

Seminar Topics

THE RUSSIAN FRONT

Aims- To introduce students to the process of working with primary sources by setting a selection of documents as required reading for a seminar. To encourage students to interrogate the origins and purpose of primary source documents. To explore how primary sources inform our understanding of historical events.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What motivations lay behind Germany's decision to invade Russia in 1941?
- What successes did Germany achieve in Russia? What mistakes did Germany make?
- What disadvantages did Russia face? What were her advantages?
- How did the invasion and subsequent fighting proceed? Why did the invasion fail?
- What impact did the invasion and its failure have on Germany? On Russia?
- How did the Russian Front affect the other Allies? Or other theatres of war?
- How did the Russian Front influence the outcome of the Second World War as a whole?

DOCUMENTS:

Drawing on your knowledge of Germany and Russia during the Second World War, use the following documents to inform and support your answers.

1. Some Weaknesses in German Strategy and Organisation 1933-45, a report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, Offices of the Cabinet and Minister of Defence, 20 October 1946.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0132/035>
2. Probable Supply Position of German Europe (1 July 1940-30 June 1941). Preliminary Estimate. Note by Ministry of Economic Warfare, 25 July 1940.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0098/005/001>
3. German Strategy in 1941. Report by the Axis Planning Section. 7 April 1941.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0101/041/001>
4. Possible Effect of a German-Soviet War. Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee. 14 June 1941.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0102/073>
5. The Effects of a Russian Collapse. Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee. 31 July 1941.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0103/042>
6. Government Code and Cypher School: Signals Intelligence Passed to the Prime Minister, Messages and Correspondence. 21 September 1942.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.hw1/0912/002/001>
7. Russian Strength During the Winter 1942-43. A report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee. 2 December 1942. <http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0111/055/001>
8. Germany's Diminishing Resources. Note by Secretary, War Cabinet. 12 January 1943.
<http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0113/021/001>
9. German Manpower and Casualties. Report by Ad Hoc Committee under Chairmanship of Prof. Dennison. 7 November 1943. <http://www.secretintelligencefiles.com/Content/swwf.cab81/0118/030>

Seminar Topics

THE RUSSIAN FRONT

FURTHER READING:

Jan Tattenberg (2019), 'The fatherland perished in the frozen wastes of Russia': West-Germans in search of the European soldier, 1940–1967, *History of European Ideas*, DOI: 10.1080/01916599.2019.1678190.

Russia and Germany, Century of Conflict. By Walter Laqueur. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Victory at Stalingrad, The Battle That Changed History. By Geoffrey Roberts. London: Routledge, 2013.

The War Behind the Eastern Front, Soviet Partisans in North West Russia 1941-1944. By Alexander Hill. London: Routledge, 2004.



DIGITAL PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTIONS



Empowering Research and Teaching