**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

# The Last Days of Hitler  Questions & Answers)

<http://spartacus-educational.com/ExAnRHU4.htm>

**Q1**: Study sources 1, 10 and 17. Explain the message being expressed in these sources.

**A1**: The cartoonist [Nicolai Jiscenko](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/14279) (source 1) suggests that ten years of [Adolf Hitler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhitler.htm) had brought death and destruction. [Daniel Fitzpatrick](http://spartacus-educational.com/USACfitzpatrick.htm) (source 17) uses the same symbol (the skull) of death in his cartoon to convey the same message. [Kukrinisky](http://spartacus-educational.com/ARTkukrynisky.htm) was the name used by three Soviet cartoonists, Mikhail Kupriyanov, Porfiry Krylov and Nikolai Sokolov. They are making the point that it Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States remain united, Hitler will be defeated.

**Q2**: Study sources 2, 6 and 7. What did [Heinrich Himmler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhimmler.htm) offer [Winston Churchill](http://spartacus-educational.com/PRchurchill.htm) and [Harry S. Truman](http://spartacus-educational.com/USAtruman.htm)? Why did they refuse this offer?

**A2**: In March 1945 [Joseph Goebbels](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERgoebbels.htm) claimed that [Heinrich Himmler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhimmler.htm) believed that Germany would lose the war. He thought the only hope was to negotiate a deal with Churchill and Truman (source 2). Himmler sent a message to Churchill offering to "capitulate on the Western Front" to "save as great a part of Germany as possible from a Russian invasion" (source 6). However, the "Western Allies refused to consider a separate peace and insisted on unconditional surrender." (source 7)

**Q3**: Using all the information in this unit, explain why [Adolf Hitler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhitler.htm) decided to commit suicide on 30th April, 1945?

**A3**: Hitler wanted to surrender to the Western Allies in order to save Germany from the Soviet Union. (source 2) This would enable "the Western Allies to advance rapidly towards the east". (source 6) When the Western Allies refused this offer he realised that the Red Army would be the first to enter Berlin. The Soviets had dropped handbills on Berlin saying that they intended putting Hitler in a cage and parading him around the streets. Hitler realised that he faced a terrible death if captured by the Red Army and therefore decided to commit suicide. (sources 4 and 5) [Erich Kempka](http://spartacus-educational.com/Erich_Kempka.htm), his chauffeur (source 8), [Heinz Linge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Heinz_Linge.htm), his valet (source 9) and [Traudl Junge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Traudl_Junge.htm), his secretary (source 11) described the details of his suicide.

**Q4**: Why did [Joseph Goebbels](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERgoebbels.htm) and [Magna Goebbels](http://spartacus-educational.com/Magda_Goebbels.htm) kill their children before committing suicide?

**A4**: In a letter written to her son, Magna Goebbels points out that it is now clear that Germany would lose the war. "Our glorious idea is ruined and with it everything beautiful and marvellous that I have known in my life... and therefore I took the children with me, for they are too good for the life that would follow". (source 13)

**Q5**: Write a brief account of what happened to the following after they left Hitler's bunker: [Gretl Braun](http://spartacus-educational.com/Gretl_Braun.htm),[Hermann Fegelein](http://spartacus-educational.com/Hermann_Fegelein.htm), [Rochus Misch](http://spartacus-educational.com/Rochus_Misch.htm), [Martin Bormann](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERbormann.htm), [Arthur Bormann](http://spartacus-educational.com/Arthur_Bormann.htm), [Walter Hewell](http://spartacus-educational.com/Walter_von_Hewell.htm), [Julius Schaub](http://spartacus-educational.com/Julius_Schaub.htm), [Erich Kempka](http://spartacus-educational.com/Erich_Kempka.htm), [Heinz Linge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Heinz_Linge.htm), [Julius Schreck](http://spartacus-educational.com/Julius_Schreck.htm), [Ernst-Gunther Schenck](http://spartacus-educational.com/Ernst-Gunther_Schenck.htm), [Otto Günsche](http://spartacus-educational.com/Otto_Gunsche.htm), [Traudl Junge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Traudl_Junge.htm), [Christa Schroeder](http://spartacus-educational.com/Christa_Schroeder.htm) and [Johanna Wolf](http://spartacus-educational.com/Johanna_Wolf.htm).

[Gretl Braun](http://spartacus-educational.com/Gretl_Braun.htm): She managed to escape from Hitler's bunker. There was no evidence that she committed any war crimes and she was released. Gretl Braun married Kurt Berlinghoff on 6th February 1954 in Munich and died on 10th October 1987 in Bavaria.

[Hermann Fegelein](http://spartacus-educational.com/Hermann_Fegelein.htm): He was found guilty of corruption by the SS and executed on 28th April 1945.

[Rochus Misch](http://spartacus-educational.com/Rochus_Misch.htm): He was captured by the Red Army and taken to Lubyanka Prison. He was tortured for evidence about the Führer’s whereabouts. He spent six years in the gulags before being released in 1954 under an amnesty agreed by Nikita Khrushchev. Rochus Misch died on 5th September 2013.

[Martin Bormann](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERbormann.htm): It is believed that he was killed by the Red Army soon after leaving Hitler's bunker.

[Arthur Bormann](http://spartacus-educational.com/Arthur_Bormann.htm): He found work on a farm under an assumed name until he was arrested on April 1949. He was sentenced by a de-Nazification court to six months of hard labour and was released in October 1949. Bormann died in 1989.

[Walter Hewell](http://spartacus-educational.com/Walter_von_Hewell.htm): He committed suicide when captured by the Red Army on 2nd May 1945.

[Julius Schaub](http://spartacus-educational.com/Julius_Schaub.htm): He escaped from Hitler's bunker possessing false ID papers with the name "Josef Huber". He was arrested on 8th May, 1945 in Kitzbuehl by American troops. The authorities could not find any evidence that he had participated in war crimes and he was released on 17th February, 1949. Julius Schaub died on 27th December, 1967.

[Erich Kempka](http://spartacus-educational.com/Erich_Kempka.htm): He was captured by the United States Army on 20th June, 1945, but was not charged as a war criminal and was released in 1947. In 1951 he published his autobiography, [I Was Hitler's Chauffeur: The Memoirs of Erich Kempka](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Was-Hitlers-Chauffeur-Memoir-Kempka/dp/1848326300/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1387003361&sr=1-1&keywords=Erich+Kempka). He died on 24th January 1975.

[Heinz Linge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Heinz_Linge.htm): He was captured by the Red Army on 2nd May, 1945. Linge was sent to Lubyanka Prison where he was tortured. Linge was eventually tried and sentenced to twenty-five years imprisonment. However, he only served five years before being released in the general amnesty of 1955. He died in 1980. His memoir, [*With Hitler to the End*](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Hitler-End-Memoirs-Adolf-Hitlers/dp/1848327188/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1386956754&sr=1-1&keywords=With+Hitler+to+the+End), was published soon after his death.

[Ernst-Gunther Schenck](http://spartacus-educational.com/Ernst-Gunther_Schenck.htm): He managed to escape and he died on 21st December 1998.

[Otto Günsche](http://spartacus-educational.com/Otto_Gunsche.htm): He was captured by the Red Army on 2nd May, 1945. He was flown to Moscow for interrogation by the NKVD. Günsche was eventually released from Bautzen Penitentiary on 2nd May 1956.He died on 2nd October 2003.

[Traudl Junge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Traudl_Junge.htm): She was arrested in Berlin on 9th July. After being interrogated for the next five months she was released from prison. Traudl Junge died of cancer in Munich, at the age of 81, on 10th February 2002. Her autobiography, [To The Last Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Hitlers-Last-Secretary-Traudl-Junge/dp/1611453232/ref%3Dlh_ni_t?ie=UTF8&psc=1&smid=AHRB2OK2Q2YCL) was published posthumously.

[Christa Schroeder](http://spartacus-educational.com/Christa_Schroeder.htm): She was arrested and was originally considered to be a war criminal but was later reclassified as a collaborator and released days later, on 12th May 1948. Christa Schroeder died on 28th June, 1984. Her autobiography, [He Was My Chief: The Memoirs of Adolf Hitler's Secretary](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref%3Dnb_sb_noss?url=search-alias=stripbooks&field-keywords=Christa+Schroeder,+He+Was+My+Chief%3A+The+Memoirs+of+Adolf+Hitler%27s+Secretary&rh=n%3A266239,k%3AChrista+Schroeder%5Cc+He+Was+My+Chief%3A+The+Memoirs+of+Adolf+Hitler%27s+Secretary) was published posthumously.

[Johanna Wolf](http://spartacus-educational.com/Johanna_Wolf.htm): She was arrested and taken prisoner on 23rd May in Bad Tölz when the Americans occupied Berchtesgaden. Wolf remained a prisoner until 14th January 1948. Unlike other secretaries such as Schroeder and Junge, Wolf refused to give interviews about Hitler. Nor did she write her memoirs. She died on 5th June 1985.

**Q6**: Using the information in this unit explain what kind of sources historians would use when writing about the last days of Adolf Hitler.

The main type of sources used by historians writing about the last days of Adolf Hitler are autobiographies written by those in the [Führerbunker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%BChrerbunker%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) in [Berlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin). This includes those written by [Erich Kempka](http://spartacus-educational.com/Erich_Kempka.htm), [I Was Hitler's Chauffeur: The Memoirs of Erich Kempka](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Was-Hitlers-Chauffeur-Memoir-Kempka/dp/1848326300/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1387003361&sr=1-1&keywords=Erich+Kempka) (source 8), [Heinz Linge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Heinz_Linge.htm), [*With Hitler to the End*](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Hitler-End-Memoirs-Adolf-Hitlers/dp/1848327188/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1386956754&sr=1-1&keywords=With+Hitler+to+the+End) (sources 9 and 16) and [Traudl Junge](http://spartacus-educational.com/Traudl_Junge.htm), [To The Last Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Hitlers-Last-Secretary-Traudl-Junge/dp/1611453232/ref%3Dlh_ni_t?ie=UTF8&psc=1&smid=AHRB2OK2Q2YCL) (source 11). Other sources used by historians include diaries ([Joseph Goebbels](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERgoebbels.htm) - source 2) and ([Karl Koller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Koller_%28General%29) - source 4) and letters ([Magna Goebbels](http://spartacus-educational.com/Magda_Goebbels.htm) - source 13). Information gained from the peace negotiations carried out by [Heinrich Himmler](http://spartacus-educational.com/GERhimmler.htm) is another important source for those studying the subject.