

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

Lieutenant Clifton James who visited Gibraltar on 27th May 1944
disguised as Field Marshal Montgomery

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What is this source?

This is a photography of Monty's double, Lieutenant Clifton James, taken in Gibraltar in 1944.

Lieutenant Clifton James really did double up as Montgomery on a number of occasions. It was very useful for Montgomery to be able to appear to an audience but also be working at the same time! James went to Gibraltar to help distract German attention from the Normandy landings, due only ten days later.

What's the background to this source?

In 1942 Montgomery took charge of the British 8th Army in North Africa. After intensive preparations he defeated the Germans and Italians at El Alamein in October 1942. This proved to be a turning point and by May 1943 the Germans and Italians had been driven out of North Africa. The next Allied campaign was the invasion of Sicily and then Italy. Montgomery played a key role in this campaign as well. He was extremely popular with the troops and the public. This was partly because he was successful. It was also because he valued the lives of his troops very highly. Although some other Allied commanders thought Montgomery was too cautious, he would always try to assemble enough of the right weapons and equipment before going into battle, as well as making sure his troops were properly trained.

Montgomery proved to be a big draw for audiences of troops and for audiences back in Britain as well. This was very unusual for a commander of the time. His popularity meant that having a double was extremely useful!

It's worth knowing that...

In 1954 Clifton James published a book called "I was Monty's double". In 1958 it was made into a film and James actually played himself and Montgomery in the film!

War Office files show that Clifton James was actually third choice to play Monty. First was the actor Miles Mander, famous for a series of roles in Hollywood 'Three Musketeers' movies but MI5 discovered he was too tall. Their second choice broke his leg in a car accident in the middle of training. James was discovered working in an army pay office.

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

1. What do the photographs suggest about the relationship between Montgomery and his troops?
2. Is it possible to rely on these photographs to show an understanding of this relationship?
3. Compare these photographs to other sources in the box to learn about this relationship.
4. What does the fact that Monty had a double tell us about him?
5. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

Use the table to write your report.