

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: UKRAINE**

**Notes from a cabinet meeting between Prime Minister Churchill and senior commanders and politicians, November 1942**

Catalogue ref: CAB 65/28

**Extract a**

MOST SECRET - NO CIRCULATION.

W.M. (42) 162nd CONCLUSIONS.  
Monday, 30th November, 1942.

THE PRIME MINISTER read to the War Cabinet a very cordial telegram which he had received from M. Stalin, dated 28th November, in reply to a telegram from himself dated 24th November.

**Extract b**

M. Stalin had referred to the paragraph in the Prime Minister's telegram in which he had stated that by building up a strong American Army and Air Force in Great Britain and making continuous preparations along our South-Eastern and Southern coasts we kept the Germans pinned in the Pas de Calais. M. Stalin hoped that this did not mean that the Prime Minister had changed his mind with regard to his promise, given in Moscow, to establish a Second Front in Europe in the Spring of 1943.

The Prime Minister said that the changed situation made it all the more incumbent upon us to start a Second Front in Europe in 1943. Our present activities in the Mediterranean, important though they were, could only be regarded as an inadequate contribution compared with the efforts which Russia was making.

**What is this source?**

This source gives a summary of a War cabinet meeting held in November 1942. The War Cabinet contained the top political and military figures in the country. The content refers to a series of telegrams between Stalin and Churchill.

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Stalin and Churchill often communicated by telegram. It was fairly safe because the Germans had not broken allied codes. Also, telephone calls were not much use as neither Churchill nor Stalin spoke each other's language.

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

By May 1940 Hitler's forces had conquered Western Europe, apart from Britain. However, Hitler's main aim was to create a large empire in Eastern Europe. To do this he needed to defeat the USSR. In June 1941 he launched Operation Barbarossa. This was a devastating lightning attack on the USSR. The Soviet forces were taken by surprise and were driven back with heavy losses. Only the arrival of a Russian winter stopped the German advance. However, in the spring of 1942 the Germans launched another series of attacks. By late 1942 the situation for the USSR looked desperate. However, Stalin had gathered large forces for a last stand near Stalingrad as 1942 came to an end.

The advances in 1942 were aimed primarily at southern and central USSR. The prime target was the Caucasus area. This was extremely rich in minerals but the key target was the oil fields in the area. Hitler wanted the oil for his own forces, but he also wanted to make sure he stopped the Soviets using it.

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

The question of a Second Front was an ongoing issue between the Allied leaders. Stalin felt that the USSR was carrying the main burden of the war against Hitler and constantly pressurised Churchill and US leader Roosevelt for a second front against the Germans.

The USA joined the war late in 1941. By late 1942 they had large forces based in Britain. The US commanders wanted to try and invade Europe in 1943. However, British commanders were more cautious because the Germans had fortified the French coast. In the end the British and Americans attacked in North Africa and then Italy in 1943 before invading France in 1944.

**How will you use this source?**

1. According to Churchill, what were Stalin's main concerns?
2. Does this tell us anything about the position the USSR was in at this time?
3. What did Churchill say about the scale of the Russian effort?
4. Does this source support the opinion of Historian 1 or Historian 2?