

EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: BERLIN

Soviet report on the state of Berlin in May 1945

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man left

BERLINERS SEE ORDER AND MIGHT

Cave-Men of German Capital Read Soviet Proclamations:

"WE DO NOT AIM TO ANNIHILATE GERMAN NATION"

"Pravda" publishes a report by its correspondents Gorbachev and Mershanov, quoted by Moscow radio, from "The Berlin Area."

In Berlin (say the correspondents) our troops captured a film-producing factory. We visited it. In the developing tanks we found an unfinished film. On the control table a roll of the latest film was still to be seen. It was the latest issue of the newsreel "Events of the Week." Yet the most important news of this historic week was missing from it. The Soviet troops have burst into Berlin and put an end to the dark Hitlerite "events."

Battle is raging on the streets, in the air and underground in the railway tunnels, getting closer and closer to the Spree, the Reichstag and the centre of the city. The whole landscape is smothered in clouds of brick-dust. In the districts where fighting is still continuing, naturally there are no civilians to be seen in the streets - only here and there a white flag hangs timidly out of a window. A white flag at the window and machine-gun fire from the attic. Yet there is no contradiction in this. The German divisions are still resisting stubbornly and fiercely, like a trapped wolf.

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN**What is this source?**

This is a report from Berlin in May 1945 that was broadcast on Moscow radio.

The document was a transcript written down by British officials in Moscow and sent back to the British Foreign Office.

What's the background to this source?

One of Hitler's key aims in WW2 was to invade and destroy the Soviet Union and build a German empire in Eastern Europe. He invaded the USSR in June 1941 and at first it looked like he would succeed. However, he was stopped by the Russian winter in 1941 and then by stubborn Soviet resistance in 1942–3. By the start of 1943 the tide began to turn against the Germans. By 1944 all German forces were driven out of the USSR. By 1945 the Red Army was moving into Germany and it took Berlin in May 1945.

German propaganda had given the Soviets a terrible reputation in the minds of many Germans. As a result, many German soldiers and civilians fought on against the Red Army in 1945 when many others gave up when facing the British and American forces. Thus, although the war was clearly lost when the Red Army reached Berlin, German forces still followed Hitler's orders to defend the city. The Red Army attacked the city on April 16th and the fighting lasted until May 2nd. The Soviets suffered well over 300 000 casualties. German losses are estimated to be even higher.

It's worth knowing that...

The report also described how Berlin had become a city of cave dwellers. Because of the Soviet attack and Allied bombing most Berliners lived in basements or other underground shelters.

By May 1945 most Germans were, not surprisingly, very bitter about what Hitler and the Nazis had done to Germany. This was actually a relief to the Allies. They feared that Nazi propaganda may have completely brainwashed Germans and that they would still support Nazism even after defeat.

How will you use this source?

1. Why did the Russians make the proclamation about not annihilating Germans?
2. What was missing from 'Events of the Week'?



Learning Curve

WORLD WAR II

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3. Can you think of how the Soviet advance into Berlin might have been shown in German newsreels?
4. What does this source reveal about the fighting the Soviet troops had to do in Berlin?
5. Are there any parts of this source you could use in your script for your task using the starter source film clip?