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Race to Berlin:

1. **Examine the event: Race to Berlin**

As World War II drew to a final conclusion in Europe, the Allied forces converged on the German capital of Berlin from both the eastern front and the western front. After defeating the remaining German forces in Warsaw, driving the Germans out of Hungary, and capturing both Budapest and Vienna, The Red Army hastened their approach to Berlin.

At the same time, a collaborative effort of American and British forces approached Berlin from the West. After holding off the last major German offensive in the Ardennes Forest at the Battle of the Bulge, the Western Allies entered West Germany and crossed the Rhine River.

At the beginning of April, both the Western Allies and The Red Army had their eyes firmly set on the German Capital of Berlin. By this time, Berlin had been bombed repeatedly by the American Air Force and the Royal Air Force. The city was defended by 90,000 German troops comprised of older men and the remnants of the Hitler Youth.

**Opinions:**

**Joseph Stalin:** Stalin was adamant about entering and taking Berlin first. One reason for his persistence on being the first to Berlin was his distrust of the Western Allies. Another reason was his personal vendetta against Hitler and Germany. Finally, Stalin was desperate to get his hands on the German nuclear research Center, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in the southwest of Berlin.

**Churchill:** Churchill wanted the western Allies to be the first to Berlin. By this time, he was suspicious of Stalin and was afraid if the Soviets entered Berlin, they would not leave. He urged Eisenhower to continue the advance toward Berlin by the 21st Army Group, under the command of Field Marshal Montgomery with the intention of capturing the city.

**General Patton:** Pattonagreed with Churchill that he should order the attack on the city since Montgomery's troops could reach Berlin within three days

**General Omar Bradley:** Bradley was hesitant to capture the city. He feared this would offend the Soviets and cost up to 100,000 Allied casualties.

**Decision:**

By mid-April, Eisenhower gave the order for all armies in the Western Allies to halt their advance to Berlin at the Elbe and Mulde River and move northeast toward Bremen and Hamburg. With U.S. troops just 96 miles west of Berlin, the Supreme Allied Commander sent a message to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, telling him that he was leaving Berlin to the Red Army. It was a controversial decision with profound implications for postwar Europe.

The Battle of Berlin was a terrible affair. Fueled by anger and revenge, The Red Army destroyed the city, raped and pillaged the civilians, and sent the captured German soldiers to camps in the Soviet Union to be worked to death. Many German soldiers and civilians, terrified of the vengeance the Soviets would exact, fled westward to surrender to the Western Allies. At the end of the conflict, the Soviets occupied the city, as well as the majority of Eastern Europe, giving them a decided advantage in post war peace negotiations.

1. What were the results of allowing the Soviets to enter Berlin first? Describe three results.
2. Why did The Western Allies allow the Soviets to enter and eventually take Berlin? Whose opinions did the Western Allies listen to?
3. What were other actions that the Western Allies could have taken?
4. What do you think the Western Allies should have done? Whose opinion/ opinions should we have listened to? Provide a justification for your opinion.
5. What would have been different if the Western Allies would have adopted your idea? Describe at least two differences.