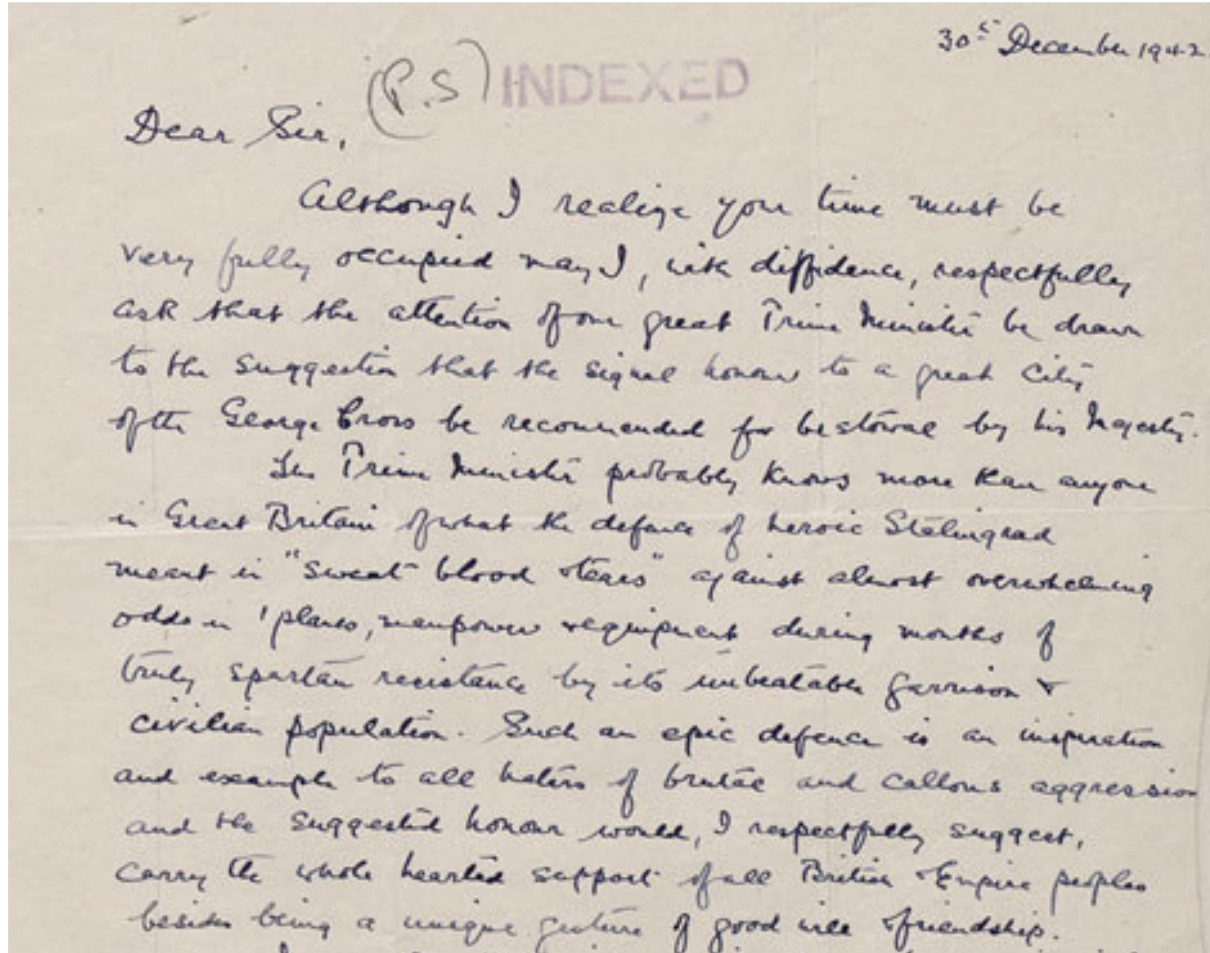


A letter written to the Prime Minister, December 1942

Catalogue ref: FO 371/33035



Transcript of letter

30th December 1942

Dear Sir,

Although I realise your time must be very fully occupied may I, with diffidence, respectfully ask that the attention of our great Prime Minister be drawn to the suggestion that the signal honour to a great city of the George Cross be recommended for bestowal by His Majesty.

The Prime Minister probably knows more than anyone in Great Britain of what the defence of heroic Stalingrad meant in 'sweat, blood, tears' against almost overwhelming odds in 'planes, weapons, equipment during months of truly spartan resistance by its unbeatable garrison and civilian population.

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Such an epic defence is an inspiration and example to all haters of brutal and callous aggression and the suggested honour would, I respectfully suggest, carry the whole hearted support of all British and Empire peoples besides being a unique gesture of good will and friendship.

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.

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 '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.

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

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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.

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?