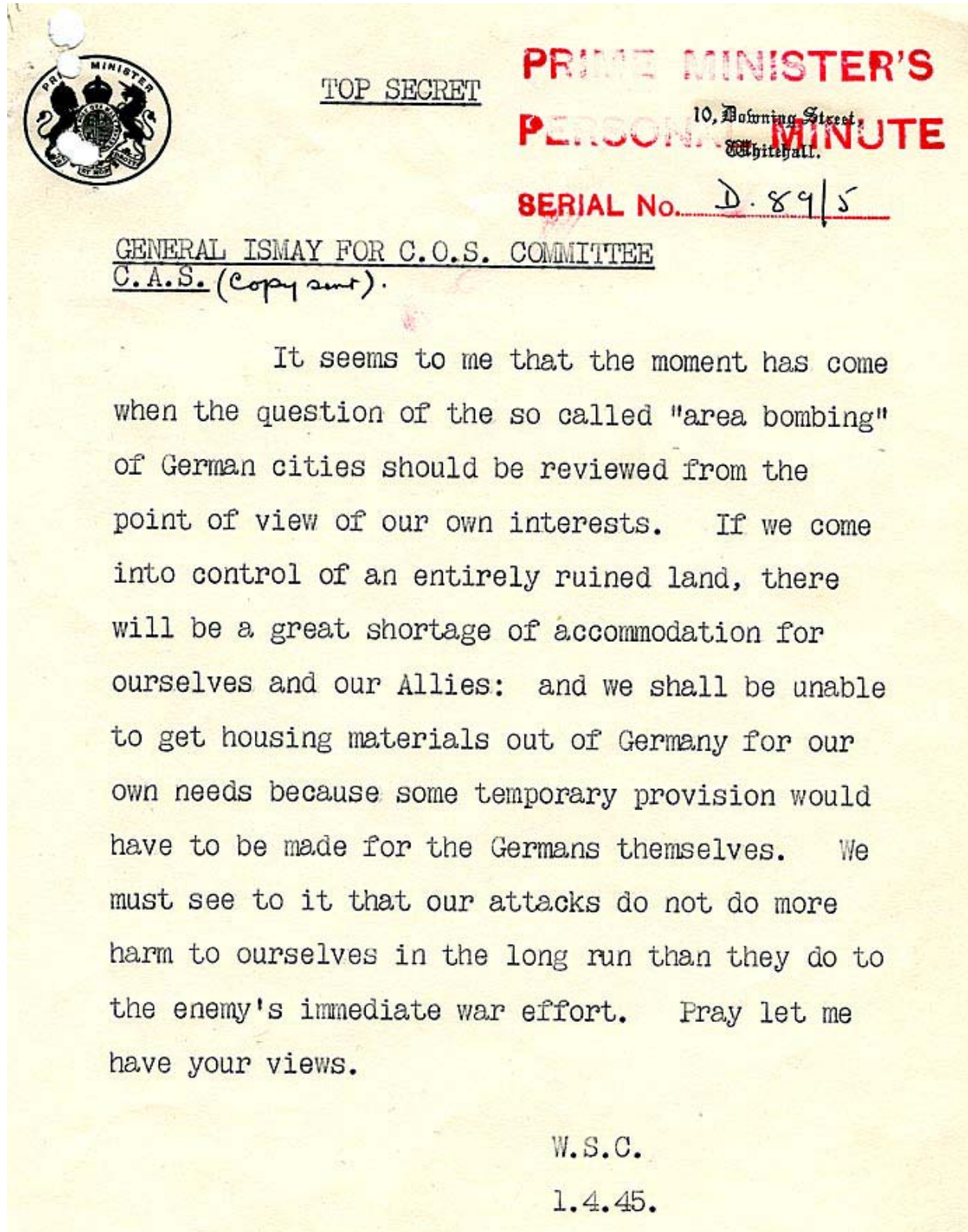


Letter from Churchill on area bombing, 1st April 1945

Catalogue ref: CAB 120/303



**WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: HAMBURG****What is this source?**

This is a letter written in April 1945 by Prime Minister Winston Churchill after the bombing of Dresden.

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**What's the background to this source?**

In February 1945, the last year of World War 2, Britain sent 300 Lancaster bombers to attack the crowded German city of Dresden. This attack was not the precision bombing of specific military targets. It was deliberate bombing of a whole area. The city was devastated.

Eleven square miles of Dresden were consumed by a firestorm. Thousands of Germans died from suffocation.

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**It's worth knowing that...**

The decision to bomb Dresden came as a surprise to some because there was little industry of importance in the city, though Dresden was being used in the transport of troops. RAF commanders had queried the decision. However, it went ahead.

There is still intense debate about the bombing today. Critics argue it had limited effects on the German war machine and did not weaken German morale or make Hitler surrender. On the other hand, German production did not rise and resources had to go into anti-aircraft defences. Also, after the war 91% of Germans said the worst aspect of the war was the bombing.

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**How does this source help us to understand why the RAF bombed German cities?**

1. According to the source, why is Churchill concerned about "area bombing"?
2. What reasons might Churchill have had for writing this letter?
3. Can this source be used to support any of the viewpoints A-D for your debate?

Use the debate summary table to record your choice of sources. Find out more about the bombing of Dresden on the following link:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesvillains/g1/>