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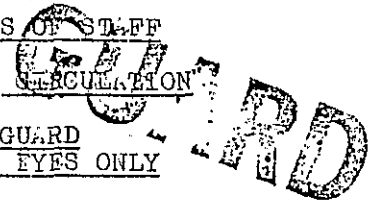
Account of COS(52)1684 Min. 6.
CIRCULATED FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CHIEFS OF STAFF

J.P.(52)142(Final)

LIMITED CIRCULATION

5th December, 1952

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CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

JOINT PLANNING STAFF

SOVIET STRENGTH AND CAPABILITIES -
COMMENTS ON S.G. 161/3

Report by the Joint Planning Staff

INTRODUCTION

1. As instructed¹, we have examined S.G. 161/3 in consultation with the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Basic Nature of the Paper

2. S.G. 161/3 was designed as an intelligence study by a special working party, acting on behalf of the Standing Group with the approval of national Chiefs of Staff. The working party was bound by instructions to produce an agreed estimate for the use of NATO commanders.

3. The terms of reference² and the form which the paper should take were laid down by the Standing Group, and instructions were given that answers to certain specific questions presented to the Standing Group by SACEUR should be embodied in the text.

4. The American members of the working party adopted a rigid interpretation of the agreed terms of reference. In particular they were unwilling to agree to any estimate which appeared to them to minimise the threat to North America. They were also averse to giving weight to Soviet weaknesses which might appear to write down the general threat to N.A.T.O.

Inevitable Limitations

5. We recognise that any strategic appreciation is bound to lack reality when it is designed:-

- 1 COS(52)152nd Meeting, Item 2
- 2 SGM 2020-52

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(a) to meet the wishes of many nations each naturally concerned with the threat to itself,

and (b) to observe the restrictions of the McMahon Act.

6. We have also borne in mind that the paper is written in the American style for American supreme commanders and that split views are unacceptable.

7. In the circumstances, we consider that the paper represents as reasonable a compromise of the three national viewpoints as could be expected at the working group level. Except in its lack of stress on the threat of Russian mining campaigns and the undue emphasis on atomic air attack on the North American continent, S.G. 161/3 does not depart materially from the briefs³ used by the British members of the working party.

SHORTCOMINGS OF S.G. 161/3

8. We have throughout based our comments on an objective examination of the document in an attempt to assess its value to commanders in making their plans. At Annex we have outlined broadly the aspects in which we consider that S.G. 161/3 fails to meet their needs.

METHOD OF HANDLING BRITISH COMMENTS

9. In view of the fact that S.G. 161/3 is basically in line with the British briefs³ and does not depart from the terms of reference², we consider that no attempt should be made to effect major alterations. We consider however that the amendments already agreed in the case of S.G. 161/4 should be similarly applied to S.G. 161/3.

10. Although the system admits of national views being presented in the form of comments to be attached to the paper, we do not think that such action should be taken since it would prejudice the unanimity of the appreciation.

11. It is however important that the shortcomings discussed at Annex should be fully remedied when S.G. 161/3 is revised, and the Standing Group should be informed now that we would advocate that the next edition of this paper should indicate Soviet weaknesses as well as strengths and the terms of reference should be revised accordingly. We therefore consider that the points raised should be taken into account when preparing the brief for the British section of the next working party.

Recommendations

12. We recommend that:-

- (a) this paper should be forwarded to Sir William Elliot for information;
- (b) the points at Annex should be taken into account when preparing the brief for the British section of the next working party;
- (c) the signal at Appendix be despatched to Sir William Elliot;

2 SGM 2020-52
3 JIC(51)117 and 118, JIC(52)33(Draft) and
45 (Draft)

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- (d) S.G. 161/3 should be brought into line with the amendments to S.G. 161/4 proposed by the Chiefs of Staff.

(Signed) D.E. HOLLAND MARTIN
F.J. St.G. BRAITHWAITE
F.G. BAMFORD.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, S.W.1.

5th December, 1952.

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Annex to J.F. (52)143 (Final)

SHORTCOMINGS OF S.G. 161/3

Failure to Represent Soviet Weaknesses

1. Although there are a number of paragraphs throughout the paper which discuss vulnerability, the Soviet weaknesses tend to be given insufficient emphasis. We discuss below some of the aspects which we consider deserve greater prominence.
2. Basic Weaknesses of the Russian Naval Position. Although there are references to the Baltic and Black Sea fleets being initially confined to their respective seas at the beginning of a war, there are two factors which have not been given adequate consideration:-
 - (a) The great distance separating the more important Allied shipping routes from the Russian northern bases, which are themselves vulnerable to attack from the sea.
 - (b) The initial disposition of Soviet naval air forces, which must operate at extended range until advanced bases are established.
3. Standard of Soviet Naval Efficiency. S.G. 161/3, page 33, paragraph 31 states that "taking all factors into consideration we conclude that by 1956 the technical equipment and operational efficiency of the Soviet Navy will enable it to perform the role assigned to it in war". We consider that it should nevertheless be made clear that the Soviet Navy's efficiency will still fall short of the standards maintained by Britain and America.
4. Efficiency of Ground Forces. S.G. 161/3 lays stress on the obvious assets of the Red Army. The rigidity of thought and fear of taking the initiative prevalent among all but the highest commanders, which in some circumstances must constitute a disadvantage, are dismissed with a rather obvious statement to the effect that junior officers are not of the calibre of the senior command, but that they may be expected to execute orders faithfully.
5. Supply of Aviation Fuel. Our own administrative planners appreciate that the provision of fuel to our airfields on the Continent is a major problem, even in circumstances where a withdrawal may be progressively shortening our lines of communication. The problem can at least be no less for the Russians, and is likely to be much greater because of extending lines of communication and the larger forces involved. We consider that this point has been insufficiently stressed. The Americans are being asked to take part in an Anglo/American study of Soviet capabilities to deal with the forward supply of fuel.
6. Allied Strategic Air Strength and the Russian Defence Problem. S.G. 161/3 does not place sufficient emphasis on the Russian vulnerability to the Allied strategic air offensive, which we consider to be the paramount factor in allied strategy in the event of war against Russia. We consider that the paper should stress the difficulty of protecting the vast land mass of Russia from such an attack, and the question of the extent to which the Russians

Annex (Concluded).

could maintain a large-scale offensive in the face of it. In particular, Russian shortcomings in radar and anti-aircraft defences, although included in the report, are insufficiently stressed against a background of an Allied strategic air offensive. COS(W)306, paragraph 16 has already drawn attention to this aspect of S.G. 161/4 and has been accepted by the Americans.

Failure to Classify Likelihood of Alternative Strategies

7. Where alternative strategies are available to the enemy it is of little value to describe them to a commander unless their relative probability is indicated, for example:-

- (a) The Scandinavian Campaign. No assessment has been made of the likelihood of Swedish neutrality being respected by Russia. We consider that it should be made clear that an attack on Norway without violation of Sweden is very unlikely.
- (b) The Middle East Campaign. There is insufficient indication of the extent of the weight Russia would give to the need to neutralise Turkey before threatening the Levant.

Failure Adequately to Represent the Mining Threat

8. Although a number of references are made in the paper to Russian mining capabilities, the likelihood and menace of a major enemy mining campaign are given less prominence than in the recently expressed views of the U.K. Chiefs of Staff, for instance in the minutes of C.O.S.(52) 29th Meeting, Item 2 B and in C.O.S.(52) 36th Meeting, paragraph 107(b).

Over-Assessment of Atomic Air Threat to North American Continent

9. Whereas JIC(52)45 does not assess as likely a widespread atomic campaign against the North American Continent, S.G. 161/3 in the section "The Likely Air Plan" appears to accept North America as a target area as likely to be attacked as the United Kingdom. We consider the latter view to be unsupported by intelligence.

Misleading Effect of Maps

10. Maps which illustrate campaign studies made without regard to Allied opposition, and which receive a circulation wider than just to planners, should, if they are not to convey a false impression, always be accompanied by a warning note to that effect. Such a warning is contained in paragraph 5(a)(i) on page 118 of S.G. 161/3, but it is too remote from the maps of the campaign studies.

12. The map on page 162c is valueless in planning the defence of Britain - especially as it ignores the mine threat.