

## Leadership c.1945-1965 – Activity 1

### Preparing for Potsdam: What do we learn about Stalin from Berlin's Soviet memorial?

#### Aims

- Understand the Soviet point of view about Germany and Eastern Europe in 1945 and how this affected relations with the USA
- Use the techniques of the historian on a public memorial and draw information and insights from it
- Demonstrate understanding of both points above in a concise but well-supported summary of the Soviet mindset (in the briefing to Truman)

#### Resources

[coldwarLDA1.lgfl.net](http://coldwarLDA1.lgfl.net) is your one-stop link to curriculum resources for this activity; you will find videos, photographs and links to the relevant main Cold War sections.

#### Step 1 – Get to know the memorial

As a class, in groups or individually, study the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptow Park using the resources at [coldwarLDA1.lgfl.net](http://coldwarLDA1.lgfl.net)

The decision to place this memorial here was taken in 1945, almost as soon as the war ended. Remember it was Soviet troops who captured Berlin, at a cost of around 80,000 troops. And it was the USSR which had suffered around 20 million dead as a result of the war with Germany. A competition was held for the memorial, and Soviet leader Stalin chose this design. It was completed in 1948-49. The stones used to build it were taken from the Reich Chancellery Building – the headquarters of Hitler's government in the war.

#### Step 2 What can the Treptow Park memorial tell us?

Sometimes when historians study source material from the past, the answer just leaps out at you. For example, when you look at this memorial, it says:

- A lot of Soviet troops died in the Battle for Berlin
- It was important to build a large scale memorial
- The Soviets wanted to remember the troops who fell taking Berlin
- There was a lot of heavy fighting
- Civilians were killed as well as soldiers
- The Soviet troops were brave and heroic
- The Soviets were a greater people than the Germans

Review the images and video clips and find examples of how the memorial says these things. You may choose to use the support sheet at the end of this pack, create a presentation using LGfL j2e tools, or make a PowerPoint, Prezi or podcast (remember [podcast.lgfl.net](http://podcast.lgfl.net)).

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### Step 3 How can the memorial help us understand Stalin's mind in 1945?

The memorial was not built until 1948, but we know Stalin approved the design in 1945. So it gives us an insight into how he might have been thinking. But what was he thinking? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Why put this memorial (and two major other ones as well) in Berlin where mostly Germans who would see it?
- When the memorial reminded him of Soviet losses, do you think it made him sad? Or did it make him determined that Germany would never do this to his country again?

### Step 4 Briefing President Truman

Put yourself in the position of an expert adviser in 1945. Your job is to brief the new US President Harry Truman about Stalin. Truman is going to meet with Stalin in Potsdam (a suburb of Berlin) in July 1945 to discuss many issues, particularly Eastern Europe. At the moment, Stalin's troops occupy most of Eastern Europe, as a legacy of them driving the Germans back since 1943. Truman is keen for the countries of Eastern Europe to become free democracies which can choose their own system of government.

As an adviser, your task is to tell Truman what kind of reaction he will get from Stalin. You should use what you have learned from the memorial and also the profile of Stalin ([ColdWarLeaders.lgfl.net](http://ColdWarLeaders.lgfl.net)). You could write this briefing as a report (see photocopy template on following pages), create a presentation, or any other method you think will be effective. We suggest that you start by saying: "Mr President, if you want to understand Stalin I think you should have a look at the monument they plan to build in Berlin."

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### Step 2 – support sheet

Use the framework below to record your findings about the Soviet memorial in Treptow Park.

#### What can the memorial tell us?

What the monument says	How it says so (what I hear)	How it says so (what I see)
A lot of Soviet troops died in the Battle for Berlin		
It was important to build a large scale memorial		
The Soviets wanted to remember the troops who fell taking Berlin		
There was a lot of heavy fighting		
Civilians were killed as well as soldiers		
The Soviet troops were brave and heroic		
The Soviets were a greater people than the Germans		

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### Step 3 - 'Truman Report' photocopiable template



Confidential Memo - Read and destroy

To: Mr President

From: John Edwards, Policy Division

Re: Joseph Stalin

June 1945

Dear Mr President,

If you want to understand Stalin I think you should have a look at the monument they plan to build in Berlin.