Note from the Deputy Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, O. G. Sargent[[1]](#footnote-1) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affaris, A. Eden, 18 August 1944

Secretary of State.

When we were speaking about General Burrows[[2]](#footnote-2) on the 15th August, I mentioned to you the increasing signs that the Chiefs of Staff and their subordinate organisations are thinking and speaking of the Soviet Union as being enemy number one and even of securing German assistance against her.

I have now gone into the matter in greater detail.

Two papers have been under preparation by the Post-Hostilities Planners[[3]](#footnote-3) at the request of the Foreign Office, one of the Strategic Advantages of the Western Group and one on the Dismemberment of Germany[[4]](#footnote-4). In the first case, the Chiefs of Staff’s minutes (Flag A) on the draft paper that was put up to them, in agreement with the Foreign Office which kept the danger of hostilities with the Soviet Union well in the background, contained the following passages:

(b) “… the creation of a Western European Group would only be a first step towards a system which, if the security of these Islands were to be secured, must include a part, if not the whole, of Germany.

(c) In fact, Germany would be the key to the security of these Islands in the future and, however unpalatable the fact might be, there might well come a time when we should have to rely on her assistance against a hostile Soviet Union. This fact again had not been made sufficiently clear in the Report.

(d) The policy we adopt in dealing with Germany at the end of the war is thus fundamental to the problem of the future defence of the United Kingdom, as on it may well depend the extent to which we could hope for German assistance. The case for and against dismemberment of Germany must be argued with this in mind.”

and again:

“… there would be every advantage in proceeding with the proposal to form an association of the Western European States, provided it was clearly understood that such an association would only be the first step towards the development of a wider system which, if Russia ever becomes hostile, must be extended to include the whole or at least part of Germany”.

In making these comments, the Chiefs of Staff also criticised the draft paper (in which the Foreign Office had concurred) for taking account of political factors and instructed the drafters to revise their report “taking a purely military view of the situation “with which we should be confronted in the event of a breakdown of “the world organisation”.

Again, in a communication from the Chiefs of Staff to the Foreign Office giving their interim views on the Western Group proposals (for the benefit of our Delegation to the World Organisation talks), the following striking passage occurs:

“We realise that we must on no account antagonise Russia by giving the appearance of building up the Western European block against her, and that for this reason the immediate object of a Western European Group must be the keeping down of Germany; but we feel that the more remote, but more dangerous, possibility of a hostile Russia making use of the resources of Germany must not be lost sight of, and that any measures which we now take should be tested by whether or not they help to prevent that contingency ever arising.”

Note the word “now”. What this means is that in our present thinking about Germany, we should, as an important consideration, calculate how we can deprive the Soviet Union of as much of Germany’s resources as possible. This sounds suspiciously like a policy of trying to win the Germans to our side against the Soviet Union with the obvious corollary of preserving German “resources” for use against our twenty years’ ally.

As a result of the Chiefs of Staff’s instructions to the Post-Hostilities Planners quoted at (d) above, this Body produced a draft paper on Dismemberment of Germany which contained the following conclusion:

“This dismemberment of Germany would be to our long-term strategic advantage in the event that we should require German assistance against a hostile Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In our view, such assistance is highly unlikely from a unitary Germany, but we might hope to bring parts of a dismembered Germany into a North Western European Group, thus adding strength to this group and increasing the depth of our defences. At the least, dismemberment would reduce the likelihood of the whole of Germany falling within the Soviet orbit and combining with her against us.”

The result of the Chiefs of Staff action is thus that their subordinates are writing papers – and no doubt talking and thinking – in terms of gaining German assistance against the Soviet Union. I doubt whether this line of thought is confined to the Service representatives on this particular Committee. Indeed, it inevitably must affect all military planning in connexion with the occupation and treatment of Germany and so a wide circle of military gentlemen. The next thing will be that Americans with whom they have contact will become perfectly aware of it. If it is not already known to the Russians, they are unlikely to remain in ignorant for long.

Incidentally, the Chiefs of Staff’s instructions mentioned above that political considerations are not to be taken into account in preparing this kind of paper, means that they contain no discussion of when or in what circumstances we must look forward to aggression from the Soviet Union and that factors such as the Anglo-Soviet Alliance and the Moscow Four-Power Pact are not mentioned.[[5]](#footnote-5) It would of course be quite senseless for a Foreign Office representative to take any further part in such discussions and arrangements have been made for him to be dissociated from the preparation of such papers and a step which the Chiefs of Staff welcome[[6]](#footnote-6).

I do not ask you to take any action for the moment, because neither of these papers have reached the stage of final approval by the Chiefs of Staff. They may realise that they are unwise and put some water in their wine before anything of this kind goes before Ministers. But you should know what is going on, since even if the Chiefs of Staff think better of it and conceal such views from Ministers, these, I fear are their real thoughts and if they do not give you the opportunity, I am sure you will have to make an occasion for putting a stop to this kind of thinking and speaking[[7]](#footnote-7).

*O.G. Sargent*

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

18th August, 1944

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1. Sargent, Sir Orme G. (1884-1962),- British diplomat, Deputy undersecretary for foreign affairs – Northern and Southern Europe (1939-1946); Permanent Undersecretary for foreign affairs (1946-1949). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Burrows, Montagu Brocas (1894 - 1967) - British Lieutenant-General, Head of the British Military Mission to USSR (1944 - 1945), Commander-in-Chief of West Africa Command of the British Army (1945 - 1946). Burrows’ anti-communist declarations did not contribute to the establishment of fruitful relations with the Soviet command. In September 1944, Stalin spoke openly to Clark Kerr of how "our military personnel do not trust General Burrows. They will not be able to work with him. General Burrows does not respect our military, and they do not respect him" (SANO. T. 2. p. 173). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In August 1944, the Post-Hostilities Planning Sub-Committee was moved to the headquarters of the Post-Hostilities Planning Staff. As a result of the reorganization, the Chairman's seat was occupied by representatives of the armed forces instead of the representative of the Foreign Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On these reports see: Lewis J. Op. cit. p. 112-114, 128-135. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This refers to the Declaration of the Four Nations on global security, signed on 30 October 1943 during the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The conflict between the military and members of the Foreign Office in the summer of 1944, which was well noted by one of the employees of latter, John Ward, began in August 1944: "In view of the tendencies and recklessness shown by the present Directors of PHP, we need not regret these gentlemen committing hara-kiri” (quoted in Lewis J. Op. cit. p. 124). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Eden took Sargent’s note seriously enough to inscribe on its margins on 23 August, "This is very bad", and promised to talk to Ismay. The conversation, however, as evinced by Eden’s handwritten note from 25 August, did not lead to serious results: Ismay said that "such an attitude does not come from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who have not thought it over." [↑](#footnote-ref-7)