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“A damned dangerous act”: New Zealand prisoners of war on the run in  
Europe during the Second World War

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## **Abstract**

During the Second World War thousands of New Zealand servicemen found themselves behind barbed wire as prisoners of war. The vast majority of them were taken captive in failed campaigns in Greece, Crete and North Africa. This thesis will analyse the journey taken by those who dared to escape in the European theatre of war. It will begin by analysing the impact that the unsuccessful campaigns in the Mediterranean and North Africa had on motivating servicemen to escape. From there it will begin to analyse the many different ways in which men attempted escape; starting with those who slipped away in the heat of battle, to those who jumped from moving trains en route to prison camps, to those who planned elaborate get-aways under the noses of prison guards in Italy and Germany. The final section of this thesis will examine what it was like for escaped prisoners on the run in enemy occupied territory, including those who could not get back to their own lines and ended up fighting with partisan groups in Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy.

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