, where his followers included Muhammad **Abduh** and Saad **Zaghul**. Expelled from Egypt, he went to India, France and Persia, where he became an adviser to the Shah, before he was forced to leave in 1891 for organizing popular opposition to the Shah’s granting of economic concessions to Europeans. **Abdulhamid** then invited him to Istanbul, where he was a virtual prisoner of the Sultan, though he was still able to arrange for the assassination of the Persian Shah who had expelled him. Al-Afghani influenced Muslims in North Africa, Central Asia, Turkey and India and directly inspired the revolt of **Urabi Pasha** in Egypt in 1882. He spread an active and secular attitude to politics, which prepared the way for the rise of Arab nationalism.

Alamein, El, battles of (1–26 July and 23 October–4 November 1942). Decisive battles of the **North African Campaigns** between the German *Afrika Korps* and Italian forces on the one side, and the British and Commonwealth Eighth Army on the other. In the spring and summer of 1942 British forces had been driven back by **Rommel** from Gazala in Cyrenaica to El Alamein in Egypt, where defensive lines had been prepared. This was the only place in the

Alamein, El, battles of

western desert where the line could not be outflanked, as there was the sea in the north and the Qattara Depression in the south, a salt marsh below sea level at the bottom of cliffs. General Auchinleck, British Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, took over personal command on 23 June, as he found that the Eighth Army faced 'complete catastrophe' with Rommel's forces poised to advance to Cairo and the Suez Canal. In the first battle of Alamein Rommel tried to break through Auchinleck's centre and then envelop his wings, but he was halted by heavy fire on his flanks. Auchinleck counter-attacked on 9 July against Italian forces to the west, so that Rommel had to abandon his own offensive to help the Italians. In one sector after another Auchinleck attacked Italian units, so that Rommel had to use up his last German reserves to prevent the collapse of his front. Rommel had been halted and Egypt saved, but Auchinleck failed in his attempt to force the Germans to retreat, as the attacks of his infantry and armour were not coordinated. In August, Lieutenant-General **Montgomery** was put in charge of the Eighth Army and foiled a second attempt of Rommel to break through the British lines at Alam Halfa (31 August–3 September). Rommel, with his supply lines overstretched and unlikely to receive further supplies owing to allied control of the Mediterranean, was no longer able to mount another offensive. By October 1942 Montgomery greatly outnumbered Rommel in troops, tanks, anti-tank guns and aircraft. On 23 October the third battle of Alamein began with a British artillery barrage on a six-mile front from the sea inland. Rommel, who was in Germany recovering from exhaustion, flew back on 25 October to resume command, but there was little he could do. The battle raged for a week, with Montgomery skilfully probing the German lines so that their fuel, reserves and ammunition were used up. On 2 November a corridor was cleared through the German minefields for British armour to move through. With only thirty-five tanks left Rommel had to retreat, abandoning his Italian allies but extricating some of the *Afrika Korps*, as Montgomery was slow in following up. Rommel had lost most of his tanks and 59,000 men, many of whom were captured: the Eighth Army had 13,000 casualties and had 432 of its tanks knocked out. These battles prevented **Axis** forces overrunning Egypt and the Suez Canal, and were the first serious defeats the German army had