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THE STRATEGIC VALUE TO THE USSR OF THE CONQUEST
OF WESTERN EUROPE AND THE NEAR EAST (TO CAIRO)
PRIOR TO 1950 *

Report by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. To analyze and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages that would accrue to the USSR if it should elect, prior to 1950, to overrun the European continent and the Near East (to Cairo), with a view to determining whether or not the strategic position thus acquired would be sufficiently strong *per se* to induce Soviet leaders to adopt such a course of action.

ASSUMPTIONS AND FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. The USSR has the military capability of overrunning Europe (excluding the UK) and the Near East to Cairo in a short period of time.
3. The Western Powers would undertake immediate counteraction, including maximum employment of US air power, using the atomic bomb at least against Soviet targets.
4. A substantial part of the merchant and naval ships belonging to the countries which were overrun would manage to avoid falling under Soviet control.
5. A large part of the Near Eastern oil facilities and installations would be seriously damaged or destroyed prior to evacuation by present operators.
6. The Western Powers, through naval blockade, would effectively cut off commerce between continental Europe on the one hand and the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and Southeast Asia on the other.
7. In addition to the assumptions enumerated above, the basic problem of analyzing the Soviet position following the occupation of the areas in question must be considered under two broad alternative assumptions:
 - a. That the USSR obtains a negotiated peace shortly after the occupation of these areas.

* This paper was prepared by a joint ad hoc committee representing CIA and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. It has been concurred in by the Directors of the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, and Navy. The dissent of the Director of Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, is appended as Enclosure B.

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b. That, after the occupation of Western Europe and the Near East as far as Cairo, the USSR is faced with a continuing global war with the US and its allies, involving ultimate US invasion of Soviet controlled territory.

(The first assumption is necessary because Soviet leaders might elect to exercise their current military capabilities in the belief that, after Soviet occupation of these areas, the US public would not support the continuation of a war to liberate the European continent, and because, under the assumption of a quick negotiated peace, the Soviet position would differ greatly from what it would be if the USSR were forced to sustain the weight of a continuing global war.)

8. The position of the UK following Soviet occupation of the European continent would obviously have an important bearing upon the basic problem, particularly under the assumption in 7 b above. If the UK were either occupied by the USSR or completely neutralized, US capabilities for counteraction, particularly through naval and air operations, would be reduced. If, on the other hand, bases for US Naval and air operations from the UK remain tenable, substantial continuing damage could be inflicted upon the Soviet war potential, and shipping along the European coast would be largely interdicted.

9. An effort has been made in this paper to develop the maximum number of factual data with reference to the basic problem. This has been possible to a considerable degree with respect to the economic, scientific, and military factors. In the final analysis, however, we are still to a large extent dependent upon "the logic of the situation" and upon deductions from the pattern of Soviet behavior for our conclusions as to the possibility of direct Soviet military action.

DISCUSSION

(See Enclosure A)

CONCLUSIONS

10. If the USSR could obtain a negotiated peace shortly after the occupation of Western Europe and the Middle East to Cairo, the potential economic, scientific, and military advantages to the USSR would appear to be very substantial, but the USSR would not begin to reap significant advantages for a period of from two to three years after the completion of the occupation.

11. The occupation of Western Europe and the Middle East, however, would involve the Soviet leaders in grave political risks.

12. We believe that, in spite of the prospect of substantial tangible economic, scientific, and military gains, the Soviet leaders would consider these political risks so serious a threat to their own positions of power and to their ultimate objective of a Communist world that they would be unlikely to undertake this operation—even under the assumption of a negotiated peace—unless they anticipated an attack or became involved in military action through accident or miscalculation.

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2. (continued)

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13. An analysis of the economic and military position of the USSR under conditions of continuing global war against the US and its Allies prior to 1950, indicates clearly that the total realizable resources under Soviet control would be inadequate for the defense of the conquered areas.

14. We conclude, therefore, that neither the recognized military capability of over-running Western Europe and the Near East to Cairo, nor any strategic advantages to be gained thereby are of themselves likely to induce Soviet leaders to undertake this course of action prior to 1950.

15. It is emphasized that the foregoing conclusions are based on an effort to weigh objectively the various considerations with respect to the stated problem and do not reflect an over-all estimate of Soviet military intentions prior to 1950.

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