

TASK INSTRUCTIONS

The key question: How should we report the fall of Berlin?

Your task

Your task is to write the script for a news report on the fall of Berlin.

HOW SHOULD WE REPORT THE FALL OF BERLIN?

It is May 1945. Berlin has finally fallen to the advancing armies of the Soviet Union, Britain's allies. The news is going to be announced by the Prime Minister, and the following day the newsreels will report the fall of Berlin in British cinemas.

Your task

Your task is to write the script for a news report on the fall of Berlin. Here is the footage with a Russian commentary. This commentary will be dubbed out and your script will be read out over the clip. You have to think about these issues:

- How much emphasis will you put on the actual taking of Berlin?
- Do you need to describe the hard fighting needed to take Berlin itself?
- How much emphasis will you put on the years of hard fighting which the Red Army has done up to this point?
- How much will you feature the role of British Empire, American and French forces?
- Everyone has known for some time that Germany would be defeated. Is this really a major event?

Use the table to plan your script.

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN**A clip from a newsreel called Russians enter Berlin with commentary in Russian, 1945**

Catalogue ref: BP010145162919
Courtesy of [ITN/Source](#), London.

What is this source?

This source is an extract from a news film shot in Berlin in 1945. The Red Army took camera operators on all its campaigns. All sides in WW2 understood the value of film for information and propaganda purposes.

The film was shot as silent film out in the battlefield. Sound would then be added in a studio later. This clip has its Russian soundtrack.

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 scale of the campaign on the Eastern Front was far larger than any other campaign in the war. In 1944 there were five times as many Soviet divisions fighting Germans, as there were British and American. Soviet losses during WW2 were also enormous. The USSR lost over 20 million military and civilian dead.

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

There is still disagreement today over the last days of the war. Some historians have emphasised the looting and raping carried out by Soviet troops on German civilians in 1945. Other historians point out the terrible atrocities committed by the Germans on Soviet territory earlier in the war.

How will you use this source?

1. What does this clip tell you about the nature of the fighting in Berlin in 1945?
2. What effect has the fighting had on Berlin?
3. Do you get the impression this is a genuine battlefield film rather than one that has been staged?
4. Does any of the footage look as if it has been filmed for a particular purpose?
5. Which three scenes will feature strongly in your script?

Use the report table to help plan your report.

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

Extract from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's statement officially announcing the defeat of Germany 1945

Catalogue ref: FO 371/46785

Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight to-night, Tuesday, 8th May, but in the interests of saving lives the "Cease Fire" began yesterday to be sounded all along the fronts, and I should not forget to mention that our dear Channel Islands, the only part of His Majesty's Dominions that has been in the hands of the German foe, are also

to be freed to-day. The Germans are still in places resisting Russian troops, but should they continue to do so after midnight, they will, of course, deprive themselves of the protection of the laws of war and will be attacked from all quarters by the Allied troops. It is not surprising that on such long fronts and in the existing disorder of the enemy that the orders of the German High Command should not in every case have been obeyed. This does not, in our opinion, constitute any reason for withholding from the nation the facts communicated to us by General Eisenhower of the unconditional surrender already signed at Rheims, nor should it prevent us from celebrating to-day, and to-morrow—Wednesday—as Victory-in-Europe Days, and I think that to-morrow it may be specially desirable for us to emphasise the debt we owe to our Soviet Ally, whose main celebrations will be taking place to-morrow.

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

What is this source?

This source is an extract from Prime Minister Churchill's official announcement to the British Parliament that the war against Germany was over.

The official date was May 8th 1945 and it became known as VE-Day, that is, Victory in Europe Day.

What's the background to this source?

After Hitler's early successes in 1940 only Britain and her Empire allies stood against Germany. However, Hitler attacked the USSR in 1941 and gave Britain an ally. Throughout the war Britain, and then the USA, supplied the USSR with supplies and equipment by air and by dangerous sea convoys. They also played their part in defeating Germany by invading occupied France in June 1944 and then advancing on Germany. However, there is little doubt that the USSR actually took on the major share of the fighting against German forces and also suffered the highest casualties.

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.

It's worth knowing that...

Before the war Churchill was a bitter opponent of the USSR's Communist system of government and he made no secret of the fact that he did not trust Stalin. However, once they became allies the relationship between Churchill and Stalin improved. They did admire each other. Even so, it was doubtful whether they ever really trusted each other.

In 1943 Churchill commented in an official telegram about the activities of the USA and British forces in the Mediterranean. He declared that: 'Our present activities in the Mediterranean, important though they are, could only be regarded as an inadequate contribution compared with the efforts which Russia was making'.



Learning Curve

WORLD WAR II

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

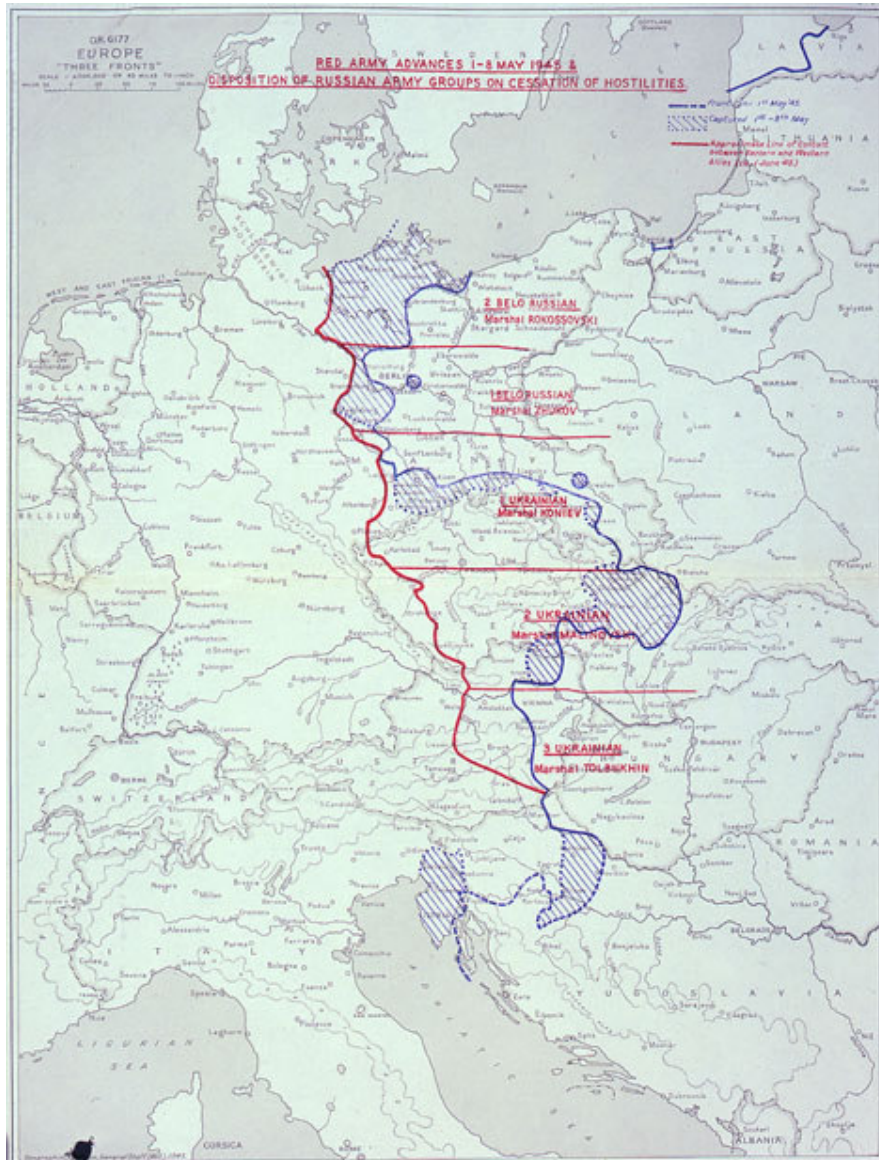
How will you use this source?

1. What was Churchill announcing?
2. Why was the ceasefire not being followed in all areas?
3. What does Churchill say about the Soviet Union?
4. What does this tell you about the Soviet contribution to Germany's defeat?
5. Are there any parts of this source you could use in your script for your task using the starter source film clip?

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.

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

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?

EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: BERLIN

Extract from a report by a British officer in Russia, 1944

Catalogue ref: FO 371/46785

Enemy Dead

On a sector of about 4 kilometres I saw some 700 to 1,000 steel helmets mostly undamaged. Explanation was that a battalion had been caught by "Katushas". Clearing up parties collect bodies, but owing to their weight leave the helmets which are collected by other groups.

At Gatchina I saw a common grave, with excavator standing by, with about 200 German dead in uniform without caps. On 1st February I saw about 2,000 German graves, all carefully labelled and the Russians intend to respect them. They are burying their own dead individually where possible.

There were German signs and signposts everywhere, many new. Papers, food, etc. were left behind in large quantities. I picked up a Christmas postcard dated 12th December, 1943, from Dresden, bearing field post stamp of 31st December (this on 1st February).

German Prisoners

Saw about 140 in two groups marching towards Oranianbaum under a very light guard.

German Morale

Russians state that Germans have fought most stubbornly and well, wherever they have been ordered to make a stand. But once **away** from positions, or taken on a flank, they incline to panic.

German Material

The Recorder of Artillery Museum, Leningrad, who is making a special study of everything captured on this front, stated that in the last few weeks the Germans have used a new type of lemon grenade. This is larger than the old type and very effective. I could obtain no further details. The recorder added he considers all German clothing has greatly and steadily deteriorated. Technical clothing for scouts, snipers, etc. and camouflage has improved in design during the summer and autumn of 1943. Telescopic sights on rifles were as good as ever.

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

This is a report written by a British officer who was posted with Soviet forces in Moscow and Leningrad early in 1944.

The British officer was there to improve links between the allied forces. However, he commented at several points in his report that he was not always able to see everything he wanted.

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.

The Germans almost reached Moscow at the end of 1941 but were halted by Soviet resistance and the Soviet winter. The Germans did reach Leningrad and encircled the city from September 1941 until January 1944. The fight for Leningrad was almost as deadly as the battle for Stalingrad. Estimates of Soviet military and civilian deaths range from 600 000 to 800 000.

It's worth knowing that...

When the Germans advanced on the USSR in 1941 they had the most advanced weapons and tactics. The Red Army was caught unprepared. This was partly because Soviet leader Stalin had executed many army officers because he feared possible opponents from within his own country.

The Soviets learnt quickly from German tactics and copied many of them. They also added their own tactics and proved very effective at producing massive amounts of equipment in terrible conditions. The Soviets were also supplied with vast amounts of equipment from Britain and the USA. Of all German soldiers killed in WW2, 90% were killed fighting the USSR.

How will you use this source?

1. What evidence is there that Soviet weapons and tactics were effective?



Learning Curve

WORLD WAR II

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

2. How did the Russians treat the German dead?
3. What does the source reveal about German troops?
4. What does it reveal about German equipment?
5. Is this source useful for telling us about the importance of the Red Army in defeating Hitler?
6. Are there any parts of this source or the notes you could use in your script for your task using the starter source film clip?

EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: BERLIN

Soviet report on the state of Berlin in May 1945

Catalogue ref: FO 371/46748

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 Gorbatev 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?

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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

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

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?

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

Extract from a British newsreel covering events on the Eastern Front 1942 Russian Offensive over a thousand mile front

ITN Ref: BP141242134611

Courtesy of [ITN/Source](#), London.**Transcript**

Thousands of shells stream through the night. By the light of gunflashes, cameras photograph Soviet artillery in action. Tanks laden with automatic riflemen press on as the tidal wave rolls forward to exploit a breakthrough

“I cannot get away from destiny”, said Adolf Hitler recently, “It haunts me day and night.”

How painfully true must he have found that remark to be when, instead of digging in until the Spring, his divisions are confronted with the prospect of a winter more terrible than the last.

His intuition must have boggled at the sight of his armies in Russia confronted with a series of offences, any one of which may seriously threaten his entire campaign. Here on the central front alone, the Red Army divisions are biting deeper and deeper into the German lines. General Zhukov was responsible for the brilliant operation.

In the wake of the advancing Russians there came those who had been driven from their homes, eager to return to what may remain. Slowly, grimly, painfully wending their way, to try and pick up the threads of life in the now liberated villages.

What is this source?

This is a newsreel film broadcast in Britain in December 1942.

At the time that this newsreel was being shown Soviet forces were engaged in a life or death struggle for the city of Stalingrad.

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

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

German forces were driven out of the USSR. By 1945 the Red Army was moving into Germany and it took Berlin in May 1945.

The key event of the campaign was probably the Battle of Stalingrad. The battle ran from late 1942 to early 1943. It was the deadliest battle in history and it cost German forces dearly in terms of men and equipment. From this point Soviet forces steadily drove the Germans back.

It's worth knowing that...

Although the film was broadcast in December 1942 the footage was probably shot in the summer or autumn of 1942. At that point the prospects for the Red Army looked very bad indeed, so this is a good example of a news film putting a positive spin on events.

After the war the old mistrust between Britain and the USA and the USSR resurfaced. As a result, the critical role of the Red Army in defeating Hitler was played down. However, films like this show us that at the time people were aware of the role the USSR was playing in the war.

How will you use this source?

1. According to the film, how did Hitler's words turn out the way he did not expect?
2. How are the Soviet forces shown in this film?
3. What does the film show us about the impact of the fighting on civilians?
4. How does the commentary describe Zhukov?
5. Are there any parts of this source you could use in your script for your task using the starter source film clip?

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

How should we report the fall of Berlin?

You have to think about these issues:

- How much emphasis will you put on the actual taking of Berlin?
- Do you need to describe the hard fighting needed to take Berlin itself?
- How much emphasis will you put on the years of hard fighting which the Red Army has done up to this point?
- How much will you feature on the role of British Empire, American and French forces?
- Everyone has known for some time that Germany would be defeated. Is this really a major event?

Use this table to help you plan your script.

Timing	What the viewer will see	What the viewer will read/hear