ASIA 1939-1945: BURMA

WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER ABOUT THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'?

Reactions of American service personnel to the news of the end of war in Europe, May 1945

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GI THOUGHTS ON V-E DAY

Not a single Officer, enlisted man or enlisted to man at Major General George E.Stratemeyer's Eastern Air Command and Army Air Forces Headquarters in the India Burma Theater took time off on V-E Day to celebrate. The closely knit organization that runs the Air War against the Japanese in Burma and Siam continued to function without letup. The first news of V-E Day was passed out early in the morning by an Indian newsboy selling papers in front of the mess hall. Radio confirmations started coming in as GI's and WAC's began their daily tasks. There was no change in the working schedules, but every face wore a smile.

Pfc. James Johnson, of 527 19th St, Brooklyn, New York, leaned out of his truck when he heard the news and said, "I say, let's get the job over here finished now and go home." T/Sgt. Jack L. Recht of 6101 West Eddy Street, Chicago, Illinois, glanced at the newspaper and said, "I have been expecting it for some time. I'm not particularly surprised. A big part of the job is done, but there is much more to do."

WAC Sgt. Jeanne Campbell of 2831 Clay Street, Alameda, Celifornia, was preparing a chocolate cake for dinner in the mess hall kitchen when she heard the newss. Putting down her cake, she said, "my husband has been fighting over there in France and now in Germany. I'm glad it is over, and I'm glad for the rest of the boys over there too. They have really had it rough. I don't think it will make much difference in this Theater as we still have to lick the Japs."

Sgt. Theodore Whitworth of 33 Cranberry Street, Brooklyn, New York, was having his hair cut when he heard the news. With a big smile, he said, "now we can concentrate our efforts on one spot - Japan."

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What is this source?

This source is part of a press release for the British and US media, as news of the surrender of Germany became known.

It comes from the Headquarters for the Army Air forces of the India Burma Theatre and Eastern Air Command.

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.

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How will you use this source?

- 1. How would you summarise the reaction of the troops in this source to the news of VE-Day?
- 2. Is there any evidence in this source that the men or woman feel forgotten?
- 3. Does this source give any sense of whether the US troops thought the war would last a lot longer or be over quickly?
- 4. What points from this source will you use in your presentation?

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