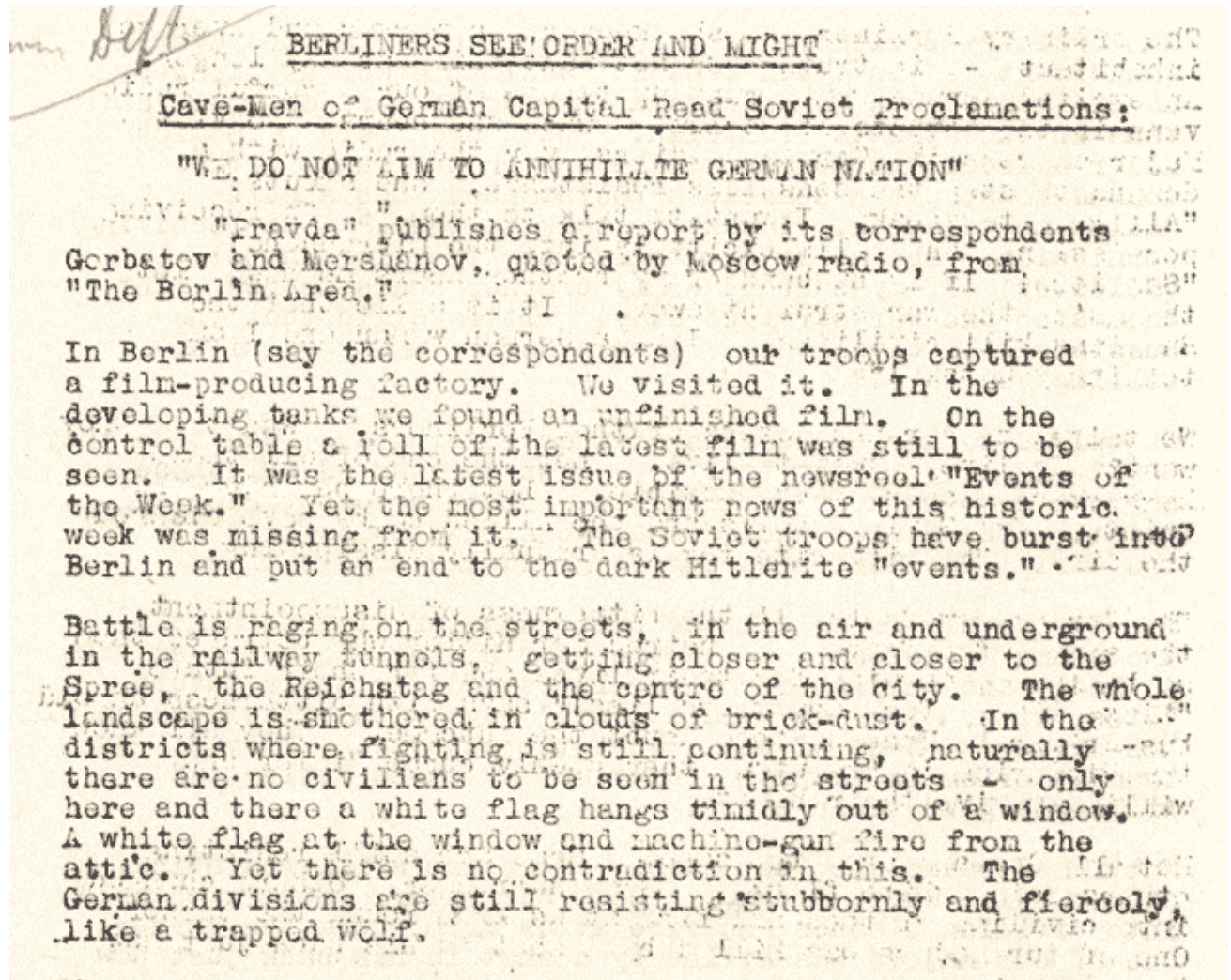


EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: BERLIN

Soviet report on the state of Berlin in May 1945

Catalogue ref: FO 371/46748



**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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'?

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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?