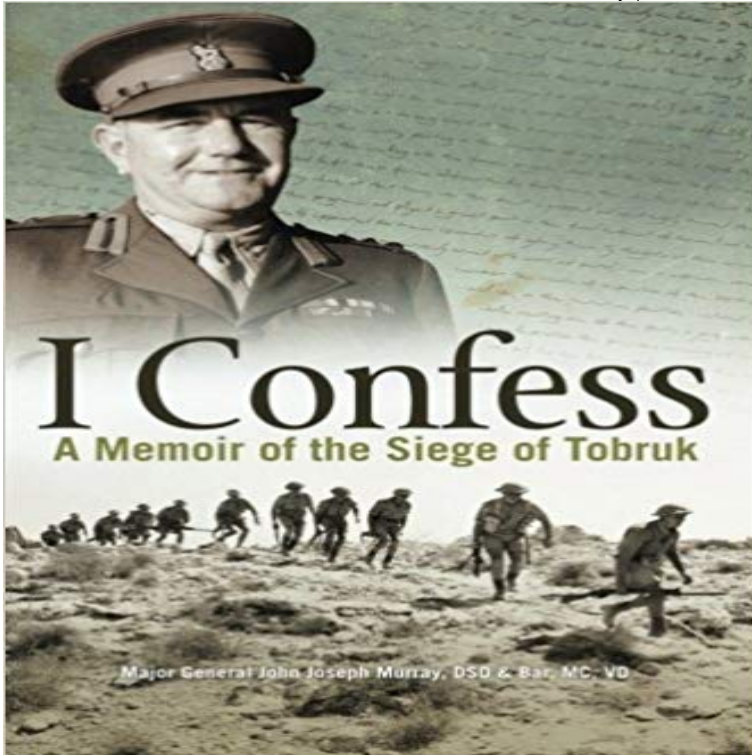


I Confess: A Memoir of the Siege of Tobruk



I Confess is an intimate portrayal of command in the crucible of war. But Major General John Joseph Murray's portrait of wartime leadership is not the stuff of military textbooks and his war is no set-piece battle. Murray commanded the Australian 20th Brigade during the siege of Tobruk, that grinding, tortuous desert defence that saw the German forces label his men rats, a badge they have worn since with pride and honour. Murray's account, as he explains in the humorous, deprecating whimsy that characterises his memoir, is not a story of raging battles and hard-fought actions, but of the essence of command. This is a portrait of the relationship Murray forges with his men through the long days of the siege against a relentless enemy and as supplies dwindle, tempers fray and exhaustion threatens. Major General John Joseph Murray DSO and Bar, MC, VD, fought in the AIF in both the First and Second World Wars. He won the Military Cross as a company commander during the disastrous Battle of Fromelles and the Distinguished Service Order at Peronne. At the beginning of the Second World War he raised the 20th Brigade at Ingleburn before embarking for Palestine. In 1941, the brigade joined the 9th Division in pursuit of the Italian Army in North Africa but came face to face with Rommel's Afrika Korps. Murray won a Bar to his DSO for delaying the advance of the German forces at Mersa Brega and Er Regina, as the 9th Division withdrew to Tobruk. He was recalled to Australia as the threat from Japan loomed and ended the war as General Officer Commanding the Northern Territory Force. Written in April 1945 as the war entered its final phase, I Confess is a carefully crafted analysis of leadership under pressure and a very personal reflection on its stresses, its tragedies and its lifelong rewards.

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