Top Secret., Printed for the War Cabinet, 6 June 1944.

P.H.P. (44) 13 (O) Final., Copy No. 2

WAR CABINET.

Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee

EFFECT OF SOVIET POLICY ON BRITISH STRATEGIC INTERESTS.

Report by the Sub-Committee

1. We were instructed to appreciate the probable long-term impact of the policy of the U.S.S.R. on British strategic interests, with the object of formulating basic principles on which the Chiefs of Staff should found their military advice when called upon to express an opinion upon questions of policy affecting the U.S.S.R. We were told that the basis of this appreciation should be that it remains the policy of His Majesty’s Government to foster and maintain the friendliest possible relations with the U.S.S.R..

2. Our full appreciation is attached, and our conclusions are set out below[[1]](#footnote-1). These have been prepared in close consultation with the Foreign Office, and have taken account of all available evidence of Russia’s post-war intentions. It should be noted, however, that no attempt has been made to deal with the possibility that Soviet Russia might attempt to extend her influence over Western Europe and thus dominate the whole continent. Nor has any attempt been made to deal with the possibility that the Russia of the future, as a result of the development of Siberia, might attempt to dominate the continent of Asia. Obviously, if either of these situations were to arise, there would be a serious threat to British interests, but the evidence at present available does not in any way suggest that the desire for the wholesale domination of this sort is in the mind of the Soviet leaders or their people.

**Conclusions.**

**Impact of Soviet Policy on British Strategic Interests.**

**3. The following are vital British strategic interests which might be threatened by the U.S.S.R. :**

**(а) Middle Eastern oil supplies; for, if our oil supplies were cut off in Iraq and Persia, our position in war would be precarious. The United States have very considerable interests in this general area, however, and the fear of American intervention might act as a deterrent to the U.S.S.R.**

**(b) Mediterranean communications; by way of Turkey. Such a move would also constitute a threat to our Middle Eastern oil supplies.**

**(с) Our vital sea communications; if the U.S.S.R. were to become a first-class Naval and Air Power.**

**(d) The concentrated industrial areas of the United Kingdom; if the U.S.S.R. built up a large strategic bomber force.**

British Policy

4. We conclude, therefore, that the following basic principles should govern the military advice given by the Chiefs of Staff on policy affecting the Soviet Union:

(а) A real endeavour to secure the full and friendly participation of the U.S.S.R. in any system of world security appears to be the best means of avoiding friction between us. Failing the establishment of such a system, we must endeavour to perpetuate and strengthen our existing Treaty of Alliance with the U.S.S.R. and our present relations with the United States and China.

(b) In furtherance of the above aims we should not oppose any reasonable demands of the U.S.S.R. where they do not conflict with our vital strategic interests as indicated in paragraph 3. In exchange we should expect the U.S.S.R. not to oppose our claims in areas vital to us.

(с) Since there exists the possibility of a threat from the U.S.S.R. to our vital oil interests and communications in the Middle East, our policy should be directed towards ensuring that the United States are on our side in the event of such a threat developing (*vide* P.H.P. (44) 3 (O) (Final)[[2]](#footnote-2)).

(d) The general weakness of the countries of Europe after this war will leave a vacuum which the U.S.S.R., if she wishes, might be in a position to fill. It would be to our strategic disadvantage to leave her free to do so, though we could not entirely prevent it. We can only insure against it by close collaboration with the Western European States, more especially France, as will in any case be necessary in order to prevent the possibility of a new German aggression.

(е) The British Commonwealth should maintain adequate naval superiority and our air strength should be related to Russian air power. Owing to our relatively small resources of British man-power our strategic reserves must be so organised as to be capable of rapid concentration in strength in any vital area, and particularly in the Middle East. Indeed, it is reasonable to argue that our major strategic reserves should be stationed in the Middle East. All our forces must be maintained at a high standard of efficiency.

5. An appreciation, such as this, based largely upon deduction, will require continual modification in the light of further information regarding the policy of the U.S.S.R.

H.M.G. Jebb[[3]](#footnote-3)

C.C.A. Allen[[4]](#footnote-4)

F.C. Curtis[[5]](#footnote-5)

P. Warburton[[6]](#footnote-6)

[TNA, FO 371/43384]

Keywords: Inter-allied relations, post-war order

1. For a more detailed more aboutaccount of the process of drawing up the report, see: Lewis J. Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-War Strategic Defence, 1942 - 1947. 2nd ed. London, 2003. p. 90-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This memorandum by the Post-Hostilities Planning Staff (dated April 1944) discussed the British strategic position in the Middle East in view of the negotiations with the Americans on oil issues. Expressing concerns about the proximity of the Iraqi and Iranian fields to the source of "possible aggression" (although not directly naming the Soviet Union), the planners felt that it, at this stage there was no need to mention it to the Americans (Lewis J., ibid, p. 83). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jebb, Hubert Miles Gladwyn (1900 – 1996) – British diplomat and civil servant, Chairman of Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee (1943 – 1944); Acting Secretary-General of the United Nations (1945 – 1946); Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office (1946 – 1948); UK Permanent Representative at the United Nations (1950 – 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Allen, Cecil Charles A. – Royal Navy Captain, member of Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee (1943 – 1944) then Post-Hostilities Planning Staff (1944 – 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Curtis, Francis (1898 – 1986) – Brigadier, Director of Military Operations (1943 – 1944); Director of Post-Hostilities Plans, War Office (1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Warburton, Peter – Air Commodore, member of Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee (1943 – 1944), then Post-Hostilities Planning Staff (1944 – 1945). As noted by historian John Lewis Warburton, he “established himself as the most forceful and persistent of the Post-Hostilities Planners where the Soviet Union was concerned”. (Lewis J., Ibid. 135). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)