

HOW MIGHT CHURCHILL HAVE REPLIED TO THIS TELEGRAM: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

The key question: How might Churchill have replied to this telegram?

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill received this telegram on May 9th 1945. This was when the surrender of Germany was officially announced.

Your task

The impression given by the telegram is that the job has been done. In fact there were still many challenges ahead and Churchill would have known this. Your task is to write a reply to the writer of this telegram. The sources in the source box provide a snapshot of some of these challenges. You could use the framework for Churchill's reply.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

A telegram sent to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1945

July 1945

CABLE (C AND W) WIRELESS
"Via Imperial"

Office of Issue
OFFICE OF THE
CABLE & WIRELESS LTD.
MAY 45
CENTRAL STATION

The first line of this Telegram contains the following particulars in the order named:
Prefix Letters and Number of Message, Office of Origin, Number of Words, Date, Time handed in and
Official instructions—if any.

| Circuit. | Clerk's Name. | Time Received. | |
|----------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| RCA W | BL | 1741 | A 1741 4226 |

CW

W754 NEWYORK 71 7 1741- 1/50

NLT WINSTON CHURCHILL LONDON

AS ONE OF MILLIONS FOLLOWING WITH
INCREASING INTEREST YOUR REMARKABLE CAREER
APPROVING OR DISAPPROVING AT TIMES BUT
ALWAYS ADMIRING YOUR COURAGE AND FRANKNESS
REJOICE WITH YOU AND ENGLAND AT STUPENDOUS
TASK ACCOMPLISHED BRINGING ABOUT COMPLETE
ENEMY DOWNFALL MAY GOD PRESERVE YOU FOR
THE GOOD OF WORLD

THIS SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY THIS FORM AND MAY BE
OF THE COMPANY'S OFFICES

What is this source?

This source is a telegram sent to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on May 9th 1945 from New York.

The date is important. It was the day after VE-Day, the surrender of Germany. Churchill received millions of cards, letters and telegrams congratulating him on the end of the war in Europe.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR**What's the background to this source?**

The Second World War began in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. By the summer of 1940 it looked as though Germany would overrun all of Europe. In 1941 matters got worse for Britain as Japan invaded her possessions in the Far East. However, in 1942 the tide gradually turned, especially after the Soviet Union and the USA entered the war in 1941. By 1945 Germany was defeated and Japan surrendered early in September 1945.

A vital part of Britain's war effort was the contribution of the Empire and Commonwealth countries. South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Canada all contributed forces. So did the Caribbean islands and African colonies. The largest contribution of manpower came from India.

It's worth knowing that...

Winston Churchill had an extremely varied career as a politician. He was responsible for some important successes but also some disastrous failures (such as the Gallipoli Campaign in WW1). He also changed from the Conservative to the Liberal party and then rejoined the Conservatives. By the 1930s he was an isolated figure and many leading political figures distrusted him. However, the crisis of 1940 was perfectly suited to his abilities and he became a legend as a result of his war leadership. He has often been voted Greatest Briton.

It may be that one of the reasons why Churchill has such a formidable reputation is that he wrote the history books about the Second World War! He more or less admitted that one of the aims of his writing was to safeguard his reputation. In other parts of the world he is less well regarded. He was very anti-Communist and so Soviet historians disliked him. He also had a reputation for brutality and treachery in his dealings with Ireland. This is why many in Ireland disliked him, and many Irish Americans had mixed feelings about him.

How will you use this source?

1. Does the writer of the telegram admire Churchill?
2. Is the writer critical of Churchill in any way?
3. What was the 'stupendous task' that has been achieved?
4. Do you agree that this telegram suggests that Churchill's work is now accomplished (finished)?

You could use the framework for Churchill's reply.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: END OF THE WAR

HOW MIGHT CHURCHILL HAVE REPLIED TO THIS TELEGRAM?

Indictment of war criminals at Nuremburg, November 1945

Catalogue ref: FO 371/50997

Extract a

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL
in the matter of:
The United States of America,
The French Republic, The United
Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland, and the Union
of Soviet Socialist Republics
against Herman Wilhelm Goering,
et al, Defendants, sitting at
Nurnberg, Germany, on 20 November
1945, 1000-1230, Lord Justice
Lawrence, presiding.

U 9435
28 NOV 1945

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: END OF THE WAR

Extract b

INDICTMENT

I. The United States of America, the French Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics by the undersigned, Robert H. Jackson, Francois de Menthon, Hartley Shawcross and R. A. Rudenko, duly appointed to

represent their respective Governments in the investigation of the charges against and the prosecution of the major war criminals, pursuant to the Agreement of London dated 8th August, 1945, and the Charter of this Tribunal annexed thereto, hereby accuse as guilty, in the respects hereinafter set forth, of Crimes against Peace, War Crimes, and Crimes against Humanity, and of a Common Plan or Conspiracy to commit those Crimes, all as defined in the Charter of the Tribunal, and accordingly name as defendants in this cause and as indicted on the counts hereinafter set out: HERMANN WILHELM GÖRING, RUDOLF HESS, JOACHIM von RIBBENTROP, ROBERT LEY, WILHELM KEITEL, ERNST KALTENBRUNNER, ALFRED ROSENBERG, HANS FRANK, WILHELM FRICK, JULIUS STREICHER, WALTER FUNK, HJALMAR SCHACHT, GUSTAV KRUPP von BOHLEN und HALBACH, KARL DÖNITZ, ERICH RAEDER, BALDUR von SCHIRACH, FRITZ SAUCKEL, ALFRED JODL, MARTIN BORMANN, FRANZ von PAPEN, ARTUR SEYSS-INQUART, ALBERT SPEER, CONSTANTIN von NEURATH and HANS FRITZSCHE, individually and as members of any of the Groups or Organizations next hereinafter named.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR**What is this source?**

These extracts come from the Indictment of the leading Nazis and were read out at the start of their war crimes trial in Nuremburg (Nurnberg is the German name) in 1945.

An indictment is the list of crimes that someone is accused of committing.

What's the background to this source?

During the war the Nazis committed some of the most terrible atrocities in history. The worst was the mass murder of Jews and other minority groups in extermination camps in Poland from 1942 onwards. However, there were many other war crimes as well. During the war, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was determined that war criminals would be hunted down and punished.

This was agreed at Yalta in February 1945 when the leaders of Britain, the USSR and the USA met in a conference.

It's worth knowing that...

The issue of war crimes remains controversial today. Some historians argue that the British and American bombing campaign against German cities was a war crime. Others point out that Britain and America's ally Stalin, leader of the USSR, was probably responsible for more deaths than Hitler. It remains an uncomfortable issue.

The leading Nazis were not the only ones put on trial. Many less senior figures were also tried, most often guards from concentration camps. However, there is little doubt that many thousands of war criminals escaped justice in the chaos and confusion at the end of the war.

How will you use this source?

1. What crimes have these men been accused of committing?
2. What roles did the men who are charged here carry out in the Nazi state?
Carry out your own research.
3. What have you learned from this source that would go into Churchill's reply to the telegram?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

HOW MIGHT CHURCHILL HAVE REPLIED TO THIS TELEGRAM?

VE Day celebrations in London, May 1945

Catalogue ref: IWM TR 2876



What is this source?

This photograph was taken on May 8th 1945 to show how people in Britain celebrated VE-Day. This shows a view of the crowd in front of the Ministry of Health building in Whitehall. The Prime Minister addressed the crowd from the balcony, which, like the roof of the building, is decorated with flags. On the right is the cenotaph.

VE-Day was Victory in Europe Day. It marked the defeat of Nazi Germany.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

What's the background to this source?

The Second World War began in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. By the summer of 1940 it looked as though Germany would overrun all of Europe. In 1941 matters got worse for Britain as Japan invaded her possessions in the Far East. However, in 1942 the tide gradually turned, especially after the Soviet Union and the USA entered the war in 1941. By 1945 Germany was defeated and Japan surrendered early in September 1945.

As this image was taken people knew that the defeat of Germany was close. However, there had been many disasters and disappointments and so people waited for the official announcement before they really started to party. The war had a huge impact on British life, not just for the troops. Government control had been extremely strict. The most obvious example of this was food rationing but the government also controlled information through censorship and propaganda.

It's worth knowing that...

As the war came to a close British people were eager to see an end to these restrictions. The next big challenge for the government was to work out how this would be done. The other big challenge was for the government to understand the mood of the people. Perhaps this image shows that some of the barriers in British society had broken down in wartime. Society was more informal and relaxed. Governments would have to accept that times had changed.

One of the problems facing a British government after 1945 was that wartime restrictions and control could not just be dropped instantly. For example, scrapping rationing would mean a rush for food in the shops and prices would probably rocket. A new government would have to find ways to gradually phase out government controls.

How will you use this source?

1. Describe the scene in this photograph.
2. Do you get the impression from this image that the British people think that the wartime job is done?
3. What would you say to these people if you were Churchill?
4. What have you learned from this source that would go into Churchill's reply to the telegram?

You could use this framework for Churchill's reply.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

How might Churchill have replied to this telegram?

Sailors celebrate VE Day in London, May 1945

Catalogue ref: IMW EA 65799



What is this source?

This photograph was taken on May 8th 1945 to show how people in Britain celebrated VE-Day. It shows two British sailors and their girlfriends wading in the fountains in Trafalgar Square, London.

VE-Day was Victory in Europe Day. It marked the defeat of Nazi Germany.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR**What's the background to this source?**

The Second World War began in September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. By the summer of 1940 it looked as though Germany would overrun all of Europe. In 1941 matters got worse for Britain as Japan invaded her possessions in the Far East. However, in 1942 the tide gradually turned, especially after the Soviet Union and the USA entered the war in 1941. By 1945 Germany was defeated and Japan surrendered early in September 1945.

As this image was taken people knew that the defeat of Germany was close. However, there had been many disasters and disappointments and so people waited for the official announcement before they really started to party. The war had a huge impact on British life, not just for the troops. Government control had been extremely strict. The most obvious example of this was food rationing but the government also controlled information through censorship and propaganda.

It's worth knowing that...

As the war came to a close British people were eager to see an end to these restrictions. The next big challenge for the government was to work out how this would be done. The other big challenge was for the government to understand the mood of the people. Perhaps this image shows that some of the barriers in British society had broken down in wartime. Society was more informal and relaxed. Governments would have to accept that times had changed.

One of the problems facing a British government after 1945 was that wartime restrictions and control could not just be dropped instantly. For example, scrapping rationing would mean a rush for food in the shops and prices would probably rocket. A new government would have to find ways to gradually phase out government controls.

How will you use this source?

1. Describe the scene in this photograph.
2. Do you get the impression from this image that the British people think that the wartime job is done?
3. What would you say to these people if you were Churchill?
4. What have you learned from this source that would go into Churchill's reply to the telegram?

You could use this framework for Churchill's reply.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

How might Churchill have replied to this telegram?

Bomb damage in North London, June 1944

Catalogue ref: AIR 14/3701



What is this source?

This photograph shows bomb damage to Shillingford Street, Islington in North London.

A V2 rocket that landed late in June 1944 caused the damage.

What's the background to this source?

Throughout the war there was a National Government that included politicians from all of the main political parties. One of the top priorities for this National Government was defence against air raids. When Germany was unable to invade Britain in 1940 Hitler then attacked British cities from the air in what became known as the Blitz. This lasted until the autumn of 1941. The Blitz did huge damage to British towns and cities. Over 40,000 civilians were killed and over a million buildings destroyed. In 1944 there was a second

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

blitz as the Germans had developed rocket-powered weapons called V1s and V2s. These weapons killed about 8000 civilians.

Air Raid Precautions (ARP) had been a fact of life for British people throughout the war. It was another aspect of government control that would have to be phased out at the end of the war.

It's worth knowing that...

The photograph represents one of the biggest challenges that would face a new government in Britain. Thousands of British people were homeless by the end of the war. The British people were expecting a new and better Britain as a reward for their war efforts. They wanted new housing, and not the poor quality housing which many had suffered from before the war. They also wanted other improvements such as health care and education. Probably the greatest challenge facing Britain after the war was to build this New Britain.

As the war was coming to an end there was a General Election held in Britain in July 1945. Winston Churchill thought that the British people would trust his leadership in the post war age. In fact, he was decisively beaten and a new Labour government won a landslide victory under Clement Attlee. It was a sign that British people trusted Churchill as a war leader but did not see him as the man to build a new, better Britain.

How will you use this source?

1. Describe this image in as much detail as you can.
2. What challenge does this image represent to a government facing the post war period?
3. Study the notes as well as the photograph. What wider challenges does the photograph represent?
4. Churchill faced an election in July 1945 and was worried he would be defeated. Can you explain why?
5. What have you learned from this source that would go into Churchill's reply to the telegram?

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: END OF THE WAR

How might Churchill have replied to this telegram?

Source a

Collaborators being rounded up in Maastricht, September 1945

Catalogue ref: WO 202/850



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

Source b

Dutch Nazis and S.S. being rounded up by the Dutch underground in Amsterdam, May 1945

Catalogue ref: WO 202/850



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

What is this source?

These photographs show collaborators being rounded up in the Netherlands at the end of the war. The photographs come from a collection taken by the 1st Canadian Photographic Unit that show different aspects of life during the liberation of the Netherlands in 1945.

Collaborators were people from occupied countries who had co-operated with the German forces.

What's the background to this source?

For most of the war Nazi Germany controlled vast areas of Eastern and Western Europe, including part of Britain, the Channel Islands. Life under German rule was hard. In Western Europe treatment was generally better than Eastern Europe, but even in Western Europe food was scarce and men could be transported back to Germany to be used as labour. In these circumstances it was inevitable that some people would co-operate with the occupying German forces.

Collaboration covered a huge range of activities. At one end of the scale there were governments and regimes that actively worked with the Nazis. For example, General Petain collaborated with the Germans in setting up the pro Nazi Vichy France regime in the southern half of France. At the other extreme, collaboration could take the form of a local girl going out with a German soldier.

It's worth knowing that...

At the end of the war there was great bitterness and anger towards collaborators. Some collaborators were guilty of war crimes. Many more had acted because of intimidation, fear or bribery. Either way, collaboration left a bitter memory and those memories still divide many European countries today. At the same time, the divisions left by the war were one of the main factors that led to the formation of the Common Market and the European Union. It is an incredible achievement that in less than 40 years after the war, Germany and France have become close allies, and remain so today.

Many countries in Western Europe are still coming to terms with what happened under Nazi occupation. In Norway, for example, there is a conscious effort in museums relating to WW2 to portray both the story of resistance to Nazi rule and the story of collaboration with Nazi rule.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: END OF THE WAR

How will you use this source?

1. What is happening in these images?
2. How do you think the collaborators will be treated?
3. Would you be concerned that there may be mistakes or injustices carried out in scenes like this?
4. What is the challenge for the future of Europe as shown by these images?
5. What have you learned from this source that would go into Churchill's reply to the telegram?

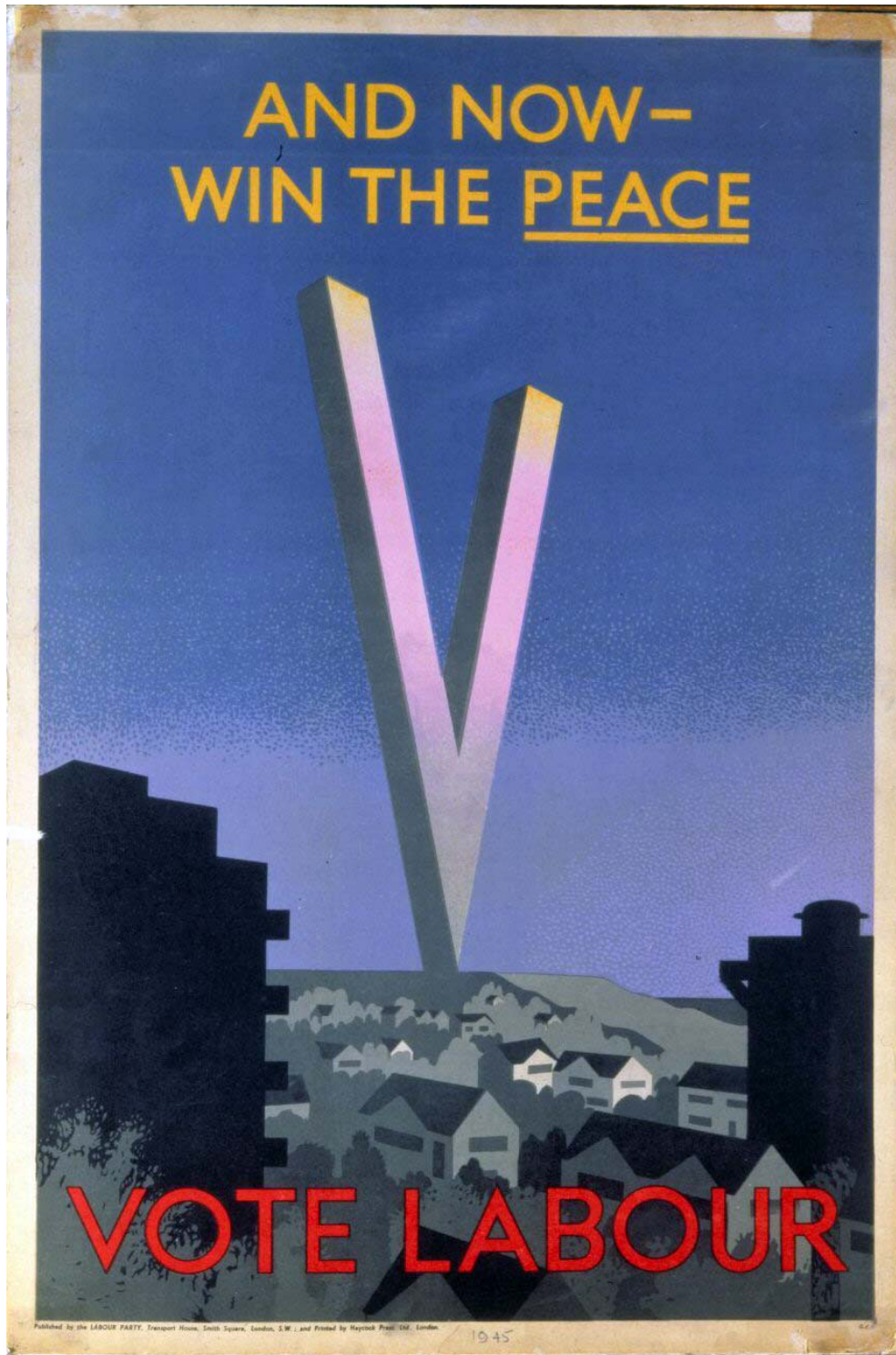
You could use this framework for Churchill's reply.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: END OF THE WAR

HOW MIGHT CHURCHILL HAVE REPLIED TO THIS TELEGRAM?

A Labour Party poster for the General Election of July 1945

Catalogue ref: MoL 2004.156/24



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR**What is this source?**

The Labour party used this poster in their campaign for the General Election in 1945. British artist John Armstrong (1893–1973) created it.

This was the first General Election held since 1935, there were no elections held in the war years.

What's the background to this source?

Throughout the war there was a National Government that included politicians from all of the main political parties. One of the top priorities for this National Government was defence against air raids. When Germany was unable to invade Britain in 1940 Hitler then attacked British cities from the air in what became known as the Blitz. This lasted until the autumn of 1941. The Blitz did huge damage to British towns and cities. Over 40,000 civilians were killed and over a million buildings destroyed. In 1944 there was a second blitz as the Germans had developed rocket -powered weapons called V1s and V2s. These weapons killed about 8000 civilians.

Air Raid Precautions (ARP) had been a fact of life for British people throughout the war. It was another aspect of government control that would have to be phased out at the end of the war.

It's worth knowing that...

Thousands of British people were homeless by the end of the war. The British people were expecting a new and better Britain as a reward for their war efforts. They wanted new housing, and not the poor quality housing which many had suffered from before the war. They also wanted other improvements such as health care, national insurance and expanded education. Probably the greatest challenge facing Britain after the war was to build this New Britain. You can see how the poster is attempting to show that Labour understands this view.

As the war was coming to an end there was a General Election held in Britain in July 1945. Winston Churchill thought that the British people would trust his leadership in the post war age. In fact, he was decisively beaten and a new Labour government won a landslide victory under Clement Attlee. It was a sign that British people trusted Churchill as a war leader but did not see him as the man to build a new, better Britain.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

How will you use this source?

1. Describe this poster in as much detail as you can. What is the message behind the poster?
2. Do you think this poster would have appealed to the people shown in our VE-Day photographs celebrating the end of the war?
3. Churchill faced an election in July 1945 and was worried he would be defeated. Can you explain why?
4. What have you learned from this source that would go into Churchill's reply to the telegram?

You could use this framework for Churchill's reply.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: END OF THE WAR

Worksheet**How might Churchill have replied to this telegram?**

In fact there were still many challenges ahead and Churchill would have known this. Your task is to write a reply to the writer of this telegram. The sources in the source box show some of the challenges that he faced:

- Reconstruction needed after the damage caused by the war
- Dealing with those who had committed war crimes
- Hope for a new future
- Social changes due to the war

You could use this framework for Churchill's reply:

Dear Sir,

Thanks you for your telegram of May 9th 1945. I am grateful for your kind words. However, I should stress there is much still to do. To begin with there is still a war to fight against Japan.

We also face many challenges here in Britain and in Europe. For example ...