

Extract from a British newsreel covering events on the Eastern Front 1942 Russian Offensive over a thousand mile front

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Courtesy of [ITN/Source](#), London.

Transcript

Thousands of shells stream through the night. By the light of gunflashes, cameras photograph Soviet artillery in action. Tanks laden with automatic riflemen press on as the tidal wave rolls forward to exploit a breakthrough

“I cannot get away from destiny”, said Adolf Hitler recently, “It haunts me day and night.”

How painfully true must he have found that remark to be when, instead of digging in until the Spring, his divisions are confronted with the prospect of a winter more terrible than the last.

His intuition must have boggled at the sight of his armies in Russia confronted with a series of offences, any one of which may seriously threaten his entire campaign. Here on the central front alone, the Red Army divisions are biting deeper and deeper into the German lines. General Zhukov was responsible for the brilliant operation.

In the wake of the advancing Russians there came those who had been driven from their homes, eager to return to what may remain. Slowly, grimly, painfully wending their way, to try and pick up the threads of life in the now liberated villages.

What is this source?

This is a newsreel film broadcast in Britain in December 1942.

At the time that this newsreel was being shown Soviet forces were engaged in a life or death struggle for the city of Stalingrad.

What's the background to this source?

One of Hitler's key aims in WW2 was to invade and destroy the Soviet Union and build a German empire in Eastern Europe. He invaded the USSR in June 1941 and at first it looked like he would succeed. However, he was stopped by the Russian winter in 1941 and then by stubborn Soviet resistance in 1942–3. By the start of 1943 the tide began to turn against the Germans. By 1944 all

EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: BERLIN

German forces were driven out of the USSR. By 1945 the Red Army was moving into Germany and it took Berlin in May 1945.

The key event of the campaign was probably the Battle of Stalingrad. The battle ran from late 1942 to early 1943. It was the deadliest battle in history and it cost German forces dearly in terms of men and equipment. From this point Soviet forces steadily drove the Germans back.

It's worth knowing that...

Although the film was broadcast in December 1942 the footage was probably shot in the summer or autumn of 1942. At that point the prospects for the Red Army looked very bad indeed, so this is a good example of a news film putting a positive spin on events.

After the war the old mistrust between Britain and the USA and the USSR resurfaced. As a result, the critical role of the Red Army in defeating Hitler was played down. However, films like this show us that at the time people were aware of the role the USSR was playing in the war.

How will you use this source?

1. According to the film, how did Hitler's words turn out the way he did not expect?
2. How are the Soviet forces shown in this film?
3. What does the film show us about the impact of the fighting on civilians?
4. How does the commentary describe Zhukov?
5. Are there any parts of this source you could use in your script for your task using the starter source film clip?