

WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

Photograph of an American serviceman reading about the end of war in Europe, May 1945

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What is this source?

This source is an official photograph taken in May 1945, as news of the surrender of Germany became known. It features US service personnel in the US Army Air Corps.

It was probably used by the US military as part of a press release for the British and US media.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

What's the background to this source?

By 1945 Allied forces were driving Japanese forces out of Burma. They captured the Burmese capital Rangoon in May 1945. It was an extremely hard campaign. The Japanese troops fought fiercely and skilfully and won the admiration of their enemies. However, by 1945 the Allies had enough troops and equipment to inflict major defeats on them.

A key element was air power. USA and British Empire pilots played an important role in the Burma campaign. Aircraft were vital for reconnaissance, attacking enemy positions and also for dropping supplies to troops who were deep in the jungle.

It's worth knowing that...

There was a lot of celebrating in Europe when VE-Day was announced. Some of the British troops in the Far East felt this was inappropriate since the war was not over.

The attitude of some troops is easier to understand when you remember that they did not know when the war was going to end. Most of the planning was based on the assumption that the war would last well into 1946.

How will you use this source?

1. Is this a useful source for assessing how US troops reacted to VE Day?
2. Why do you think this photograph was taken?
3. Is there any evidence in this source that the forces serving in Burma felt forgotten?
4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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