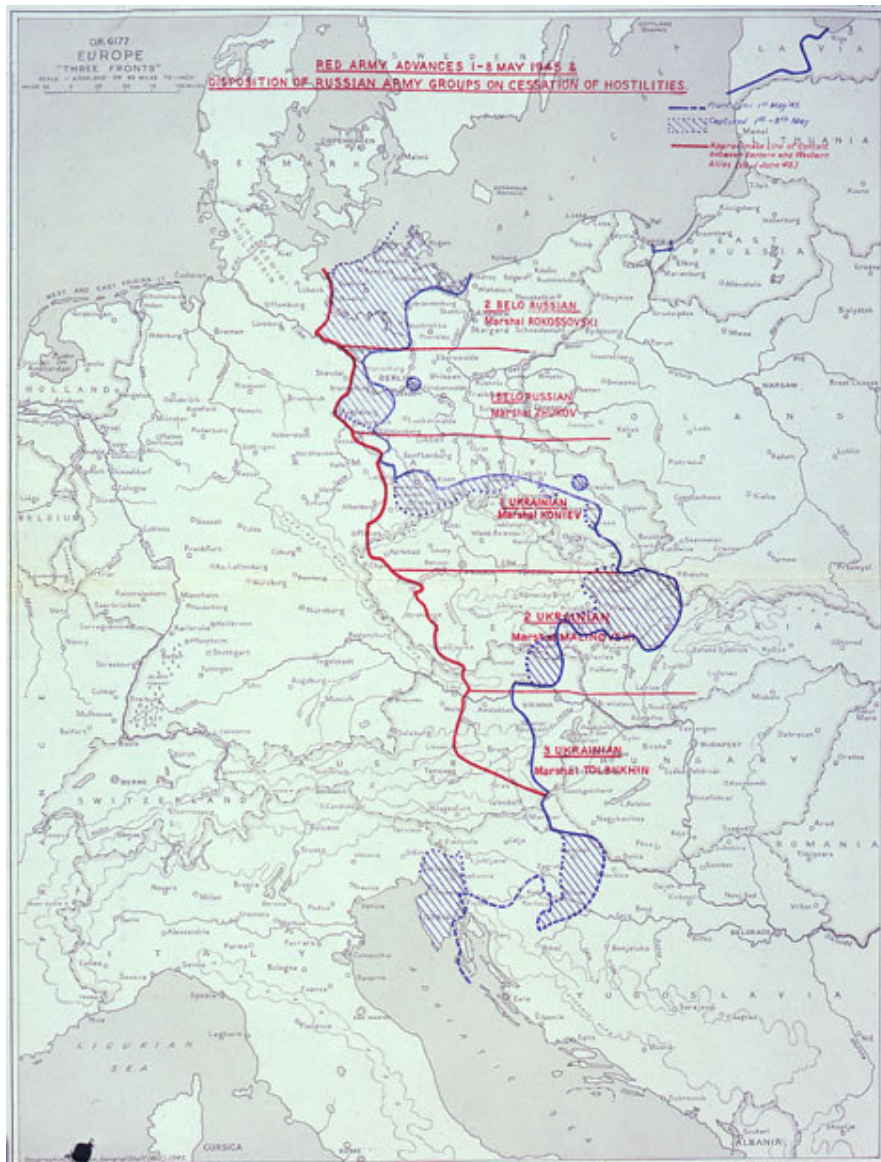


EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

British military map from May 1945

Catalogue ref: WO 208/1773



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

This source is an official British military map showing the position of the Soviet Army forces at the end of the war in Europe in May 1945.

The map shows the point where the Soviet advance into Germany ended in May 1945. It also shows the position and commander of the various Soviet armies.

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...

Before the war the Western powers (especially Britain and the USA) were deeply opposed to the USSR's political system, Communism. However, during the war they found they had a common enemy in Hitler and they worked together to defeat him.

This map may look like a simple statement of where Soviet forces were in May 1945. However, it is likely that the map was drawn up in case the Soviets tried to advance further into Europe. British Prime Minister Churchill and US President Truman did not trust Soviet leader Stalin.

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How will you use this source?

1. Describe this map as though you were a radio broadcaster and your listeners cannot see it.
2. What does the red line show?
3. How much territory has the Soviet Red Army recaptured from the Germans?
4. By looking at other sources in the source box, does this map help you to understand the scale of devastation that was caused by the war in the East of Europe?
5. Could you use evidence from this map in your script for your task using the starter source film clip?