

# ***Treptower Park; Soviet Red Army Legacy in Modern Berlin***

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**Class. 9-12 Social Studies. American Government (Comparative Government). History and World History.**

## **Lesson Objectives**

*The student will be able to:*

- Identify main combatants and themes in the final Battle for Berlin at the end of World War II and discuss Stalin's desire to be the first to occupy Berlin.
- Identify meanings and importance of symbols used in the Soviet Memorial located in Berlin.

## **Attitude Objectives**

*The student should gain a better understanding of*

- How the Battle for Berlin shaped many post-war attitudes and dealings between Germany and the Allies.
- Why the Soviet Memorial in Treptower Park is significant in a study of modern Germany and Berlin.

## **Materials and Resources**

- Notebook/desktop computer with LCD projector.
- Paper, pencil
- Ability to present POWERPOINT lessons or a way to display pictures of Memorial

## **Social Studies Standards**

IDAHO CONTENT STANDARDS GRADE 9-12 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT (Reflects National Standards)

### **Standard 5: Global Perspectives**

Students in American Government build an understanding of multiple perspectives and global interdependence.

**Goal 5.1:** Build an understanding of multiple perspectives and global interdependence.

**Objective(s):** By the end of American Government, the student will be able to:

- 9-12.G.5.1.1      Discuss the mutual impact of ideas, issues, and policies among nations, including environmental, economic, and humanitarian. [\(505.01c\)](#)

## IDAHO CONTENT STANDARDS GRADE 6-9 WORLD HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

### **Standard 5: Global Perspectives**

Students in World History and Civilization build an understanding of multiple perspectives and global interdependence.

**Goal 5.1: Build an understanding of multiple perspectives and global interdependence.**

**Objective(s): By the end of World History and Civilization, the student will be able to:**

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 6-9.WHC.5.1.1 | Explain common reasons and consequences for the breakdown of order among nation-states, such as conflicts about national interests, ethnicity, and religion; competition for resources and territory; the absence of effective means to enforce international law. |
| 6-9.WHC.5.1.2 | Explain the global consequences of major conflicts in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, such as World War I; World War II, including the Holocaust; and the Cold War.  |
| 6-9.WHC.5.1.3 | Evaluate why peoples unite for political, economic, and humanitarian reasons.  |

#### ***Activity 1: The Battle for Berlin***

- “The Battle for Berlin” (Reading #1)
- Questions corresponding to the reading (Worksheet #1A)

#### ***Activity 2: A Visit through the Soviet Memorial***

- A visual and reading trip through the Memorial (Handout/Reading #2)
- Post/pre reading Exercise on what the symbols represent. The first column will be filled in by students before the reading/discussion. They will try and anticipate what the symbols mean. The last column will be filled out during the reading/discussion as the intended meaning becomes clear. Will provide an interesting contrast in what the student expected and what the Soviets intended. (Worksheet #2A)

#### ***Additional Materials***

- “The Battle for Berlin” worksheet #1A answers
- “Organizational Chart comparing Soviet and German issues” worksheet #1B answers

- “Soviet Memorial pre and post-reading assignment” worksheet #2A answers

#### Additional Lesson Presentation Material

- PowerPoint Presentation on tour of Treptower Park

#### “Go-Beyond “ Activity

Read and discuss the following book. *The Fall of Berlin 1945*. Author. Anthony Beevor

# Activities

## Activity 1: The Battle for Berlin

*NOTE: Teacher can use the introductory material to introduce the reading and set the tone for the discussion/activities about the soviet legacy left in modern Berlin.*

INTRO: The final chapter in the destruction of Hitler's Third Reich began on April 16, 1945 when Stalin unleashed the brutal power of 20 armies, 6,300 tanks and 8,500 aircraft with the objective of crushing German resistance and capturing Berlin. By prior agreement, the Allied armies (positioned 60 miles to the west) halted their advance on the city in order to give the Soviets a free hand. The depleted German forces put up a stiff defense, initially repelling the attacking Russians, but ultimately succumbing to overwhelming force. By April 24 the Soviet army surrounded the city slowly tightening its stranglehold on the remaining Nazi defenders. Fighting street-to-street and house-to-house, Russian troops blasted their way towards Hitler's chancellery in the city's center.

Inside his underground bunker Hitler lived in a world of fantasy as his "Thousand Year Reich" crumbled above him. In his final hours the Fuehrer married his long-time mistress and then joined her in suicide. The Third Reich was dead. (Eyewitnesshistory.com)



The article that you will assign to your classes (Reading #1) examines how the significance of the Battle for Berlin and how that battle influenced modern Germany. The impact of the battle had tumultuous repercussions in post-war Germany that were felt for decades. One of the more visible aspects of the soviet legacy was the existence of the soviet military in the former East Germany for four decades. The e existence of the Soviet/Russian military is now only a memory. However, the Soviet Memorial at Teptower Park is a living reminder of the Soviet influence on East Germany and an interesting look at historical interpretation. The lives of East Germans have changed dramatically in the past twenty years. The Soviet influence during the time of the GDR was immense. The immensity of this political influence can perhaps be understood, at some level, buy visiting the huge memorial in Treptow.

*NOTE: Understanding of the Battle for Berlin can be accomplished through the reading exercise #1. The questions from worksheet #1A can also be a jumping off point for additional discussions and possible written or oral reports. To expand the time used on the class, students could focus a presentation on various questions from the worksheet.*

*(Reading Exercise #1)*

## **The Battle for Berlin in World War Two**

*By Tilman Remme*

### **Germany 1945**

On 2 May 1945, after one of the most intense battles in human history, the guns at last stopped firing amongst the ruins of Berlin. According to Soviet veterans, the silence that followed the fighting was literally deafening. Less than four years after his attack on the Soviet Union, Hitler's self-proclaimed thousand-year Reich had ceased to exist. The German Führer himself was dead.

Europe would never be the same again. Despite years of Cold War tension, the continent would remain free of war for decades to come, unprecedented in European history. Crucially, by the time that Germany re-emerged as a single and united nation in 1990, the megalomania that had brought death and destruction to the continent in the first half of the century had been well and truly purged.

But the human cost of the battle for Berlin had been enormous. Millions of shells were fired into a city that was already devastated after two years of relentless bombing raids by British and American warplanes. Nearly a quarter of a million people died during the last three weeks of World War Two, almost as many as the United States lost during the entire war.

**The battle of Berlin has never been told from the point of view of the ordinary Russian soldier ...**

Some 54 years after the war, the acclaimed British military historian, Antony Beevor, embarked on one of the most ambitious projects of his career. His aim was to discover new material on the battle for Berlin, following the success of his award-winning book on the battle of Stalingrad.

'The battle of Berlin has never been told from the point of view of the ordinary Russian soldier,' Beevor said when I first interviewed him in 1999. 'Nor has it been told from the point of view of the revenge they took on the population of Berlin when they captured the city.'

### **Beevor's research**



Antony Beevor

Beevor's task was awesome. There were tens of thousands of unexplored documents in the Russian archives relevant to the Battle of Berlin. Would the new material shed light on controversial issues such as the alleged mass rape of German women by Red Army soldiers? Why did Stalin sacrifice the lives of tens of thousands of his soldiers in order to be in Berlin before the Americans? After all, he was already committed to sharing the city with his Western allies after the war.

Our first filming trip to Germany took us to the river Oder, 60 miles east of Berlin. In April 1945, over two years after the German defeat at Stalingrad, the Oder and its tributary, the Neisse, had become the front line between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Two and a half million Red Army troops, 6000 tanks and over 40,000 artillery pieces were deployed for the final onslaught against the German capital.

**The German resolve to fight was largely due to fear of Russian retributions.**

In contrast, the German armed forces, the Wehrmacht, was a shadow of its former self. But its 300,000 German troops were determined to hold out against the vastly superior Red Army. The German resolve to fight was largely due to fear of Russian retributions. Since 1941, Nazi forces had laid waste to large parts of the Soviet Union. More than 23 million Soviet soldiers and civilians had died. Fuelled by Nazi propaganda, the Germans were terrified of what would happen if Berlin fell into Soviet hands.

#### **Stalin and his allies**



A Russian soldier helps load a Katyusha Rocket as they advance into Berlin

But Stalin was in a hurry. The Americans had recently crossed the Rhine and the Soviet leader was concerned that they might capture Berlin before him. To speed up his campaign,

he split the command of the Berlin operation between Marshall Zukhov in the centre and Marshall Konev in the south. Stalin thus effectively triggered a race between his two most senior commanders, as both of them were eager to be credited with the conquest of the German capital.

On 15 of April, Soviet forces launched one of the most powerful artillery barrages in history. Over a million shells were fired against German positions west of the Oder. But when Zukhov's troops advanced from their bridgeheads, they found that the Germans had withdrawn to fortified positions on the Seelow heights further inland, having learned of the imminent Soviet attack from a captured Russian soldier.

Zukhov's attack clearly wasn't going according to plan. He decided to send in wave after wave against the German defences. 'We started to fire at the masses,' says one former German machine gunner. '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.' There was confusion all around. According to one Russian veteran, Soviet artillery was fired without proper guidance, killing scores of Red Army soldiers.

**They weren't human beings for us. It was a wall of attacking beasts who were trying to kill us ...**

It took Zukhov three days to break the German resistance, far longer than planned. Huge numbers of Soviet tanks were lost because they were used as battering rams against the German positions. Over 30,000 Soviet soldiers died compared to the 10,000 soldiers lost by the Germans. In the end, the high Soviet casualty rate was largely a result of Stalin's hurry to reach Berlin.

#### **Battle of Halbe**



Detail of one of a series of wall paintings inside Hitler's bunker, Berlin.

Although the route to Berlin lay open at last, the battle for the city was only just beginning. Amongst the rubble of the city centre, Hitler was holding out in his underground bunker, cut off from the reality of the fighting above. During a staff conference on 22 April, Hitler came close to admitting defeat. But then his deputy, Martin Borman, insisted that there was still hope. 'Suddenly they were all busy making plans again,' a former Wehrmacht staff officer remembers.

'It was decided to fight the battle for Berlin and that Hitler would direct it personally.' Hitler's hopes lay with the 70,000 troops of General Wenck's 12th Army south west of the city. He ordered them to unite with General Busse's 9th Army, retreating from the Oder. They were then to launch a counter attack against the Red Army.

### **It was the Nazi forces' desperate last stand.**

But Hitler's final battle plan was pie in the sky. Advancing from the south, Marshall Konev's forces cut off and surrounded the Wehrmacht's 9th Army in the forest south of Berlin, near the small town of Halbe. 'The massacre in that forest was appalling,' Beevor observed after a visit to the Halbe battlefield. 'There was absolutely no way of treating the wounded, they were just left screaming at the road side.'

Over 50,000 soldiers and civilians died. Most of the dead were German, many of them SS. It was the Nazi forces' desperate last stand. One local witness remembers how the narrow paths leading through the forest were piled high with corpses. It took the local population months to clear the site. Even today, a thousand corpses are found each year in and around Berlin. Many of them are detected in the now silent forests of Halbe.

### **Russians in Berlin**



The final advance, May 1945

Meanwhile, Zukhov's and Konev's troops were punching their way into the German capital, sometimes accidentally firing at each other in their bid to win the race for Berlin. Ironically, the Soviets' use of tanks in the street fighting was not dissimilar to the tactics used so disastrously by the Germans in Stalingrad. Soviet T-34s were highly vulnerable to the Panzerfaust, the German bazooka, fired by soldiers hiding in destroyed buildings. It meant further unnecessary losses for the Red Army. But the 90,000 German defenders - mainly old people or members of the Hitler Youth - stood little chance against more than a million Red Army troops.

Already, the civilian population was bearing the brunt of the Red Army's revenge. Though the first wave of Soviet troops was generally considered to be disciplined, it was the second that indulged in orgies of rape and violence, fuelled by large stocks of alcohol found in the city.

## ... up to two million German women were raped during the last six months of World War Two ...

Based on contemporary hospital reports and on surging abortion rates in the following months, it is estimated that up to two million German women were raped during the last six months of World War Two, around 100,000 of them in Berlin. One woman remembered hiding in the loft of her apartment block, ready to jump out of the window if she was detected, whilst her best friend was being gang raped by Soviet soldiers in the apartment below.

The authorities in Moscow traditionally deny German allegations of mass rape at the end of the war. But during his research, Beevor discovered internal Red Army documents that prove that the Soviet High Command was well aware that some of their soldiers were running out of control. Even more shocking is Beevor's discovery in the Red Army files that Red Army troops also raped Russian women after their release from Nazi slave labour camps in Germany.

### Fall of the capital



Berliners amongst the ruins

Back in April 1945, the battle was coming to a close. On 30 April, Hitler committed suicide - together with his mistress Eva Braun, only hours after they were married. Hitler had given strict orders for his body to be burned, so that his enemies wouldn't do what they had done to Mussolini, who was publicly displayed hanging upside down. 'And Hitler,' one former SS guard told us, 'could rely on the fact that the people he gave these orders to would carry them out.'

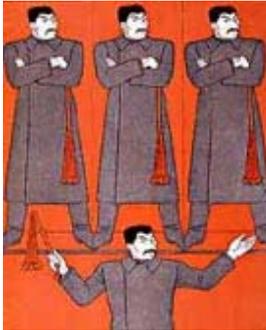
By 2 May, the Reichstag, the old German parliament, had fallen. Berlin surrendered to Marshall Zukhov, who received the honour of being the conqueror of Berlin. The battle for Berlin had cost the Soviets over 70,000 dead. Many of them had died because of the haste with which the campaign was conducted. 'Of our unit's 360 handsome young men who gathered at the Dnieper River, only 6 made it to Berlin,' says one Soviet veteran.

## The battle for Berlin had cost the Soviets over 70,000 dead.

So what are the reasons for Stalin's hurry to reach Berlin? After all, he was happy to share the city with his western allies after the city's surrender. The traditional explanation is that it was a question of Soviet prestige and mistrust of the west. However, during his research,

Beevor discovered a startling new document: 'It struck me so powerfully that the moment I started to read it I knew I had to look at a totally different aspect of Stalin's interest in Berlin.'

### **Nuclear legacy**



Josef Stalin

The document shows that Stalin was desperate to get his hands on the German nuclear research centre, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in the southwest of Berlin - before the Americans got there. The Soviets knew through their spies of the American atomic bomb programme. Stalin's own nuclear programme, Operation Borodino, was lagging behind and Soviet scientists wanted to find out exactly what the Germans had come up with during the war.

As it turned out, the special NKVD troops despatched to secure the German institute discovered three tons of uranium oxide, a material they were short of at the time. 'So the Soviets achieved their objective,' says Beevor, 'the uranium oxide they found in Berlin was enough to kick start Operation Borodino and allow them to start working on their first nuclear weapon.'

### **The country lay in ruins and the population was close to starvation.**

After the battle, more than a hundred thousand German prisoners of war were marched to labour camps in the Soviet Union. Only now did the totality of their defeat sink in on the German people. The country lay in ruins and the population was close to starvation. In addition, confirmation of the Nazis' mass extermination of the European Jews meant that Germany faced a complete moral catastrophe.

The battle for Berlin had brought to an end the bloodiest conflict in European history. 'There's no family in the Soviet Union, Poland or Germany where they didn't lose at least one close relative,' said Beevor in our final interview. 'In Britain, the suffering was real, but it simply cannot be compared to the scale of suffering in Central Europe.'

# The Battle for Berlin (Worksheet #1A)

1. When did the final battle of WWII, the Battle for Berlin, end?
2. How many people died during the last three weeks of World War II?
3. Where were the American troops as Stalin prepared for the final push into Berlin?
4. What tactic did Stalin use to speed up the Soviet advance into Berlin?
5. What were the names of the two major Soviet commanders?
6. Did the Soviets use pin point accuracy for their artillery barrages? What was a result of this type of artillery use?
7. During the advance on Berlin, there was heavy fighting in the forest of Halbe. What is a modern day concern in respect to the Battle of Halbe? (What is being found?)
8. What is ironic about the Soviets tank tactics in the battle amongst the streets of Berlin?
9. Was Stalin against sharing the German capital with the Allies?
10. According to recently uncovered documents, what is a primary reason for the Soviet rush to get to Berlin first?
11. What did the Soviets find that allowed them to kick start their nuclear weapon program?

## **Activity 2: A Trip through the Park.**

*NOTE: The teacher can use the following description of the Memorial to become familiar with the Memorial and to introduce the Memorial to the students.*

### **Intro:**

#### **Treptower Park: - Soviet War Memorial**

There are several Soviet War Memorials (Sowjetisches Ehrenmal) in Berlin. The memorial in Treptower Park is extremely impressive, but is also virtually unknown by Western tourists and visitors. It requires a little effort to get to this memorial, as there are no other famous attractions around it, and you have to walk quite a bit from the S-Bahn station.

The memorial in the centre of Treptower Park is the biggest one of its kind in Germany. It may seem rather kitschy, but the workmanship is awe inspiring. Sure, if the visitor knows how history went on after World War II and how the theory of real socialism in the eastern part of Germany and Europe ended, one cannot take the message seriously. But separated from its content and the execution of the work, it is well worth a visit.

The memorial is not just a memorial. It is a memorial park within Treptower Park. It was created from 1946 to 1949 at the site of a former huge playground, and is a cemetery for more than 5000 Soviet soldiers as well as a monument for the victory over the Nazis and fascism. They needed 40,000 cubic meters of granite to build the monument. Every year on 8 May, the day of the liberation, a memorial service takes place. But the state does not hold ceremonies there anymore. *The last official military act was on 31 August 1994 when the Russian troops retreated from GDR.*

In times of separation (German separation) the monument was the symbol of GDR's founding myth: East-Germany freed from the claws of suppression, incorporating the everlasting appeal to follow in the footsteps of the heroes who had successfully fought for socialism and freedom.

A collective of architects and artists collaborated to achieve the impressive result. The architect Jakov S. Belopolski, the sculptor Yevgeni Wutshetitch, the painter Alexander A. Gorpenko and the engineer Sarra S. Valerius were the heads of the project.

*NOTE: At this point the teacher can have a discussion about war memorials in the United States that students may be recognize. Examples might be Gettysburg or Arlington National Cemetery. This could lead to a short discussion on what the purpose of these memorials might be. Also could lead to a discussion on whether memorials have a positive or negative influence. The "trip" through the Memorial in Berlin could be expanded to presentations of other Memorials or a writing assignment dealing with the student's thoughts on the positive or negative aspects of such memorials.*

*Before the “trip,” teacher will pass out Handout 2A and students will look at the pictures of pieces of the memorial and fill out the pre-discussion assignment. They will write down what they think various symbols from the Memorial represent.*

## Handout #2

### **1. Triumphbogen (Triumphal Arch)**

If you come from Puschkinallee you enter the Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park through a triumphal arch, made of grey granite. An inscription honors the soldiers who “died for freedom and independence of the socialist homeland.”

### **2. Mutter Russland (Mother Russia)**

Following the alley from the Triumphal Arches on Puschinallee or the street Am Treptower Park you reach a kind of forecourt. Its centre-piece is a three meter high statue of a woman. She symbolizes Mother Russia, the homeland grieving for its fallen sons. From here the view opens to the main part of the memorial park.

### **3. Red Granite Flags**

You enter this main field passing between two monuments made of red granite. They are stylized flags, hanging towards the alley, symbolizing grief – like a person bending their head in grief

### **4. Soldiers Kneeling**

On the front sides of each flag you see the sculpture of a soldier on his knees, each carrying a machine gun. One of the soldiers is a young guy, the other one looks clearly older

### **5. The Grove of Honour (Ehrenhain)**

The Grove of Honor (Ehrenhain) within the Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park is a huge grassy field in the centre of the whole complex, about 200 or 300 meters long, leading up to the bombastic statue of the soldier with the child. Five iron-cast wreaths are placed in this area.

Here, 4800 Soviet soldiers are honored. But most probably, they are not buried under the five burial grounds which are framed by low hedges and each adorned by a flagstone and a big iron-cast laurel wreath. The fields are more symbolic. The real burial sites are more probably beside this grove which is bordered by white gravel walkways on both sides of the complex, under the sycamore trees. Another 200 soldiers are buried in the hill of the mausoleum.

### **6. The 16 Marble Sarcophagi**

The 16 white marble sarcophagi – eight on each side – along the boundaries of the Soviet War Memorial complex in Treptower Park are most impressive..

As said earlier, some of the stories on those sarcophagi are ridiculous if you know how history went on. But at the time they were created they were the perfect description of war and peace, of grief and hope, and above all, they still reflect the feelings of the ordinary people who lost their homes and many loved ones.

The stones are impressive pieces of this kind of bombastic monumental art. Walking along the

sarcophagi you can read the history of the war even if you do not understand Russian or German. The reliefs tell the war history of the Soviet peoples.

The quotations of Stalin – in Russian on the inside towards the central Grove of Honor, in German towards the boundary – have caused political controversy. Stalin holds a controversial spot in history as a tyrant and murderer. But most feel his quotes should be left in this spot as a testimony of an historic era. Stalin was no better than Hitler, and one can only imagine the protest it would cause if comments of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* had been incorporated in a war memorial.

Each of the 16 sarcophagi has its own theme, for example: Germany's attack, destruction and suffering in the Soviet Union, sacrifice of the Soviet people, support for the army, heroic army, heroic battle, sacrifice and agony of the army, victory and heroic death.

### **7. The Mausoleum**

The mausoleum in Treptower Park is located in a pavilion at the end of the Grove of Honor. This pavilion is sitting on a burial hill, and on the mausoleum stands the statue of the soldier with the child. You can walk up there on a wide staircase.

You can have a look inside through the iron bars that protect the wonderful dome of the mausoleum. In its centre is the book of honor which holds the names of the soldiers who are buried here.

The dome is covered in great mosaics. At the bottom you see representatives of all Soviet republics mourning the deaths they suffered. The top is adorned by the five-pointed star of communism. In between are mosaic ribbons with inscriptions in Russian and German.

### **8. The Soldier and the Child**

And finally there is the main monument of the War Memorial park, the huge statue of the Soviet soldier towering on the mausoleum. The soldier holds a German child on his left arm. In his right hand he holds a sword with lowered blade, and under that you can recognize pieces of the destroyed swastika.

The child symbolizes the innocent (German) people who can look towards a brighter future in the arms of their saviors.

The sculpture is 12 meters high and weighs 70 tons. It stands on a mausoleum, and this on its part is erected on an 18 meter high burial hill. You can walk up a wide staircase to the mausoleum.

Symbol. Monument. <b>Handout #2A</b>	Pre-reading student prediction of meaning	Actual meaning of symbol statue or monument
<p>1.</p> 		
<p>2.</p> 		
<p>3.</p> 		
<p>4.</p> 		
<p>5.</p> 		
<p>6.</p> 		
<p>7.</p> 		
<p>8.</p> 		

*NOTE: The following pictures can be used and printed if teacher is unable to view POWERPOINT trip through the Memorial.*

# *Aerial view of Memorial*



# #1 Triumphbogen (Triumphal Arch)



## **#2 Mutter Russland (Mother Russia)**



**She symbolizes Mother Russia, the homeland grieving for its fallen sons.**

### **#3 Red Granite Flags.**

**They are stylized flags, hanging towards the alley, symbolizing grief – like a person bending their head in grief**





**#4 Soldiers Kneeling** One of the soldiers is a young man,



the other looks clearly older



## **#5 The Grove of Honour (Ehrenhain)**

**Here, 4800 Soviet soldiers are honored. But most probably, they are not buried under the five burial grounds which are framed by low hedges and each adorned by a flagstone and a big iron-cast laurel wreath. The fields are more symbolic.**

## **#6 The 16 Marble Sarcophagi**

**They are a “perfect” description of war and peace, of grief and hope, and above all, they reflect the feelings of the ordinary people who lost their homes and many loved ones.**



## **#7 The Mausoleum**

**Burial Hill, the burial site of 200 additional Soviet Soldiers**





### **#8 The Soldier and the Child.**

The soldier holds a German child on his left arm. In his right hand he holds a sword with lowered blade, and under that you can recognize pieces of the destroyed swastika. The child symbolizes the innocent (German) people who can look towards a brighter future in the arms of their saviors.