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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Victories and defeats of Bernard Law Montgomery in  
World War II

Aleš Hrdlička

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a veškeré použité zdroje jsem uvedl v seznamu použitých zdrojů

V Olomouci 5. 4. 2024.

.....

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, Ph.D., for his patience, advice, and valuable help during my work.

## Anotace

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1. Introduction
2. Bernard Law Montgomery's career during World War 2
  - Early serve during World War 2
  - North Africa, Sicily, and Italy
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3. Bernard Law Montgomery's victories
  - Second Battle of El-Alamein
  - Sicily landings
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  - Operation Plunder
4. Bernard Law Montgomery's defeats
  - Operation Market Garden
5. Conclusion

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## **List of abbreviations**

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

SHAEF – Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force



## **Abstract**

The thesis deals with Bernard Law Montgomery and his performance in World War Two. In addition, the thesis examines how Montgomery's participation in these battles influenced his career. It also examines how Montgomery's participation in these battles influenced his relationship with Winston Churchill. In the second chapter, the thesis focuses on his command during the Second Battle of El Alamein, which he fought in October and November 1942 and where he managed to seize victory over the Axis. This battle profoundly affected his career and his relationship with Churchill. In the third chapter, the thesis deals with his command during Operation Overlord in 1944. Despite the overall success of the landings, Montgomery did not perform well when facing the Germans around Caen. This operation negatively affected his career and marked a deterioration of his relationship with Churchill. In chapter four, the thesis deals with Montgomery's performance during Operation Market Garden in September 1944. Due to Montgomery's flaws in planning, the entire operation failed to reach its objective, which was the bridge in Arnhem. Despite the negative effect of Market Garden on Montgomery's career, it did not harm his relationship with Churchill.

Keywords: Bernard Law Montgomery, Second World War, victories, defeats, Second Battle of El Alamein, Operation Overlord, Operation Market Garden, life, career, Winston Churchill

## **Introduction**

The bachelor thesis will elaborate on the victories and defeats of Bernard Law Montgomery in World War Two. Bernard Law Montgomery was a British Field Marshal most famous for holding important command posts during the Second World War in North Africa, Southern Europe, and Western Europe. The thesis aims to analyse his performance during the Second Battle of El Alamein, Operation Overlord and Operation Market Garden. It will also examine how Montgomery's participation in these battles influenced his career and relationship with Winston Churchill.

The thesis is structured into four chapters. The first chapter, divided into three subsections, provided an overview of Montgomery's life and career, initially focusing on his childhood and early life. Later, it traces his journey from being an ordinary soldier to a distinguished British officer during the Second World War. It also delves into his post-World War II service and life. Chapter two analyses Montgomery's performance during the Second Battle of El Alamein fought against the Axis in Egypt in 1942. Chapter three analyses Montgomery's performance during Operation Overlord, the Normandy invasion, and the later phase of the campaign in France, fought in the summer of 1944. Finally, chapter four analyses Montgomery's performance during Operation Market Garden fought in the Netherlands in 1944. Each chapter also includes subsections dedicated to examining how Montgomery's involvement in these battles influenced his career and his relationship with Winston Churchill.

The bachelor thesis synthesises several literature and online sources. For reasons of specificity, different sources were mainly used for each chapter.

# **1. Life and career of Bernard Law Montgomery**

## **1.1 Life and career of Bernard Law Montgomery before World War II**

“Bernard Law Montgomery was born on 17 November 1887, the third son of the Reverend Henry Montgomery and his young wife Maud (née Farrar), at St Mark's Vicarage, Kennington Oval in South London,” (Moreman, 2010, p. 6) He lived between 1889 and 1901 in Tasmania, where his father worked as a clergyman. Upon returning to London, he started attending St Paul's School in London. Afterwards, Montgomery was accepted in 1907 to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where, despite an incident after which he was almost excluded, he completed the course. In 1908, upon being assigned to the Royal Warwick Regiment as a second lieutenant, he was sent to an overseas deployment to India, which lasted until 1912. (Moreman, 2010, p. 7-9)

At the outbreak of World War I, Montgomery's Royal Warwick Regiment, part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, disembarked in France on August 23, 1914. While deployed to France to oppose the German Army, Montgomery first experienced combat on August 24 near Harcourt. Even though his formation was forced to retreat he proved to be a capable commander. Later, in 1914, his formation was deployed to the Aisne and Dunkirk area. Nonetheless, on October 13, Montgomery was severely wounded during fighting near Méteren. As a result, he was repatriated back to England, where, while recovering, he received the Distinguished Service Cross. He was not sent to France immediately. Instead, he was assigned to the 91<sup>st</sup> Brigade in Manchester. Montgomery spent 1915 serving as a brigade major in England. In early 1916, he was sent back to the frontline in France. (Clark, 2022, p. 41- 47) “As a brigade-major, and later as an increasingly senior operations officer at corps headquarter level, and finally as chief of staff of an infantry division in the field, Montgomery took part in many of the bloodiest battles of World War I, from the Somme to Passchendaele and the German Spring Offensive.” (Hamilton, 2007, p. 4) By the end of World War I, while being assigned to the 47<sup>th</sup> Division, he was involved in developing the concept of cooperation between various branches of the Army. Montgomery managed to successfully implement these methods on the battlefield. (Clark, 2022, p. 78)

In the 1920s, Montgomery was assigned to various units and destinations. Initially serving at the British Army of the Rhine in 1919, later studying at Staff College in Camberley in 1920. This period was followed by his deployment to Ireland, where his task was to face the Irish Republican Army. This period was followed by Montgomery being regularly reassigned to different formations. He stayed with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in Plymouth, the 49th Division in York

and finally, the 1<sup>st</sup> Warwick Regiment in 1925. This period was marked by Montgomery's close focus on military training. After these assignments, he was tasked with lecturing at Staff College at Camberley. (Clark, 2022, p. 101-109) Two important events took place in his personal life in 1927 and 1928. After his marriage to Betty Carver, their son David was born. Even though their marriage was not perfect, partially caused by their different attitudes, they still loved each other. (Gelb, 2018, p. 49-50)

From 1931 to 1936, Montgomery was reassigned to the Mediterranean and South Asia. (Moreman, 2010, p. 11-12) "As Montgomery was the most senior officer in the region, alongside commanding the Warwicks he was also the de facto commander of all British troops in Palestine (which included a battalion of the King's Own Royal Regiment) and acted as Military Governor of Palestine on behalf of Lieutenant General Sir John Burnett-Stuart, the general officer commanding Egypt and Palestine, who was based in Cairo." (Clark, 2022, p. 134-135) In early 1937, Montgomery returned to England as a brigadier, where joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. As Montgomery focused on military training, his conduct of the exercise on Salisbury Plains in the summer of 1937 was well appreciated by senior officers. Montgomery's return to England was also marked by an unfortunate event in his personal life, as his wife Betty died on October 19, 1937. (Clark, 2022, p. 142-144) In 1938, Montgomery experienced a combination of success and failure. Even though he had successes, he was almost dismissed for renting a military property without authorisation from his senior officers. After this incident, he was sent to Palestine as commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Division between 1938 and 1939. Later, he served with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Back in England in 1939. Montgomery even managed to endure a life-threatening disease during this period. (Moreman, 2010, p. 12-13)

## **1.2 Life and career of Bernard Law Montgomery during World War II**

After declaring war on Germany by Great Britain, Montgomery's 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, was deployed to France in October 1939. Here, it was stationed in Lesquim near Lille. From October 1939 to May 1940, Montgomery was focused on training and preparing his men. At the same time, he had a good relationship with his superior, Allan Brooke. Montgomery was not involved in combat until May 15 near Louvain in Belgium. Although the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division withstood the initial attack, it was later ordered to withdraw. After participating in the retreat fighting at Roubaix and Ypres, he took command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps on 30 May. During this campaign, he distinguished himself as a capable commander. Finally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps

was ordered to evacuate to England, and Montgomery left France from Dunkirk on June 1, 1940. (Clark, 2022, p. 171-181)

After his return to England, Montgomery met Churchill on July 2 during his visit to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Here, the two personalities interacted in a friendly conversation. (Montgomery, 2007, p. 36-37) While Montgomery was reassigned to the 5th Corps and later to the 7th Corps in 1941, he got into conflict with his senior officer, Auchinleck. Nevertheless, he was protected by his superior and friend Brooke, commanding the Home Ground Forces. Montgomery was later given command of the South-eastern Command in England. He was appreciated for his successes while conducting military exercises, most notably the V Corps exercise in December 1940. (Clark, 2022, p. 182-187) Montgomery was a strict and unyielding commander during his stay in Britain, demanding maximum commitment from his subordinates. Later, in July 1942, he participated in planning the raid of Dieppe. As the raid failed to achieve its goal, Montgomery attempted to avoid being held responsible for the failure. (Gelb, 2018, p. 84, 90-91)

On August 8, 1942, Montgomery was ordered to command the Eighth Army in North Africa. He took over the command of the Eighth Army on August 13, 1942, in Egypt. (Montgomery, 2007, p. 50, 53) Being deployed to the theatre in North Africa, he faced the Afrikakorps for the first time during the Battle of Alam el Halfa, which raged between August 30 and September 2, 1942. Here, the Eighth Army managed to repel the Rommel's attack. This success was followed by the Battle of El-Alamein, which raged between October 23 and November 2, 1942. This was a significant victory. Both for the Allies and Montgomery, who was promoted to general thanks to his success. As a result of El-Alamein, Montgomery's Eighth Army went on the offensive and began its advance westward. It marched through Libya, liberating Tripoli on January 23, 1943. From here, it advanced onwards. Montgomery pressed on with the Eighth Army and entered Tunisia in late March. After the Eighth Army breached the Axis defences on the Mareth Line, it cooperated with the US Army in defeating the Axis Army in North Africa. The campaign in North Africa ended on May 13, 1943, with the surrender of the Axis army in Tunis. (Clark, 2022, p. 225-236)

After the successful execution of the North African campaign, Montgomery was ordered to participate in the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. This action was codenamed Operation Husky, and the initial task was to land the Allied Army on beaches in the island's southern portion. Montgomery's Eighth Army, together with Patton's Seventh US Army, was part of the Fifteenth Army Group under the command of General Harold Alexander. Despite the Allied numerical advantage over the Axis, they did not manage to carry out a quick advance. After the initially

successful landings on July 10, the Eighth Army was involved in slow and atrocious fighting. A tense relationship between Montgomery and Patton marked the campaign in Sicily when none of the two commanders was willing to cooperate and instead preferred to advance independently. Additionally, Alexander struggled to handle the situations and coordinate their moves. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 31-33) After the Sicily campaign, Montgomery participated in the invasion of Italy, which commenced on September 3. This campaign was, however, fraught with difficulties. Not only did the Eighth Army experience slow advance, as the men were involved in fierce fighting in rugged terrain throughout autumn and winter 1943, but Montgomery was also dissatisfied with the purpose of the campaign, as it, according to him, lacked a clear objective. In December 1943, he was withdrawn back to England, where he was chosen to participate in Operation Overlord. (Clark, 2022, p. 241-244)

“Bernard Montgomery returned to England in early January 1944 delighted at having not only been appointed as commander of the 21st Army Group but also Allied land force commander for the opening phase of the campaign in Normandy.” (Clark, 2022, p. 261) Montgomery's return to England meant he was also involved in planning of the invasion. While making significant changes to the invasion plan, he was required to coordinate the moves of a massive multinational force comprised of US, British and Canadian forces. (Clark, 2022, p. 261-262) “The D-Day landings on 6 June 1944 - arguably the greatest set-piece battle of Montgomery's career - proved resoundingly successful, with large numbers of Allied troops ashore by the end of the day.” (Moreman, 2010, p. 31) In the wake of the successful landings, Montgomery arrived in France on June 8, 1944. July, August, and September 1944 were marked by Montgomery's involvement in the Battle of Caen, Operation Goodwood, the Battle of Falaise Pocket, and the liberation of Brussels. On September 1, 1944, Montgomery was relieved as the Allied land force commander. Meanwhile, he retained his post as the commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group. Besides, he was promoted to field marshal. Tensions rose again between Montgomery and Eisenhower as their opinions about the upcoming campaign differed. (Clark, 2022, p. 268-272)

After the failed Operation Market Garden, a combined air and land strike in the Netherlands, by which Montgomery attempted to cross the Lower Rhine and place the Allies to strike against the Ruhr, Montgomery started to criticise Eisenhower and his campaign conduct. Through this, he attempted to get into more favourable positions in the senior command. (Corrigan, 2018, p. 62-64) The German attack through the Ardennes caught the Allies by surprise. As the situation deteriorated rapidly for the Americans facing the German attack, Montgomery was ordered to handle the Allied actions against the advancing Germans. With multiple American divisions

under his command, he managed to stop the German advance at the Meuse River. Here, the Allies regained initiative again. The situation stabilised after his forces linked with Patton's forces in Houfalize on January 16, 1945. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 96-107)

Following the anabases in Ardennes, Montgomery successfully crossed the Rhine on March 24, 1945. This operation was codenamed Varsity-Plunder. (Clark, 2022, p. 279-280) On April 15, he was present at the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. (Montgomery and Steele, 2020, p. 46) Montgomery's forces spent the final weeks of the war advancing through the Netherlands and Saxony as they were ordered to head towards Denmark. After the fall of Hamburg on May 3, he negotiated with Donitz's delegation the terms of surrender of the German forces in the region. They were agreed upon and signed on May 4 in Lübeck. (Clark, 2022, p. 281-283)

### **1.3 Life and career of Bernard Law Montgomery after World War II**

After the end of World War II in 1945, Montgomery was stationed in Germany. On May 14, 1945, Montgomery was appointed the "Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces of Occupation and British Member of the Allied Control Council in Germany." (Montgomery, 2007, p. 236) However, the period following the war was characterised by challenging circumstances for Montgomery. He struggled to handle the command in post-war Germany. As Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, his later service as Chief of the General Staff between 1946 and 1948 was marked by other tensions. During these years, he had an especially bad relationship with Chief of the Air Staff Marshal Tedder. His service as Chief of the General Staff harmed his reputation and relations with other officers. (Moreman, 2010, p. 58)

Between 1948 and 1958, Montgomery held essential posts in two organisations focused on military cooperation between Western countries. Initially, he served in the Western Union Defence organisation. This service was followed by a transfer to the then-recently formed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, where he served under the overall commander Eisenhower, Ridgway and Gruenther. At NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), he cooperated with other Allied nations to create a capable army prepared for a possible conflict. (Clark, 2022, p. 333-336) Montgomery's service at NATO was marked by his effort to prepare the alliance's ground forces for a nuclear conflict. Despite the power of atomic weapons, he advocated for the importance of conventional warfare in the event of such conflict. This strategy was underlined by his attempt to unify the use of ground forces with the nuclear forces of NATO in

case of a nuclear war with the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). (Moody, 2016, p. 218-227)

Montgomery remained active in public life even after his retirement in 1958. (Clark, 2022, p. 336-337) “He opposed a bill legitimizing homosexual relations between consenting adult males; supported apartheid in South Africa; visited Chairman Mao in China more than a decade before President’s Nixon’s trip to Beijing; befriended Nikita Khrushchev in the U.S.S.R., Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, and Prime Minister Nehru of India; decried the American involvement in Vietnam as self-defeating; and deplored Britain’s move to join the European Community and its common market.” (Hamilton, 2007, p. 114-115) “Montgomery died at home on 24 March 1976 in his eighty-ninth year, and after a state funeral in St George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle he was interred in his local churchyard at Binstead” (Clark, 2022, p. 338)



## **2. The Second Battle of El-Alamein**

### **2.1 Bernard Law Montgomery's command of the Second Battle of El Alamein**

Because of the unsatisfactory conduct of the campaign in North Africa, changes were made in the high command of the Eighth Army. Montgomery was the replacement for the initially selected Gott. (Gelb, 2015, p. 111) Before the Second Battle of El-Alamein, British forces, under the command of Bernard Montgomery, fought a successful engagement with the Axis during the Battle of Alam Halfa. In the wake of this battle, Churchill wanted to launch an offensive near El-Alamein in coordination with the US landings in Morocco. Nonetheless, Bernard Montgomery refused the demand to attack in September and instead proposed to strike in October 1942, stating that the preparations of the Eighth Army were not finished. He also mentioned the necessity of a full moon, which was required for crossing the enemy minefields. This was projected on October 24. Finally, Churchill accepted this decision as the US later postponed the invasion date. (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 283-286) Montgomery proved to have both military and political skills. Not only did he manage to secure victory with the British Army, which did not perform overtly successfully before his arrival, but he also managed to ensure that the Eighth Army was prepared adequately as he did not succumb to Churchill's pressure. This laid a premise for further events.

Montgomery made an elaborate plan for the offensive, codenamed Operation Lightfoot. For 12 days, the Eighth Army would lead its main offensive in the northern sector of the battlefield. The first stage was to attack the Axis with the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps, followed by the attack of the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps armoured formations. Afterwards, during the second stage, the joined 10<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Corps would destroy the Axis' infantry and armoured formations. Finally, the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps would eliminate the remaining Axis forces while withdrawing from the area. (Harper, 2017, p. 128) The plan seems straightforward as it envisions a swift action against the Axis using a combination of infantry and armoured formations that would overwhelm the enemy. However, the question was if it would proceed as swiftly as Montgomery expected. Notably, the cooperation between the 30<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Corps seemed smooth according to the plan. Nevertheless, it did not consider more formidable enemy opposition that could slow down or hamper the attack. "The lack of a common doctrine on how tanks, infantry, and artillery should deal with German anti-tank guns firing behind the protection of their minefields was a major "blank spot in tactics" and a serious omission for which Eighth Army would pay dearly." (Harper, 2017, p. 129)

Montgomery's preparations for the offensive included changes in command posts. These, however, did not always have a positive effect. Firstly, Leese was appointed the new commander of the 30<sup>th</sup> Corp. Secondly, Lumsden, who was chosen as an alternative for Horrocks, who refused Montgomery's request, became the new commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Corp. Nevertheless, Montgomery had no prior experience with Lumsden. (Harper, 2017, p. 118, 124, 125) Additionally, Lumsden was known for "letting down infantry formations". (Harper, 2017, p. 125) Here occurred a critical error. Despite his plan relying on close cooperation between infantry and armour, Montgomery appointed a commander who opposed this strategy. This approach became evident when Montgomery and Lumsden conflicted over the role of armoured formations. Contrary to the plan, Lumsden believed that infantry should not hold his armoured formations back. This criticism was, however, dismissed by Montgomery. (Bungay, 2013, p. 206) This argument should have served Montgomery as a warning that Lumsden was not willing to follow his orders. By keeping Lumsden in his position, he endangered not only the course but also the outcome of the operation.

As the previously stated actions were to unfold in the northern sector, the southern sector involved Operation Bertram. The purpose of this operation was to mislead Germans and convince them that the southern sector was the area of the main Allied offensive. This part of the offensive was to be carried out by the 13<sup>th</sup> Corps. As the Eighth Army's forces staged their movement southwards, British intelligence started spreading false information about non-existing Eighth Army formations. (Harper, 2017, 128-131) This was a great gamble from Montgomery, requiring much organisation and effort with uncertain outcomes. He had to coordinate the actions in the northern sector with actions unfolding in the southern sector of the battlefield. In addition, he risked that the Axis could potentially uncover the plan and concentrate the leading force in the northern sector; thus, the 10<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Corp had to face tough opposition and sustain heavy losses. This would mean that Operation Bertram wastes precious resources that could be otherwise used in the main direction of the attack. Nonetheless, Operation Bertram proved successful as the Axis did not recognise the true nature of these actions and were caught by surprise during the opening phase of the British attack. (Harper, 2017, p. 130)

Montgomery's contribution to the plan for the British offensive is considered ambivalent. He argued that his arrival marked a turning point when he transformed and prepared the Eighth Army for an offensive. (Arnold, 2015, p. 66) Nevertheless, there is a contrary opinion to this piece of information. It is argued that Montgomery retrieved the basics for his plan from an earlier one. He adopted Auchinleck's, Dornan-Smith's, and Ramsden's plan. He seized and used

the plan as these officers were replaced, not admitting he did so. (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 266) This significantly undermines Montgomery's tactical skill as it puts into question his contribution to the Second Battle of El-Alamein. The course of the battle and the outcome of the Second Battle of El Alamein could have been much different if he had understood the situation without previous knowledge. Finally, it shows his disrespect to his predecessors, as he did not hesitate to use their plan without making it explicit.

The offensive began in the evening of October 23, 1942. 30<sup>th</sup> Corps moved into action after an opening artillery barrage. Besides reaching the Miteryan ridge, the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps created two crossings through minefields. The Miteryan ridge was partially captured; however, the advance of the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps was slow, and they suffered heavy casualties. As the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps struggled to make paths through the minefields, they were held back by eliminating pockets of resistance defended by the determined German defenders. (Doherty, 2017, p. 158-178) The slow progress of the 30<sup>th</sup> Corp showed that Montgomery's plan did not reflect the actual situation on the battlefield. Indeed, it did not expect such determined resistance from the Axis, which resulted in heavy casualties and caused delay. This fact also suggests that Montgomery, indeed, did not create the plan for the offensive.

On October 24, the situation worsened for the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps as it managed to carry out only a slow and costly advance. Even further, the planned night-time tank assault did not materialise. As the situation was getting precarious, the Corps and divisional commanders decided that changes needed to be made to the original plan. Nevertheless, they needed to consult this fact with Montgomery. Early on October 25, a meeting was held at the Eighth Army's Headquarters, where Montgomery, Leese, and Lumsden were present. Montgomery decided to continue with the attack. (Bungay, 2013, p. 230-233) "The 10<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division was duly ordered to renew the offensive. The carnage was almost immediate. Within the hour, 8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade came under heavy fire from no more than 400 yards away. Tanks burst into flames, providing a flaring beacon for a swarm of German Bombers which inflicted further casualties." (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 308) This implies that Montgomery did not have sufficient knowledge of the situation. Although the situation steadily deteriorated and did not match the plan, Montgomery still demanded to act according to the original orders. Additionally, Montgomery did not consider the possible drawbacks of his plan. "In short he required their tanks to extricate him from a critical impasse, the blame for which should properly lie with his overly optimistic battle plan rather than the lack of 'stomach for fight' with which he charged them." (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 308) The discrepancy between the original plan and the situation on the battlefield was significant. The situation was made difficult not only by the determination of the Axis but also

by Montgomery's unwillingness to admit that the original tactic failed. His reluctance to make necessary adjustments resulted in heavy casualties.

On October 25, it became evident that Operation Lightfoot did not meet its expectations. This was realised when the efforts in the northern and southern sectors did not achieve their objectives. (Harper, 2017, p. 177-180) As it was evident from the course of the battle, the attack did not go according to plan from the beginning. Although Montgomery should be held partially responsible for the failure of the initial attack, there are also aspects of the battle which he could not influence. These include the problems in communication between the Eighth Army's units. The delays in communication between Montgomery's headquarters and frontline resulted in inaccurate orders being received. This disarray and wrong orientation on the battlefield resulted in the Eighth Army's units firing at each other. (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 312). To summarise, it is difficult to determine the exact cause of why Montgomery's Operation Lightfoot failed to achieve its objective. One of the significant factors could be found in the originality of the plan, which is not considered to be devised by Montgomery. In other words, Montgomery did not have a clear idea about the situation and the enemy before the battle. Next, enemy resistance proved much stronger than expected. This factor had combined with exaggerated expectations from the Eighth Army, especially the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps.

On October 25, realising that the original plan did not succeed, Montgomery made necessary changes. He was nevertheless restricted by a lack of reserves and a high casualty rate, reaching 6,140 men. In addition, several formations were in a bad state, particularly the 1<sup>st</sup> South African and 2nd New Zealand divisions. As for his tactic, Montgomery intended to launch an isolated strike headed north using the 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Division, combined with the attack of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division on October 25 and 26. The 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Division acted according to Montgomery's plan and managed between October 25 and October 30 to advance northward and divert Rommel's attention and resources. (Harper, 2017, p. 178, 184-187, 190-198) The decision to strike northward and thus divert Rommel's attention undoubtedly helped to build the ground for the upcoming actions of the Eighth Army. Still, the situation was not ideal for Montgomery. There were several factors which he had to take into consideration. When evaluating the situation and planning upcoming moves, Montgomery did not have to consider only the high number of casualties sustained during Operation Lightfoot. The Axis realised that the Eighth Army's effort was led in the northern sector. "From Ultra intercepts, he knew that Rommel had now brought the reinforcements from the south up to defend the northern corridor to the west of Kidney Ridge. This meant it would be excessively hard, if not impossible, to achieve a breakthrough where he had hoped." (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 312) Despite

the bad news, Montgomery received vital information on enemy movements. He could then adjust his plans.

The renewed attack was launched on the night of October 31. It was code-named Operation Supercharge. This operation expected a combined strike of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Corp. It envisioned an infantry attack westward led by the 30<sup>th</sup> Corp. This phase would be followed by the actions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps headed towards Tel el Aqqaqir. Then, they would engage the Axis armour. This part was to be supported by the actions of armoured cars acting as skirmishers. Finally, the actions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Corp will be finalised by reaching the Sidi Rahman area. The 13<sup>th</sup> Corp was once again expected to carry out divisionary actions and advance if the Axis would start to withdraw. (Montgomery, 2007, p. 71-72) Interestingly, Montgomery once again expected cooperation between the 30<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Corp. This did not work out during Operation Lightfoot, and Montgomery still trusted it. However, this time, it could have had fatal consequences as Montgomery could not afford to lose. Based on the losses and exhaustion of his troops, he would not have additional attempts. Montgomery's decision to repeat the plan could have been based on several factors. He had only approximately five days between abandoning Operation Lightfoot and launching Operation Supercharge. Thus, he did not have enough time to plan the next move. He had to launch another attack as fast as possible. Otherwise, he risked that the Axis would regroup, possibly bring reinforcements, and thus, achieving success would be increasingly difficult.

Beginning on November 2, Supercharge proved successful as the elements of the Eighth Army finally managed to achieve a breakthrough. Nevertheless, at first, the success of the operation remained uncertain. The Eighth Army also sustained heavy casualties from the opposing Axis forces. This was the case of the 9<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade. Despite the Axis launching counterattacks, the Eighth Army managed to continue pushing the Axis back. Finally, on the evening of November 2, the Axis forces could not bear the overwhelming pressure of the Eighth Army. On November 4, Rommel ordered the Axis to start their withdrawal. (Harper, 2017, p. 212-231) This proved to be a crucial part of the battle when, after enormous effort, the Eighth Army forced the Axis back. Even so, success was not achieved smoothly. Nevertheless, this time, the overwhelming numerical superiority proved unbearable for the Axis, who depleted much of their resources and did not have enough strength to oppose the Eighth Army. (Dimpleby, 2012, p. 327-329). This fact once again questions Montgomery's impact on events. Undoubtedly, he orchestrated this attack with a successful outcome in the wake of the recently failed Operation Lightfoot. However, the events during Operation Supercharge suggest that the Axis were finally pushed back thanks to the numerical superiority of the Eighth Army combined

with their enormous casualty rate rather than Montgomery's plan and tactics. The plan was very similar to the one used during Operation Lightfoot; however, this time, the Axis did not have enough force to withstand it and had to withdraw.

Similarly, as in previous events, Montgomery's plan did not work out in the final part of the battle when the armoured formations were tasked with destroying the remaining Axis forces. (Harper, 2017, p. 237) It is questionable whether Montgomery had great expectations from these formations. Undoubtedly, he was aware that the armoured formations did not perform overtly successfully in the previous stages of the battle. Therefore, he could not expect success by selecting these formations. Furthermore, the action under Freyberg's command, intending to block and destroy the Axis forces, was hastily prepared and executed. Several units designated for the pursuit did not reach the assembling areas on time. The advance was cautiously postponed until daylight, and the initial objective of the pursuit, Fuka, was changed later that day as the bulk of the Axis force was already gone. The situation was made uneasy even further as Lumsden did not communicate with Montgomery, and Gatehouse got lost. (Bungay, 2013, p. 255-256) If Montgomery wanted to succeed, he had to act quickly and swiftly, but the way the Eighth Army conducted the pursuit was the direct opposite. Unsurprisingly, they allowed the Axis to escape. Although it may seem that Montgomery could not have influenced some of these events, it should be noted that his tactic chosen for this part of the operation did not create more significant damage on the retreating Axis. "Ignoring the advice of the desert veterans, who counselled a pursuit striking deeply westwards through the desert, parallel to Rommel's line of retreat, before swinging to the coast and cutting off *Panzerarmee*, Montgomery initiated a series of short jabs to the coast that achieved little and dissipated effort." (Doherty, 2017, p. 290) If Montgomery had been more determined, he would have not only won the battle itself, but he could have also destroyed much of the Axis forces and thus even weakened their position in North Africa.

Despite all the setbacks, the battle was a success for Montgomery, the Eighth Army, and Great Britain as the Axis in North Africa were finally forced to withdraw. It should be noted that this victory proved to be costly when, in total, 13,500 members of the Eighth Army were either killed in action or wounded in action. (Arnold, 2015, p. 73)

## **2.2 The effect of the Second Battle of El Alamein on Bernard Montgomery's career**

British triumph at El Alamein had an immense impact on Montgomery's career. "In England the church bells rung, Montgomery was knighted and promoted to full general and he was lauded by the press, desperate to find a British hero." (Corrigan, 2018, p. 56) This determines the vital role of this victory in his career, as he suddenly became the centre of attention of the British public. It also boosted his career. Not only was he named the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, but he also held important posts during the later phases of the war. (Bungay, 2013, p. 295) The victory seized during the Battle of El Alamein can be seen as a turning point in Montgomery's career. A triumph that brought him both military and public attention.

## **2.3 The effect of the Second Battle of El Alamein on Bernard Law Montgomery's relationship with Winston Churchill**

The victory greatly affected his relationship with Churchill. However, the beginning of their relationship in North Africa was not ideal, as the two personalities clashed over the date of launching the offensive. Montgomery was adamant that the offensive launch must be postponed. Churchill finally accepted Montgomery's intention to strike in October. Although the initial tension calmed down, it aroused once again after the failure of Operation Lightfoot. Churchill started to question Montgomery's ability to lead the battle to a successful outcome. (Harper, 2017, p. 116-118, 189-190) The relationship was uneasy as none of the two personalities wanted to pull back their interests. There was even a certain amount of distrust. Despite these facts, once Montgomery secured the victory, he received appreciation from Churchill. "Churchill cabled Alexander, congratulating him on the victory in the desert and praising his "brilliant lieutenant." (Gelb, 2018, p. 155) It is riveting to mention that Montgomery managed to retain Churchill's support despite an awkward incident when the British press published a photo of him dining together with captured General von Thoma. This caused a public outrage. (Gelb, 2018, p. 153) This piece of information can determine the importance of Montgomery for Churchill, as he managed to find a capable British commander who was able to fight the Axis successfully. Thus, he was prepared to support Montgomery even when he was being scrutinised. It should be noted that Churchill was in an uneasy position himself, as Britain was not particularly successful in the war, and thus, he used this victory for his own good. "Churchill's position in the Parliament was in jeopardy and being able to bask

in the reflected glory of what was promoted as a great victory gave him a political lifeline.”  
(Arnold, 2015, p. 74)



### **3. Operation Overlord**

#### **3.1 Bernard Law Montgomery's command of Operation Overlord**

Bernard Montgomery was expected to play an essential role during the preparation and execution of Operation Overlord. He oversaw the actions of the combined US-British ground forces summoned into the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group. (Badsey, 2011, p. 15) Upon his arrival in England in early January 1944, he started to remake the invasion plan, code-named Neptune. Supreme Commander Eisenhower approved these changes earlier. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 38-39) "Monty's take-over of the D-Day operation two weeks before Eisenhower's arrival from America was therefore welcomed by the majority of the Allied working staff, who had been working without a designated commander for more than a year and who, for the most part, had no battlefield experience in fighting the Germans." (Hamilton, 2007, p. 42) On the other hand, as General Field Marshal Rundstedt commanded the German forces, Rommel was in charge of the coast defences. Hitler oversaw the two actions of these two officers. (Badsey, 2011, p. 12-14) Montgomery's involvement in the planning was an important step. The combination of combat experience from previous campaigns and his victory over Rommel during the Battle of El Alamein certainly placed him in an important role when preparing and executing the invasion.

Despite being welcomed by the planners, Montgomery criticised their original plan. His proposed suggestions included expanding the invasion area, reinforcing the landing force, and separating the actions of British and American troops. Besides, the officers assigned to the individual sectors shared responsibility for planning the actions in their sectors. (Gelb, 2018, p. 251-252) Nevertheless, not all proposed changes should be attributed to Montgomery. One such example may serve Colonel Bonesteel. As Bonesteel based his assumption on the knowledge of the Normandy terrain he obtained during the earlier phase of the war, he was the first to argue that the landing area should be enlarged. (Holland, 2020, p. 60-61) Even though this fact may undermine his impact on the planning, it should be noted that the sheer complexity of the actions prevented one single person from orchestrating the planning of the operation. Additionally, even though Montgomery was an experienced commander, these officers had greater knowledge of the area, and thus, they certainly played a vital role in the planning. Furthermore, the division of the actions of British and American formations presents several interesting facts. Firstly, this approach may have avoided further tensions and unrest as Montgomery was not solely responsible for the planning. Secondly, it made the subordinate officers more familiar with the area and terrain where they were expected to fight the Germans. There may be an additional argument as to why Montgomery decided to get involved with the US officers.

“Although the British would land more men on D-Day, eventually fixed as 6 June 1944, the American build-up would thereafter be faster and American troops would soon out-number those of the British,” (Corrigan, 2018, p. 61) This fact, together with the complexity of the plan, indicates the reason why Montgomery got the Americans involved in the planning. Undoubtedly, he understood that they would play a vital role in the operation, and thus, he knew they should not have been excluded from the preparation phase.

The entire ground plan for Operation Overlord, presented on April 7, consisted of launching an attack on the beaches, securing the bridgehead, and finally striking out into the French inland. Afterwards, while the Second British Army and First Canadian Army would lead deceptive pressure intending to head towards Caen, the bulk of the Allied army, consisting of US forces, would head towards Paris while simultaneously surrounding German forces near Falaise. (Montgomery, 2007, p. 138). As for the invasion, it was expected to be a combined air and ground strike. After a night airborne drop, the US troops were expected to disembark on beaches Omaha and Utah. Next, the British and Canadian soldiers were designated to disembark on beaches Juno, Gold and Sword. (Gelb, 2018, p. 265) From disembarking on Normandy until liberating Paris. One of Montgomery’s goals for the operation was to avoid high casualties. To achieve this, besides the close cooperation of all military branches, he stressed the usage of artillery and air force. (Holland, 2020, p. 57)

Montgomery also wanted to ensure his inexperienced men were not sent to combat unprepared. Hence, while he visited the units, these men were involved in rehearsals, which simulated the conditions they would experience in Normandy. (Moreman, 2010, p. 30) These facts demonstrate his responsible approach to planning. Besides preparing detailed moves through France, he realised that the operation could result in a high death toll.

Despite all this effort, there was one major obstacle to the preparation. Montgomery did not have a clear picture of the enemy positions and forces. This was caused by the fact that the Allies did not know the exact strength of the German Army in Normandy. (Holland, 2020, p. 90) This partially undermines the effect of the rehearsals, which did not reflect the accurate situation in Normandy. There is, however, an even more critical aspect connected to this point, which could potentially prove fatal for the outcome of the operation. Although the Allied commanders generally accepted the plan of the 90-day anabases, General Bradley believed it was “too rigid and did not take into account the unexpected.” (Holland, 2020, p. 63) It is questionable why Montgomery presented such a conservative plan, especially when he wanted to avoid high casualties. Unknown enemy forces could potentially engage the Allied forces. Not only would the Allies not have an alternative, but, in sharp contrast with Montgomery’s

earlier proposal, they would not be able to prevent high casualties. Finally, introducing such a plan risked the outcome of Operation Overlord.

The June 6 invasion proved successful, as the overwhelming power of the combined American, British, and Canadian attack proved unbearable for the Germans. Except for the fierce German opposition on Omaha Beach and the resistance of the 21 Panzer Division, the Allied formations successfully secured the newly made gains and made their way inland. The only major unsuccessful part was the failed capture of Caen. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 56-58) High losses had been avoided, as 10,000 men were lost on the day of the invasion. (Badsey, 2011, p. 45) Despite the unknown enemy strength on the battlefield, the initial phase proved successful. In addition, based on Montgomery's pre-battle proposal, Montgomery managed to avoid a high casualty rate in this operation phase. On the other hand, there has been an important event in terms of handling the battle. Although the landings proved successful, they simultaneously revealed flaws in Montgomery's plan and his handling of the operations. Since June 13, the Second Army had been embroiled in fierce fighting around Caen, failing to capture the city in the previous days. Montgomery thus adopted a laxer approach. He ordered the Second Army under Dempsey to focus the attention of the Germans on Caen and try to weaken their forces by the actions of artillery and air force. Montgomery's prime focus was to launch a decisive breakthrough after amassing sufficient force. Nevertheless, a strong German defence was expected. (Holland, 2020, p. 340-341) This revealed that Bradley's criticism of the plan was justified. However, it is odd that Montgomery initially expected to capture Caen on June 6, even though he knew the Second Army would face strong German formations deployed to the area. As he possibly exaggerated the capabilities of the Second Army, he may have believed that the shattered Germans would not be a significant obstacle. Despite the slow and costly advance, the Allies had the upper hand in manpower and equipment. They were constantly deploying fresh troops to France, when by June 17, 557,000 Allied military personnel arrived on the battlefield. In addition, the Allies were able to replace their losses quite easily. On the other hand, the German 7<sup>th</sup> Army and Panzer Group West were stretched to their limit when attempting to stop the Allies. While the German reinforcements were not big enough to replace the losses, they were further weakened by the constant bombardment conducted by the Allied air force. (Badsey, 2011, p. 51-52) Still, the British and Canadian formations were involved in heavy fighting as they were trying to advance further towards their objective. The initial attempt for the breakthrough, which commenced on June 25, failed due to fierce enemy resistance. Nevertheless, the second attempt finally proved successful as the elements of the Second Army entered Caen on July 8. (Norman, 2015, p. 210, 213-214) Although Caen was finally reached,

there were two primary concerns. Caen was reached more than a month later than the original plan envisioned, and the Second Army sustained high casualties. Both facts point out that the actual situation on the battlefield was much different from the pre-battle plan. “Yet the fighting itself in the Anglo-Canadian sector was as savage as that on the western front in World War I had been. By the end of June 1944 British and Canadian units had already suffered 25,000 casualties—without the capture of a German-held city to tout on the eastern flank, beyond Bayeux.” (Hamilton, 2007, p. 64) Even though Montgomery proposed avoiding a high casualty rate, this was certainly not fulfilled during the later phase of the operation in Normandy. In addition, Montgomery was mistaken in his assumption before the battle as he too heavily depended on artillery and air force. Even though their actions certainly impacted the situation on the battlefield, he fell short of recognising that to defeat the Germans decisively, the Second Army still had to deploy its ground troops.

Although Caen was reached, the Second Army did not manage to advance much further. As Bradley’s First Army and Dempsey’s Second Army did not achieve their objectives, they collaborated with Montgomery to break through the enemy lines with an assault on both flanks of the Allied front. Initially, the Second Army would conduct a deceptive strike code-named Goodwood. Being launched on July 18, the only achievement was the elimination of the last pockets of resistance in Caen. Nevertheless, the main strike, expected to be carried out by the First US Army, did not materialise due to bad weather. Goodwood was thus stopped after three days. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 68-69) Montgomery failed to deliver the desired breakthrough again. On the other hand, the operation failed due to the American inability to launch their part on time. It is questionable whether Operation Goodwood would succeed if the US commenced their action. It should be noted that the initial idea for the combined operations was not Montgomery’s. It was Dempsey who made the initial suggestion of launching a deceptive attack around Caen, which was announced to Eisenhower. Montgomery, nevertheless, reduced the scale of the assault in terms of infantry. Eisenhower was, nevertheless, not notified about these changes. (Holland, 2020, p. 529-530) This may imply that Montgomery did not believe in any more significant advance in the area around Caen as he drew on his experience from the fighting he experienced during June. This is indicated by the outcome of the meeting held on June 10 when Montgomery decided to make only limited advance south-east of Caen as the primary focus was to avoid sustaining high casualties. (Holland, 2020, p. 528) His lack of enthusiasm for Operation Goodwood indicates that he knew the enemy resistance was too strong for the Second Army and lacked the necessary capacity for a breakthrough. Montgomery may had another reason for reducing the number of infantry involved in Operation Goodwood. The

Second Army was struggling with a shortage of infantry as it sustained 40,000 casualties during the fighting in June and July. (Badsey, 2011, p. 72) As the Americans conducted the main strike, he likely did not want to sacrifice forces under his command for American achievement. Whether Operation Goodwood would succeed if Dempsey had more troops available is questionable. Apart from not believing in a breakthrough and worrying over sustaining high casualties, Montgomery might have been jealous of Dempsey attempting something he would not dare to do. This fact may also reflect why Montgomery decided to reduce the scheme of the original plan and thus did not allow Dempsey to use the full potential of the Second Army. Even though the operation failed, Montgomery did not suffer significant consequences. Particularly because Dempsey orchestrated the plan. In addition, the Second Army made some achievements. Most importantly, it exhausted or even destroyed many of the German armoured formations. (Holland, 2020, p. 554-556)

Even though Montgomery was confronted with American dominance in Normandy during the summer months, he was not replaced by an American officer. There was no suitable American officer, and Eisenhower was not prepared to take over Montgomery's duties (Hamilton, 2007, p. 73-74). A combination of factors led to this situation. Besides the American dominance, the slow progress of his troops around Caen and the failure of Goodwood undermined his role. Nevertheless, despite the seeming failures of the British, the Second Army sacrificed itself when faced the German armoured formations. (Holland, 2020, p. 614) This characterised the campaign around Caen, even though some of Montgomery's moves were controversial. However, despite little advance, he certainly weakened the German forces. This also helped the Americans on the other part of the front. Perhaps they would not have achieved such success on the battlefield without the contribution of Montgomery and the Second Army around Caen.

At the beginning of August, the Germans shifted their focus from Caen to Mortains, where Patton's Third Army attempted to break through. In the last-ditch attempt to stop the Allies, the Germans brought the panzer formations from the area around Caen. The failure of their counterattack and Hitler's order not to withdraw provided an opportunity for the American and British forces to encircle the Germans around Falaise. Thus, the Allies launched a pincer movement intending to close the pocket from north and south. The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army, under Montgomery, was projected to close the pocket north, while the US 12th Army Group was expected to close the pocket from the south. Nevertheless, the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army could not take swift action, and their advance stalled. Even though the US forces experienced a swifter advance, Bradley ordered his men not to advance further than Argentau. Finally, the Falaise

pocket was closed on August 20, and the final pockets of resistance were destroyed on August 22. (Badsey, 2011, p. 85-90) Even though the combined Allied assault resulted in success, there had been criticism over Montgomery's contribution to the outcome. This was caused by the inability of Montgomery's forces to close the Falaise pocket quickly enough, allowing 50,000 German military personnel to escape. (Clark, 2022, p. 270-271) Based on the information provided, it is evident that Montgomery did not hold sole responsibility for the failed attempt. Montgomery's forces were slow in their advance, but Bradley was not willing to speed up the advance by which he could help Montgomery. Nonetheless, this did not improve Montgomery's position as he once again failed to achieve the desired outcome in the battle.

“A week later, on August 24, 1944, Patton's first troops (General LeClerc's French 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division, which had refused to fight at Falaise) were in Paris, and by August 25 the entire Seine below Paris was in Allied hands, after 80 days of fighting—ten fewer than General Montgomery had estimated in his D-Day briefings.” (Hamilton, 2007, p. 77) The Allied advance was quicker than expected. Nevertheless, Montgomery failed on several occasions as he did not fulfil his original. More importantly, he also failed to adjust his moves swiftly.

### **3.2 The effect of Operation Overlord on Bernard Law Montgomery's career**

Operation Overlord had more detrimental than beneficial effect on Montgomery's career. Even though he was promoted to field marshal, he was forced to step down from the position of commander-in-chief of the land forces and turn it over to Eisenhower. (Badsey, 2011, p. 92) As Montgomery came under scrutiny earlier during the campaign, it was only a matter of time before an American officer would replace him. Despite being supported by the British public, his position was attenuated even more as the Americans were at the forefront of the Allied fight against the Germans in France. The Second Army was numerically inferior to the American forces as a lack of reinforcement held it back. (Gelb, 2018, p. 312-314) Montgomery could not influence this, but it certainly affected his dismissal. Then, there was an additional reason. “The Normandy campaign exposed Monty's marked weakness as a coalition general, especially his inability to communicate with his peers and his often-patronizing tone towards US generals. ... Indeed, Monty won the Normandy campaign only at a considerable personal cost in terms of confidence that Eisenhower, American commanders and senior British officers at SHAEF placed in him.” (Moreman, 2010, p. 39) As a result of Operation Overlord, Montgomery's position was significantly weakened. As the senior commanders doubted his skill, it would be increasingly difficult for him to regain their trust in the upcoming phases of the campaign in Europe. Additionally, he was not strong enough to face American dominance on the battlefield

and in the leadership hierarchy. Undoubtedly, the promotion was the only positive effect of Overlord.

### **3.3 The effect of Operation Overlord on Bernard Law Montgomery's relationship with Winston Churchill**

The effect of Operation Overlord on the relationship between Montgomery and Churchill showed both bright and dark aspects. As Montgomery was preparing to lead the strike in Normandy, he was forced to withstand the pressure from Churchill and Eisenhower, advocating for additional landings. Montgomery refused such intention, arguing that he solely oversees the planning. In the end, Churchill withdrew his proposal. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 47, 49-51) This implies that Churchill did not believe that the assault in Normandy, which Montgomery was preparing, could bring success. Indeed, they did not trust each other's capabilities. Otherwise, Churchill would not have tried to remake Montgomery's plan. It also shows that Churchill was more inclined to support Eisenhower, who represented the Americans, rather than the British, whom Montgomery represented. The tension between them, however, did not vanish once the operation was underway. Montgomery narrowly avoided losing his post when he conflicted with Churchill after Operation Goodwood. (Moreman, 2010, p. 37) Operation Overlord marked a deterioration of the relationship between Montgomery and Churchill. Especially when compared with the atmosphere after the Battle of El Alamein.

## **4. Operation Market Garden**

### **4.1 Bernard Law Montgomery's command of Operation Market Garden**

The situation preceding Operation Market Garden was precarious for the Allies as their advance stalled at the beginning of September 1944. Simultaneously, the period after the successful conduct of Operation Overlord was bewildered by uncertainty as the Allied commanders were embroiled in the discussion over the upcoming moves. On September 4, Eisenhower decided to advance over the entire front. Montgomery's role was to advance through Belgium and reach Antwerp. Despite Montgomery's criticism, the plan was not changed. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 84-86) Montgomery and Eisenhower met on September 10 to discuss the subsequent moves. It was during this meeting that Montgomery's plan for what was later known as Operation Market Garden was approved. There is, however, a point of contention over the objective proposed during the conference. On one hand, Eisenhower is said to have proposed a limited advance to secure Antwerp. On the other hand, Montgomery, who struggled to respect Eisenhower as his senior officer, envisioned greater progress to reach the Ruhr. (Buckingham, 2015, p. 70-71) "Montgomery reasoned that once the Ruhr was open then the rest of Germany would fall quickly because the majority of German industry would be in the hands of the Allies." (Fox, 2014, p. 105) Montgomery was not willing to accept Eisenhower, his senior officer, and thus, he was not willing to follow his orders and instead acted solely. This could create a potentially precarious situation for the Allies as Montgomery's approach severely hampered their coordinated advance. Information about allegedly demoralised Germans also influenced the decision to advance further. (Fox, 2014, p. 235) In addition, the national aspect played its role, as the British were not satisfied with being given a secondary role on the northern flank of the Allied advance while the US were to push forward in the main direction. (Carver, 1991, p. 3421-3433) The origin of the operation could be traced to a combination of factors. Firstly, Montgomery was likely willing to make a significant move, considering that the Germans were no longer a threat in September 1944. Besides, Montgomery's desire to achieve a considerable personal achievement and the determination to bring more attention to the British sector were among the crucial reasons Operation Market Garden was launched.

The plan expected a combined air and surface strike. "Market was the airborne portion of the plan and Garden the ground portion." (Schultz, 1997, p. 27) The First Allied Airborne Corps was expected to be dropped into the area stretching between Eindhoven and Arnhem. These exploits were to be later reached by the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps via the ground route. If this move proved



successful, the Second Army could follow up in conducting operations from the area against Ruhr. (Montgomery, 2007, p. 174) “The US 101st Airborne Division would seize the bridges near Eindhoven, the US 82nd Airborne Division the bridges and commanding terrain near Nijmegen and 1st Airborne Division the final road and railway bridges over the Lower Rhine at Arnhem after landing on heathland west of the town.” (Moreman, 2010, p. 42) “The plan called for the XXX Corps to advance the sixty-four miles to Arnhem in forty-eight hours.” (Ramsey, 1992, p. 2) The operation was expected to be commenced only a week after it was initially mentioned. The start date has been set on September 17. (Arnold, 2015, p. 231)

Numerous errors marked Montgomery's management of the planning process. The choice of commanders had an immense effect on the planning and outcome of the operation. Especially his trust in Browning, who was assigned to oversee the airborne part of Market Garden. Like Montgomery, Browning lacked the necessary experience. Furthermore, Browning's interests played a role, as he believed a successful performance could bolster his reputation. This was reflected in his refusal to acknowledge the presence of two SS Panzer divisions in the area, leading to Montgomery and the planners' failure to utilise this information and adjust the strategy. (Buckingham, 2015, p. 75-76) Next, Montgomery refused to discuss the plan with American officers who were expected to participate in the operation. (Newland and Chun, 2011, p. 265). In addition, several senior Allied officers, British and American, did not support the operation. (Gelb, 2018, p. 328) Montgomery possibly wanted to proceed with the operation, so he accompanied himself with loyalists like Browning. On the other hand, he avoided anyone with a critical opinion about the plan. Undoubtedly, he was aware that the operation faced a real threat of being cancelled, and therefore, he wanted to eliminate all critical voices.

Moreover, the RAF is also partially responsible for the flaws made during the planning. Besides the fact that the planning was hindered by a lack of aircraft, which meant the airdrop could not take place in one day, there was an additional problem. This was the poor cooperation and understanding between the RAF and airborne formations when each military branch pursued its objectives. As the RAF was in sole control of the air part of the operation, it was not willing to sustain heavy losses, and thus, it proposed to drop the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division 9 miles from Arnhem Road Bridge. Despite objections from the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, Urquhart, and other British and American officers, the plan was not modified. This mistake became apparent when only a fraction of the designated force, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Frost, managed to reach the bridge in Arnhem. (Buckingham, 2015, p. 82-91) This implies that Montgomery cannot be solely blamed for the mistakes made during the planning. Nonetheless, based on his inexperience with

handling airborne operations, he failed to recognise the problematic relationship between RAF and airborne formations. Thus, this was an additional element in the chain of poor decisions.

Difficulties hampered Market Garden since its beginning. The advance of the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps fell behind schedule, caused by the unknown strong German formations up to that time and by the fact that the elements of the 101<sup>st</sup> airborne division did not manage to capture the bridge at Son intact. Thus, the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps was far behind schedule. The final point of advance was the capture of the bridge at Nijmegen. Due to the fierce resistance, the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps did not reach the 1st British Airborne Division, being split into two around Arnhem and Oosterbeek. The 1st Polish Parachute Brigade, which was airdropped in Driel, was subsequently relieved by the XXX Corps. While the British paratroopers, after a heroic fight at Arnhem, surrounded on September 21, the remaining elements of the 1st British Airborne Division withdrew over the Rhine back to Allied positions. (Bentley, 1990, p. 15-17) The concerns over the outcome of the operation proved justified as both the armoured and airborne formations experienced immense difficulties. Mainly the British paratroopers at Arnhem. Without a doubt, Montgomery was mistaken in his belief that he could reach Arnhem quickly, as the advance was much slower than expected. The significant flaws could be found in the hurried preparations and the overtly optimistic expectations. Montgomery fell short of recognising the strategy chosen was unfavourable for this operation. Besides these, the planners did not consider the strengthened German garrison in the area.

The question remains whether this plan could be implemented under ideal conditions. “Even if Market Garden had worked it is difficult to see how a German army commanded by Field Marshal Walter Model would have allowed a sixty-mile long narrow corridor with only one road to exist for long.” (Corrigan, 2018, p. 63) Based on these facts, the general concept of Operation Market Garden was unrealistic. It heavily depended on the fact that the Germans could not conduct a strong resistance against the Allies. Moreover, there was no alternative plan for what to do in case the plan failed. This was realised when the Allies did not conduct any major action until the end of the war. (Hamilton, 2007, p. 90) This fact points out how undesirable area Montgomery had chosen. Thus, they were in a deadlock. The Allies had no other option but to handle the situation. It took much longer to get through than initially expected. Finally, the captured bridges in Nijmegen were put out of action by the Germans in late September 1944. (Buckingham, 2015, p. 228) Even if Market Garden succeeded, the vulnerability of the bridges would be a significant concern. This fact could threaten any upcoming moves expected to occur afterwards.

## **4.2 The effect of Operation Market Garden on Bernard Law Montgomery's career**

The failure of Market Garden damaged Montgomery's career. Not only did he perform unsuccessfully on the battlefield, but he also conflicted with Eisenhower after the operation. Despite the argument, Eisenhower diplomatically decided not to dismiss Montgomery. (Clark, 2022, p. 274) “He intended, therefore, to give Bradley the task Montgomery had previously been assigned of seizing the Ruhr, with Montgomery acting in support.” (Gelb, 2018, p. 335) Even though Montgomery maintained his post, being given a secondary role in the campaign certainly downgraded his position in the eyes of Eisenhower and other officers. This can be understood as a significant consequence of Market Garden on Montgomery's career.

This happened despite his attempts to be held directly responsible for the failed operation. He started to accuse officers involved in the execution of Market Garden. This was the case of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade commander, Sosabowski, whom Montgomery falsely accused of mishandling the operation. (Buckingham, 2015, p. 229-230) Montgomery similarly accused Lieutenant-General O'Connor. (Corrigan, 2018, p. 63). These facts portray that Montgomery was aware of the severe implications of the failed Market Garden. Despite these efforts, he had not escaped the consequences.

## **4.3 The effect of Operation Market Garden on Bernard Law Montgomery's Relationship with Winston Churchill**

Before launching Market Garden, Churchill actively discussed the following moves with the Americans and “requested that Montgomery's sector be given more attention.” (Jeffson, 2002, p. 6). Despite the operation's failure, it did not significantly influence Montgomery's relationship with Churchill, as Churchill blamed the bad weather rather than Montgomery's planning. (Arnold, 2015, p. 247) Besides Churchill being indirectly involved in launching the operation, he was possibly afraid of the consequences. Criticism of Montgomery would also hold Britain responsible for this failure. Undoubtedly, he realised that this could severely undermine the British position in the campaign.

## Conclusion

The thesis analysed Bernard Law Montgomery's performance during the Second Battle of El Alamein, Operation Overlord, and Operation Market Garden in World War II. It also examined how each battle influenced his career and relationship with Winston Churchill.

The analysis of Montgomery's performance during the Second Battle of El Alamein in October and November 1942 revealed that although Montgomery led the Eighth Army to victory, he made several mistakes during the planning and conduct of the battle. Besides the authenticity of the battle plan, the failure of the initial attack, codenamed Operation Lightfoot, resulted from his underestimation of the strength of the Axis forces and exaggeration of the capabilities of his army. Even though Montgomery managed to force the Axis to withdraw during Operation Supercharge and thus secure victory, he allowed them to escape from the area. Therefore, based on the course of the battle, it was more likely that the victory was due to the numerical superiority of the Eighth Army rather than Montgomery's leadership and tactical skills.

Montgomery's triumph at El Alamein also profoundly impacted his relationship with Winston Churchill when Montgomery earned his trust and support.

Analysing Montgomery's involvement in Operation in 1944, his planning resulted in a successful landing in Normandy on June 6, 1944. However, his plan for the later vents diverted greatly from the expected course. Primarily, while overseeing the actions of the Second Army in June, July, and August, he could not execute a quick advance around Caen. Even though his forces participated in the successful outcome of Operation Overlord, they were overshadowed by the successes of the US Army.

His involvement in Operation Overlord certainly damaged his career. Before the operation, Montgomery was given the overall command of the forces, a post he was relieved from after it was finalised. Although he was promoted to field marshal, he lost the trust of the senior command and was overshadowed by the Americans.

Similarly, his relationship with Winston Churchill degraded as it was full of distrust before and during the Overlord.

Unlike the previous two battles, Market Garden ended in defeat for Montgomery. The reasons can be traced to several crucial mistakes made during the planning phase in September 1944. Most notably, hasty preparations and Montgomery's demand to commence the operation were among the critical factors. Additionally, he neglected information about the presence of

the enemy's armoured formations in the area. Ultimately, the operation failed because his intention to link the 30<sup>th</sup> Corps with the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Arnhem did not materialise.

Following Montgomery's unsuccessful performance during Overlord by Market Garden, he attempted to improve his damaged reputation. However, the operation failed, and the Americans overshadowed him and his forces. Montgomery also conflicted with Eisenhower.

Despite the unsuccessful performance, Montgomery's relationship with Churchill was not damaged as Churchill supported Montgomery and his attack in the Netherlands.

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## Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na vítězství a porážky Bernarda Law Montgomeryho za druhé světové války. Konkrétně analyzuje jeho velení v Druhé bitvě u El Alameinu, Operaci Overlord a Operaci Market Garden. Dále práce zkoumá, jak jeho účast v těchto bitvách ovlivnila jeho kariéru a jeho vztah s Winstonem Churchillem.

Montgomery zvítězil v Druhé bitvě u El Alameinu, která se udála v říjnu a listopadu 1942. Je ovšem nutné podotknout, že vliv na toto vítězství měla spíše početní převaha Osmé Armády, spíše než Montgomeryho taktické schopnosti. Tato bitva měla pozitivní dopad na jeho kariéru, jelikož byl povýšen na generála a stal se populární osobností. Dále měla pozitivní vliv na jeho vztah s Churchillem. V průběhu Operace Overlord, v roce 1944, velel všem pozemním silám spojenců. I když zinscenoval úspěšné vylodění spojenců v Normandii, později nebyl schopen dosáhnout rychlého postupu v prostoru Caen. Toto bylo v rozporu s jeho plánem. Navíc jeho vojska utrpěla těžké ztráty. Vyjma povýšení na polního maršála, měla Overlord negativní dopad na jeho kariéru, jelikož byl odvolán z pozice velitele pozemních spojeneckých sil. Současně měl konflikt s Churchillem před a v průběhu této operace. V září 1944 se Montgomery rozhodl zinscenovat Operaci Market Garden, což byl plán pro rychlý průnik do Německa. Operaci ovšem zkomplikovaly Montgomeryho chyby v plánování, které zapříčinily selhání celé operace, když se nezdařilo 30. sboru dosáhnout mostu v Arnhemu. Po selhání Market Garden se Montgomery dostal do konfliktu s Eisenhowerem. Další negativní dopad pro Montgomeryho kariéru byl fakt, že byla jeho vojskům vrchním velením dána druhořadá priorita. Přes tyto všechny negativní dopady neměla Market Garden negativní vliv na Montgomeryho vztah Churchillem.