LAND and AIR WAR in BERLIN



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The Russian State Archive contains many photos which document the land-and-air war in (and over) Berlin during the spring of 1945. This particular photo, also from the Russian State Archive, depicts Soviet Katyusha rocket launchers firing in the Battle of Berlin during April of 1945. Image online, courtesy Russian State Archive.

The <u>vicious battle</u> for Germany's <u>capital city</u> - dubbed "Berlin Offensive Operation" by <u>the Soviets</u> - is often called <u>The Last Battle</u> of the war in Europe. A risky move by Stalin, who decided to "go it alone" without his Allies, the seventeen-day, mind-numbing battle - depicted in photos at the Russian State Archives - was incredibly costly.

Stalin's troops were <u>on a mission</u>. Earlier in the war, the Nazis had laid waste to vast stretches of Soviet land. More than 20 million soldiers and civilians died as a direct result. What would happen to the Germans, and Berlin, if <u>their capital fell</u> into Soviet hands?

Resistance was fierce, but it was no match for Russian determination. Later, a surviving German machine gunner <u>said</u>:

We started to fire at the masses [of Soviet soldiers]. They weren't human beings for us. It was a wall of attacking beasts who were trying to kill us. You yourself were no longer human.

Millions of shells were fired into an already devastated city, killing about 250,000 people. Around 70,000 of those who died were Soviet soldiers.

The Brandenburg Gate and the <u>Reichstag</u>, among other <u>places</u>, became scenes of debris and <u>danger</u> during <u>fearsome</u> fighting for the city. <u>People</u> from all <u>walks of life</u> were caught up in the <u>destruction</u>.

Some of the most intense shelling and fighting in Berlin <u>took place</u> during <u>The Last Days of Hitler</u>. With specific destinations in mind, Soviet artillerymen marked <u>their ammo</u>:

To Hitler, In Berlin, On the Reichstag.

Gestapo headquarters, where people like Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich had concocted murderous plans against innocent people, was <u>massively damaged</u>. Hitler, <u>in his bunker</u> near the Reichstag, would come to realize the capital city would soon be lost.

Understanding their situation was <u>hopeless</u> (this video includes graphic war scenes), some Germans began to surrender. The Soviets captured thousands of <u>others</u>. The Fuhrer's <u>soldiers</u> became <u>prisoners of war</u>, with <u>huge numbers</u> of them facing a very uncertain future after transport to the Soviet Union.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LAND-and-AIR-WAR-in-BERLIN-Victory-in-Europe-End-of-WWII

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LAND-and-AIR-WAR-in-BERLIN-Victory-in-Europe-End-of-WWII

Questions 2 Ponder

Can War Cause Individuals to Become Unfeeling and Uncaring?

When a WWII German machine gunner described how he and his fellow soldiers were firing at the Soviet soldiers—"They weren't human beings for us. It was a wall of attacking beasts who were trying to kill us. You yourself were no longer human"—do you think he was describing what can happen in any war?

Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Fighting in Berlin - 2 May 1945

Photograph online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Soviet Army Fighting in Berlin

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Soviet Heavy Artillery in Berlin

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Berlin: The Downfall 1945

Image online, courtesy the <u>amazon.com</u> website.

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The Reichstag - Heavily Damaged

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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A Berlin Street - Final Days of Battle, 1945

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Soviet Tanks in Berlin - World War II

Image online, courtesy the Russian State Archives website.

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Fearsome Fighting in the Streets of Berlin

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Soviet Rocket Fire During the Battle for Berlin

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Street Scene During Battle for Berlin

Image online, courtesy Imperial War Museum.

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German Prisoners of War

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Fighting Through the Destruction - Berlin, 1945

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Soviet Troops Atop the Reichstag

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Soviet Military Marking Their Ammo

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Massively Damaged Gestapo Headquarters

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Victory Flag - The Fall of Berlin, 1945

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Propaganda Ministry Captives - Fall of Berlin

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Fuhrer's Soldiers Become Prisoners of War

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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Belorussian Soldiers with Prisoners of War - Berlin, 1945

Image online, courtesy Russian State Archives.

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<u>Hitler's Bunker - The Final Days</u>

Clip from <u>Downfall (Der Untergang)</u>, produced by <u>Constantin Film</u> and distributed by <u>New Market</u> Films

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