

## 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

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### **Extract d**

execution of an effective landing on the Continent is a matter of extreme difficulty.

As GREAT BRITAIN has concentrated an Air Force in EGYPT, she seems to feel considerable difficulty in even taking on a Second Front by continuous bombing of GERMANY by mass formations of planes. The establishment of the so-called Second Front against GERMANY, therefore, appears to be difficult, no matter how much it is backed up by American support.

### **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.

### **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.

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...**

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.

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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?