

Edexcel GCSE

History A (The Making of the Modern World)

Unit 3: Modern World Source Enquiry

Option 3B: War and the transformation of British society, c1931–51

Wednesday 9 June 2010 – Morning

Sources Booklet

Paper Reference

5HA03/3B

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D-Day and the defeat of Germany, 1944–45

Background information

In June 1944 Allied forces successfully landed on the beaches of Normandy in France. In the months that followed, they liberated France, Belgium and Holland, crossed the Rhine and advanced on Berlin. Germany surrendered in early May 1945. Some historians argue that D-Day was the main reason for the German defeat. Some believe it was other factors, such as the Allied advance after the landings and the events on the Russian front.

Source A: From a US army report about the landings on Omaha Beach on D-Day.

As the landing craft reached the beach they faced heavy shelling, machine gun fire and rifle fire. It came from the pill-boxes and cliffs above the beach. Men were hit as they came down the ramps of the landing craft and as they struggled through the defences towards land. Many others were killed by mines. Several craft were sunk by shelling and mines. The enemy now started shelling the beaches, which were full of US soldiers.

Source B: British newspaper headlines for D-Day, 6 June 1944.



Source C: From a British newspaper reporter who witnessed the landings on D-Day.

I was in a bomber aircraft above the landings for the first few minutes. From what I could see there was nothing stopping the attacking soldiers from getting to the shore. The Germans had been taken by surprise. There seemed little resistance. Wave after wave of Allied troops reached the shore almost unopposed. Everything seemed to be going according to plan.

Source D: An official US photograph showing the first soldiers crossing the Rhine, March 1945. The notice board refers to the soldiers in the engineering corps who constructed 'the longest tactical bridge built'.



Source E: From a diary written by William Shirer and published in 1945. Shirer was a US journalist who had lived in Nazi Germany until 1941. He accompanied the Allied advance after D-Day.

1945

March 2nd
US troops have reached the Rhine.

March 8th
The first army is across the Rhine. We got across at Remagen on the railway bridge – a few minutes before the Germans had planned to blow it up.

April 2nd
War reporters are saying today that there will be no more big battles in the West. The Germans are finished.

April 22nd
The Russians are within 3 miles of the heart of Berlin. The city is in flames.

May 1st
Adolf Hitler is dead. The news came from German radio.

Source F: From a history textbook, published in 2001.

In December 1944, the Germans launched one last attack on the Americans in the Ardennes. The Battle of the Bulge was Hitler's last gamble and it failed. This forced the Germans to retreat once more. They had used up their final reserves of troops and tanks. German troops everywhere were overstretched and on the retreat. The Russians continued to close in from the east, while German troops were retreating from Italy.

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