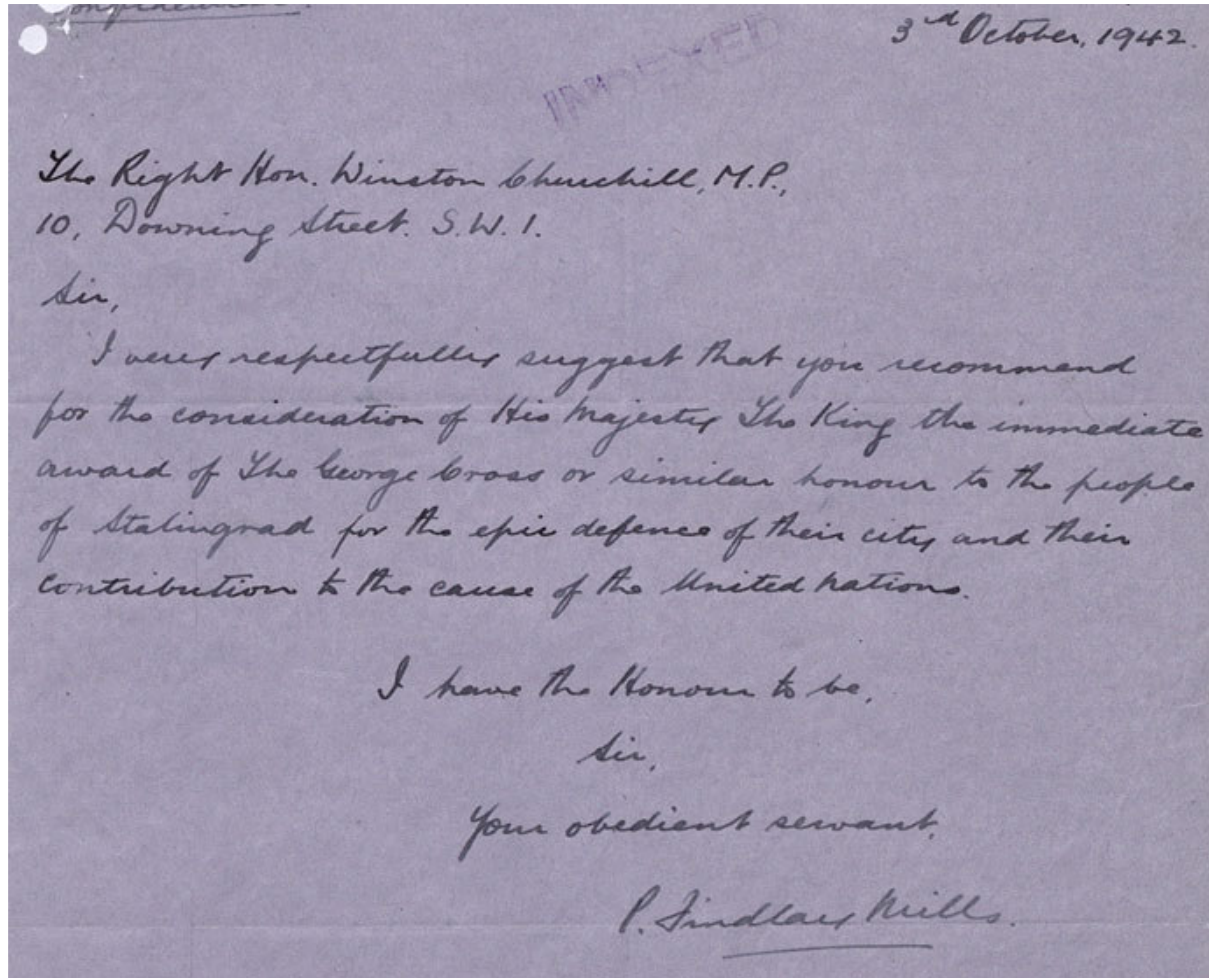


## EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: STALINGRAD

## A letter written to the Prime Minister in October 1942

Catalogue ref: FO 371/33035



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**Transcript of this letter**

3rd October 1942

The Right Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P.,  
10, Downing Street. S.W.1

Sir

I very respectfully suggest that you recommend for the consideration of His Majesty the King the immediate award of the George Cross or similar honour to the people of Stalingrad for the epic defence of their city and their contribution to the cause of the United Nations.

I have the Honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

P. Findlay Mills

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**What is this source?**

This letter was written to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1942.

You can see from the way that this letter has been written that the author expected it to be read by Churchill's officials. However, it is unlikely that the Prime Minister read such letters, but his officials would have given him some idea of their content.

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**What's the background to this source?**

Hitler's main aim was to conquer a large empire in Eastern Europe. To do this he needed to defeat the USSR. In June 1941 he attacked the USSR and conquered huge amounts of territory. In 1942 the Germans launched a new offensive in the south of the USSR. They wanted to capture the oilfields of the Caucasus region. The key to this area was the large city of Stalingrad. Again, the Germans were successful at first. They made big gains in July–August 1942. By the end of October they were still advancing slowly. However, the incredibly fierce resistance of Soviet forces and civilians in Stalingrad halted the German advance late in 1942. By the end of the year the tide was beginning to turn against the Germans.

German successes were based on fast moving attacks where artillery, tanks, aircraft and infantry all worked closely together. They were co-ordinated by use of radio. In Stalingrad the rubble of destroyed buildings made tanks much less effective. The Soviets also used clever tactics which they called

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'hugging' the Germans. This meant fighting them hand to hand as much as possible. This meant that the Germans could not use their artillery or air power for fear of hitting their own troops. It was a bloody and brutal struggle and both sides suffered very heavy casualties.

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**It's worth knowing that...**

A key factor in turning the tide against the Germans in 1942 was the Soviet winter. German troops were not well equipped for the freezing weather. This was partly because they expected Stalingrad to have fallen earlier in the year.

Back in Germany there were appeals to the civilian population to donate clothing, especially fur coats, for the soldiers on the Eastern Front.

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**How will you use this source?**

1. What does the letter writer want?
2. Does the writer seem well informed about events in Stalingrad?
3. Does the letter help you to measure the mood of the British public?
4. Does this source help you to understand the importance of the Battle of Stalingrad?
5. Is there any part of this source that you would quote in your final report to the Prime Minister?