

**The key question:**

How serious was the situation on the Eastern Front in 1942?

**Historian 1:**

"I think Stalin was exaggerating the situation in the USSR in 1942. He was trying to pressurise the British and U.S.A to do more against Germany because he felt the USSR was doing more than its fair share in the war effort."

**Historian 2:**

"I think Stalin's position was really desperate in 1942 because the Germans had already met with a great deal of success on the Eastern Front."

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**Your task**

Your task is to write a report on the Eastern front. In your report you must decide which of our historical opinions is more accurate by using the sources.

Consider the content and the quality of the evidence. Use the table to plan your report.

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**Photograph of the Russian Front 1941–1943**

Catalogue ref: FO 898/527



*Sans se laisser émouvoir par la vue de cette ville russe en flammes, des soldats allemands se réconfortent. A un moment donné, l'Allemagne était en possession de plus de 1.500.000 kilomètres carrés de territoire soviétique. Les Russes mirent le feu aux usines qu'ils ne pouvaient transporter.*

**Transcript of this source**

German soldiers comfort each other without giving into emotion at the sight of this Russian town in flames. At one time, Germany was in possession of more than 1,500,000 square kilometres of Soviet land. The Russians used to set fire to any factories that they could not remove.

**What is this source?**

This source comes from a French pamphlet printed in 1944.

By the time that this pamphlet was published the Russians had regained the land taken by the German army.

## EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE

### 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.

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### 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.

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### How will you use this source?

1. How does this source portray the German army?
2. Which has the most powerful message, the photograph or its caption?
3. Does this source support the opinion of Historian 1 or Historian 2?

Use the report table to help plan your report.

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: UKRAINE**

**A War Office map showing the German advances into the USSR by October 1942**

Catalogue ref: WO 208/1768



## EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE

**What is this source?**

This is an official War Office map from 1942. The War Office was the government department in charge of the armed forces. Today it is called the Ministry of Defence.

Senior commanders and politicians would have used this map.

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

The German advance did not just use German forces. By 1942 Italian, Romanian and Hungarian forces were fighting alongside the Germans.

The fighting in this campaign was the largest scale campaign of the war. It was also the most savage. Casualties on both sides were huge. Many prisoners were also taken but their survival rate was very low.

**How will you use this source?**

1. Comment on the extent of Soviet territory captured by the German army.
2. Is the land they have taken valuable?
3. Does this source help us to interpret any of the other sources in the box?
4. Does this source support the opinion of Historian 1 or Historian 2?

EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: UKRAINE

A telegram from the Japanese government to its officials in embassies around the world August 1942

Catalogue ref: HW 1/827

Extract a

Date: 11th August, 1942.

(A) The latest European situation is as follows:

1. The German-Soviet war entered upon July with considerable successes. The German Army while carrying out diversion attacks in the LENINGRAD and MOSCOW areas, concentrated its main strength from VORONEZH southwards, and bringing to bear its full weight with new methods of attack and new weapons, its advance is to be expected. GERMANY naturally, in view of last year's failure, made the most careful and well planned preparations for this year, and in putting forth the nation's full strength, may be said to have staked all on this campaign to give the SOVIET a knockout blow before winter begins. It is accordingly estimated that GERMANY is making haste to execute her plan of coming to a military decision in the course of this year, by depriving RUSSIA of the CAUCASUS oil-fields, and by cutting off the SOVIET from communication with the outside world. She will thus be enabled to hold this front with a minimum of troops and thus to realise the so-called "situation of non-defeat".

Extract b

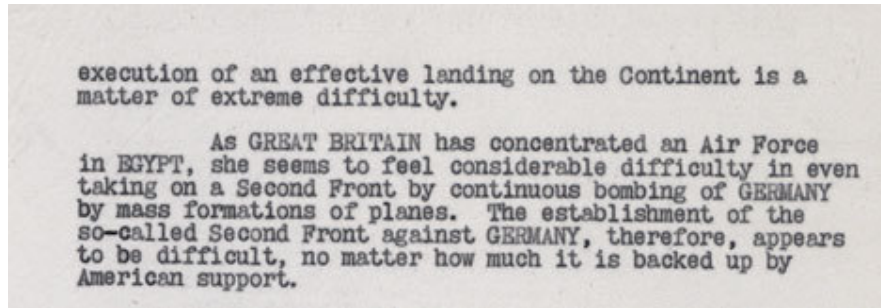
Taking a general survey of both armies this year, although the Soviet Army has still a considerable quantity of aeroplanes and tanks, the command of the air on the battlefield is on the whole in German hands. The Germans are therefore able to fill up all their losses completely, [? which gives them a preponderance of offensive power at any given point], and a Soviet defeat will not be surprising. However the Red Army appear to be assembling [a] reserve army[ies] in reinforcement in the STALINGRAD area and in the lower reaches of the VOLGA. It is expected that a desperate stand will be made on this line. The issue of the German-Soviet war may therefore be said to depend on the battle-power of the Red Army's reserve army.

Extract c

(C) The Question of a Second Front.

It appears that the SOVIET in their critical situation due to the German Army's advance are appealing to GREAT BRITAIN and the UNITED STATES through their Ambassadors MAISKY and LITVINOV to establish a second front against GERMANY without delay. GREAT BRITAIN and the UNITED STATES however, owing to the extreme effectiveness of the German submarine warfare, are not only greatly put to it for shipping, but GERMANY having strengthened her coastal defences against ENGLAND can dispose of considerable forces under the command of General RUNDSTEDT, so that the

**Extract d**



**What is this source?**

These extracts come from a telegram sent out by the Japanese government to their embassies in different parts of the world.

It was intercepted by British intelligence, translated and sent to British commanders. There are extra brackets and question marks in the text as result. British intelligence also broke German codes.

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

Japan was allied to Germany in WW2. Although German and Japanese forces did not fight together Japanese officials would certainly have been interested in what was happening in the war between Germany and the USSR.

## EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE

This source gives us a useful indication of what the Japanese knew. The information probably came from the German government.

**How will you use this source?**

1. What impression do you get from this source of how serious the situation was for the USSR?
2. Does this source support or contradict any of the other sources in the box?
3. Is there any reason for this source to exaggerate the situation?
4. Does this source support the opinion of Historian 1 or Historian 2?

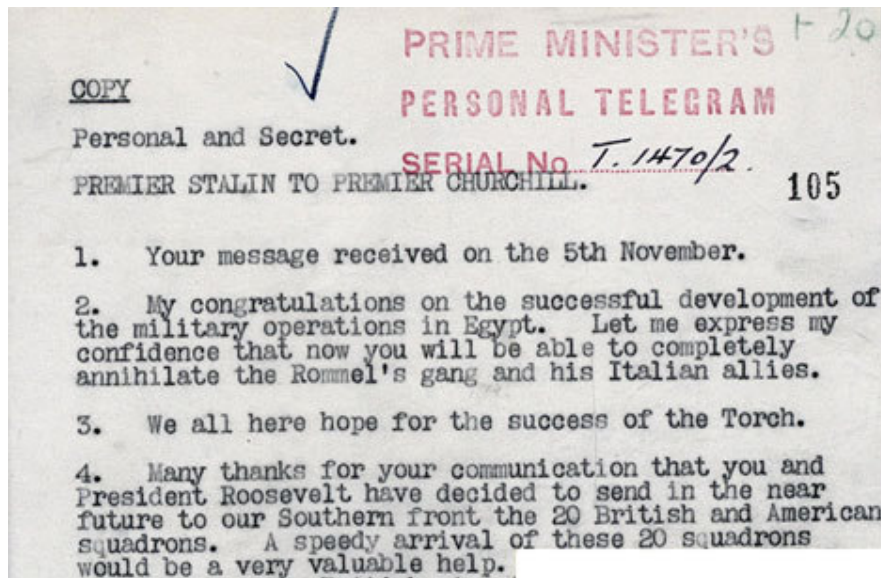


**EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE**

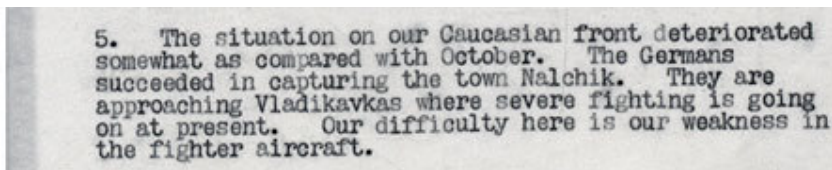
**Extracts from a telegram sent by Soviet leader Josef Stalin to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, November 1942**

Catalogue ref: CAB 65/28

**Extract a**



**Extract b**



**What is this source?**

This source is a telegram sent by Soviet leader Stalin to British leader Winston Churchill in November 1942.

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.

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE****What's the background to this source?**

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

Britain and the USA shipped large amounts of material and equipment to the USSR during the war. Although the Soviet people took on the heaviest burden of the fighting against Hitler they were well supplied with arms and equipment.

Britain and the USA supplied the USSR through two routes. One was the northern route that led through the North Sea and then around northern Russia to the port of Archangel. This route was extremely dangerous because of terrible weather conditions and enemy action. The other supply route to the USSR was from the south through Iran.

**How will you use this source?**

1. What was going well for the Allies?
2. What help were Britain and the USA giving to Stalin?
3. What impression do you get of relations between Stalin and Churchill?
4. What worrying news did Stalin have to report?
5. Does this source support the opinion of Historian 1 or Historian 2?

**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.

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE**

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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?

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE****Time to Remember – Operation Barbarossa**

ITN Ref: BP010141224703

Courtesy of ITN/Source, London.

Extract from "Time to Remember – Operation Barbarossa", newsreel showing the fighting on the Russian front in 1941

**Transcript**

But could any aid prevent the total and immediate collapse of the Soviet Union? Mile after mile, defeated Russian armies fell back, as once they had done before the Grand Armee of Napoleon. And as they withdrew they fired their fields, set light to their farms. Scorched the earth that was theirs.

For the invader, victory after victory. Encirclement, after encirclement. Soon there would be no army left even to retreat. Already the world, friend and foe alike, was beginning to count the days.

Adolf Hitler had already counted them. On October 3rd, 15 weeks after the launching of Barbarossa, he announced:

"I declare today and I declare it without reservation: the enemy in the East has been struck down and will never rise again."

Yes. The bear was dead. All that remained was for the stupid beast to realise it lie down. But at the front, a hold up. Come on! What are we waiting for? It's only a dead bear refusing to lie down.

Yes. Like the stubborn city of Leningrad. Home of the Revolution and vital base for the Baltic fleet. A city under fire from the German guns. A city in flames after each visit of the Heinkels and the Dorniers. A city suffering all that a city could suffer, yet refusing to give in even though three parts surrounded. Elsewhere the Red Army might fall back, but here, as in Moscow, the sticking point.

As Nazi artillery battered at her walls, Leningrad fought back. Not just as a fortress but also as one of the key arsenals of the Union. Here were to be forged the weapons that would one day make Russia, in her turn, the irresistible force. But that's all in the future, today it's backs to the wall. Even as completed guns are swung out, workers devote their precious spare time to practice battle. Total war. And total war too in the rear of the invaders.

In villages supposedly subdued, along vital supply lines, the lightning attacks of partisans. Now even the scorched earth seems to be rising against Hitler. Total war. And when the partisans lay hands on an informer, a traitor, a collaborator, they dispense little mercy. Only justice swift and final.

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE**

Counterattacks, spoiling attacks: a dead bear not only refusing to lie down but actually using his claws.

In her agony Russia under Stalin, like Russia under Alexander, found the passionate courage, of a people who loved their land.

**What is this source?**

This newsreel footage was shot in 1941 at the time of the German invasion of the USSR. The invasion was known as Operation Barbarossa. The footage shown here was used in a documentary series called 'Time To Remember'. The scenes were probably taken at different times and places and edited together.

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

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The fighting in this campaign was the largest scale campaign of the war. It was also the most savage. Casualties on both sides were huge. Many prisoners were also taken but their survival rate was very low.

**How will you use this source?**

1. What does this footage tell you about the nature of the fighting?
2. Does this source help historians to tackle the question of how serious the situation was for the USSR?
3. Does this source support the opinion of Historian 1 or Historian 2?

**EASTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: UKRAINE**

**How serious was the situation on the Eastern Front in 1942?**

Use this table to plan your report.

Source [Name]	Supports view of <b>Historian 1</b> or <b>Historian 2?</b>	Why this source supports the view	List any concerns you have about the source	Quality of source overall for supporting the historian's view (0-10)