Note from G. Wilson, Foreign Office Northern Department, on relations with the Soviet Union after the war, 24 September 1944[[1]](#footnote-1)

[…]

3. It is our policy to build up, even within the framework of a World Organisation, a Western European security bloc which will involve close military collaboration with our European neighbours. There is every reason to suppose that the Russians will do the same in Eastern Europe. These two military blocs will be a danger to peace rather that otherwise unless their two leaders – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and ourselves – are very closely linked together not only diplomatically but also militarily.

4. Military staff talks on the lines suggested would be welcomed by the smaller countries in the two blocs as they would give them a much greater sense of security. It might be possible, and would certainly be valuable, for the French to be associated as a principal in such conversations.

5. It provides the only positive solution to the difference in outlook which is developing between the Foreign Office and the Service Departments on policy towards Russia. This difference of outlook, to judge by the line recently taken in a number of papers by the service representatives on the Post Hostilities Planning Committee and by the Chiefs of Staff on the Western Europe security bloc papers, is roughly as follows. The military say, quite rightly, that the only power in Europe which can, in the foreseeable future, be a danger to us is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. They go on to argue that the only way to meet that potential danger is to organize against it now, and in pursuance of that policy they have recently advanced as an argument in favour of the dismemberment of Germany the theory that we might then be able to use the man-power and resources of north-west Germany in the eventual war against the Russians, and that we should gain valuable depth of defence. In a number of other ways also it has been apparent that, in considering post-war plans, the Russian danger has been at the forefront of their minds, and that they are already nibbling at the idea – if not more – of building up Germany against Russia. The view taken in the Foreign Office has been that, in planning along these lines, the military will take inevitable the very danger they are trying to avoid. The implementation of some of their plans could not be concealed from the Russians, who would retaliate in kind and could do so much more quickly and effectively and ruthlessly than we possibly could. Any chance of co-operation with the Russians would then disappear completely. In any case, the Anglo-Soviet Treaty is one of the corner-stones of our whole foreign policy, and it is not possible to strain every nerve to make the Treaty work and at the same time to base our military plans on the assumption that the next war will be fought against the other party of that Treaty. We and the military are on common ground (a) in acknowledging as a fact that Russia is the only power in Europe that can be a danger to our security, (b) in wanting to avoid that danger, and (c) in wanting to secure that, in any future war, we and the Russians are on the same and not opposite sides. The difference between us is therefore one of method and not of principle, though we may take different views as to the imminence of the Russian danger. But one way of reducing that danger would be if we and the Russians were, after the war, regularly engaged in military conversations and staff talks about the security of our common, or even individual, interests. […]

9. The usefulness of such military talks would of course depend on the degree of confidence each side felt in the other, but the fact of our suggesting them at all would go a long way to increase the Russians' confidence in us. It is the sort of proposal which they may well make themselves, if we do not make it first. If that were to happen, a refusal on our part would certainly make the Russians still more mistrustful and suspicious. We are unlikely to have a better opportunity than the present time to make our suggestion to them. I suspect that they are a good deal more impressed by our military achievements in France than they are ever likely to admit, and would now realize that we made suggestion from strength and not from weakness. Such a positive indication by us of the importance we attached to the Anglo-Soviet Treaty in the post-war world, and of our determination not to let our two countries drift apart after this war as they have done after previous wars, would do more than anything else to get Anglo-Soviet relations on to a better basis. […]

[Signature: Wilson]

[TNA, FO 371/43306]

Keywords: Inter-allied relations, post-war Germany, post-war order.

1. In sending a memorandum to Eden on 30 September, Sargent noted that the issues raised in it is "worthy of individual consideration," and offered to organize a meeting on the subject. Sargent emphasized: "Personally I am in favour of the line of approach suggested by Mr. Wilson, but I foresee considerable difficulties in the way”. Eden agreed with Wilson's ideas but expected difficulties due to the fact that "our military get on so badly with the Russians”. The meeting with the military took place on 4 October (see: Minutes of a Meeting held at 4 pm. Wednesday, 4th October, 1944, in the Foreign Secretary's Room // TNA, FO 954/22). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)