

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?**YOUR TASK**

Imagine it is 1944. In June the Allies will invade France. Field Marshal Montgomery has been put forward as the man to command the land forces in France. Your task is to look at his record and decide whether you think he is the right man. Organise your report along the following lines:

1. Does Monty have a good track record?
2. Is he well organised in terms of planning campaigns?
3. Is he respected by the troops?
4. Does the public respect him?
5. Are the complaints about his personality justified?
6. Are any of the criticisms of him as a leader justified?

WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS FIELD MARSHAL MONTGOMERY?

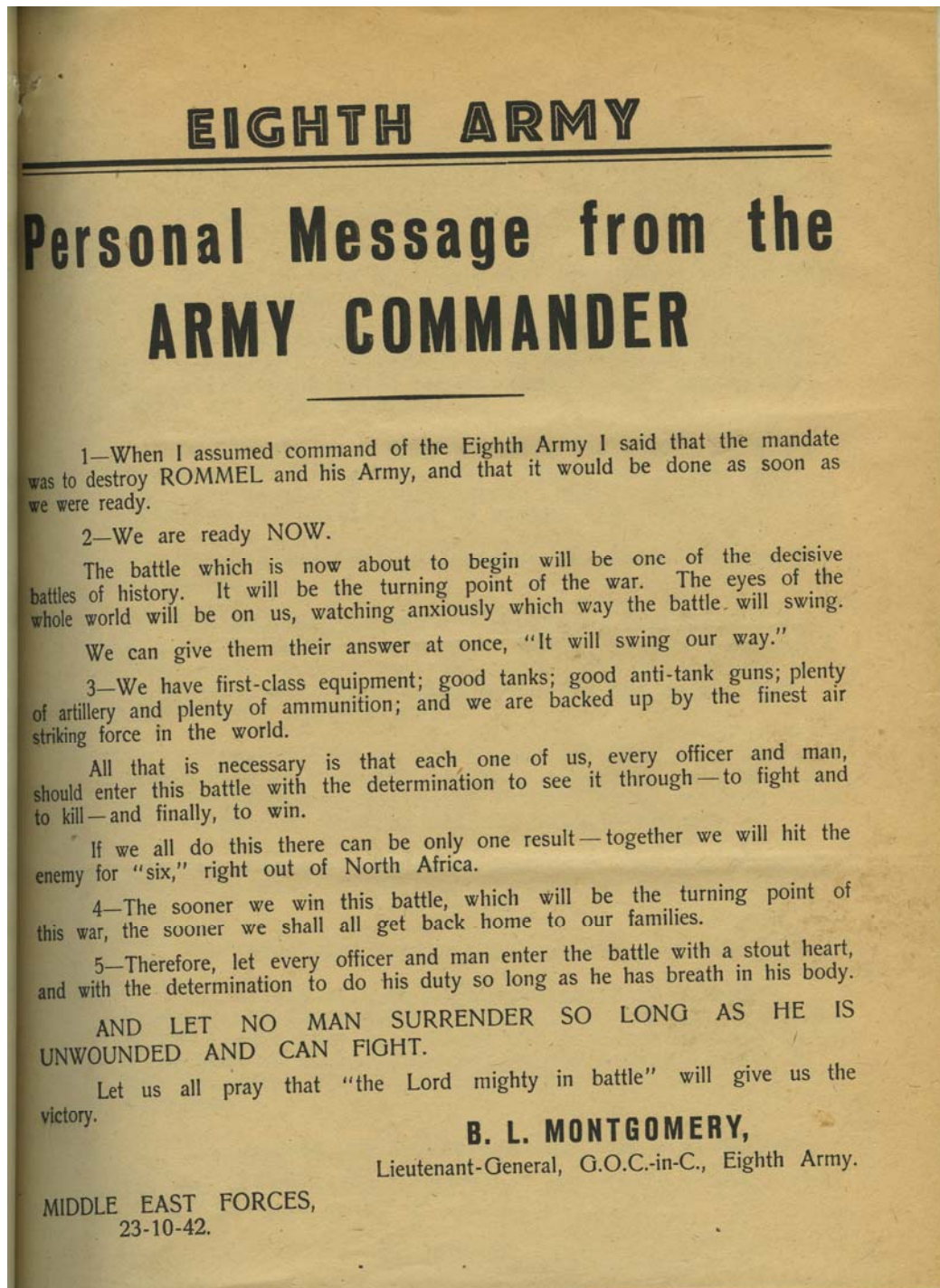
Bernard Montgomery was probably the most famous British commander in WW2. He was also a controversial character. Here is one comment on him:

As commander of the victorious British Army in North Africa, "Monty" enjoyed enormous popularity among both his troops and the British people. His military achievements won him the respect of his fellow soldiers, including his Desert War opponent, Erwin Rommel. But his arrogant, rigid, and abrasive manner earned him a reputation as one of the most difficult and controversial commanders of World War II. He was unreceptive to suggestions, and his cautious approach to combat led other Allied commanders to view him as weak and indecisive.

The National World War II Museum, New Orleans.

**Notice sent out to all troops in the British Eighth Army,
October 23rd 1942**

Catalogue ref: WO 214/19



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What is this source?

This is a printed notice sent out to all troops in the British Eighth Army before the Battle of El Alamein. The battle began on October 23rd and lasted for 12 days.

A notice like this was a most unusual step for a British commander. Until Montgomery's arrival the battle plans were kept strictly secret and senior commanding officers had very little contact with their troops.

What's the background to this source?

One of the key battlegrounds in WW2 was in North Africa. The area contained important oil reserves in Libya, which was controlled by Hitler's ally, Mussolini, the leader of Italy. Next door to Libya was Egypt, which was controlled by the British. Egypt had valuable ports that helped British forces in the Mediterranean Sea. Egypt also had the Suez Canal that was a vital supply line for troops and equipment to India and other parts of the British Empire. As a result, Italian and German forces fought constantly against British forces in North Africa from June 1940-late 1942.

At first, the campaign went well for British Empire forces against the Italians. However, the Italians were then reinforced by German Afrika Korps troops. They were well trained, well equipped and well led by General Erwin Rommel. The open spaces of the desert were ideally suited to German tactics that used fast moving tanks, armoured vehicles and aircraft. By the autumn of 1942 Rommel's forces had pushed deep into Egypt as far as El Alamein. It was here that the decisive battle of the campaign would be fought.

It's worth knowing that...

Montgomery was only appointed to take over command of the 8th Army on August 15th 1942.

He upset the commanders he was replacing by taking charge two days earlier than he was supposed to.

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. What three key points does Montgomery want his troops to understand?
2. Is it clear that this battle is important?
3. Why is Montgomery confident of victory?
4. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?