
BACKGROUND BRIEFING—GREAT BRITAIN

Traditionally, the British people have ensured their security and independence by preserving the balance of power in Europe. The existence of Great Britain would be threatened by the domination of the European continent by any hostile power that could deprive Britain of access to European markets and resources, and endanger its sea lifelines to the British Empire. The wars against Napoleon, Imperial Germany, and Hitler's Germany were fought not for territorial gains nor for martial glory, but to restore the balance of the European system. From the fall of France in May 1940 until June 1941, Britain stood alone fighting the forces of Nazism. The physical damage suffered from five years of incessant air bombardment and U-boat attacks; the lives lost in campaigns on three continents; and the enormous drain upon British financial resources have left Britain greatly weakened and unable at this time to ensure, by her own efforts, the security and prosperity of her people.

Central to British security is the continuation of the special relationship with the United States that developed during the last war. As the two great freedom-loving democracies of the world, we must work together to promote our shared values based upon our common heritage. The responsibility for maintaining an open European system, which Britain shouldered exclusively for many years, must now be shared with the Americans. The Americans have learned the bitter lesson of the two World Wars that lawlessness and aggression in faraway regions of the Eurasian continent can lead to threats to the security of their own continental nation thousands of miles away. The British contribution to this Anglo-American partnership will be impressive. The British system of worldwide military bases, British experience in foreign affairs, and the resources of its empire will complement American industrial strength and manpower.

Since the last war demonstrated that Great Britain's concentrated centers of population and industry are vulnerable to air attacks, we are particularly concerned with the development of atomic weapons that can wipe out entire cities. Given the fact that the atomic bomb was the fruit of wartime collaboration

between Great Britain and the United States, we trust the Americans to maintain responsible custody over these weapons and to employ them only as a last resort, for the protection of our shared values. As a great power, however, Britain cannot rely exclusively on any other country for its security. Consequently, we too are obliged to develop our own atomic weapons. An atomic arsenal would be the most effective deterrent to a hostile nuclear attack on our country. Such a course should not be seen as jeopardizing our special relationship with the United States.

The British people are grateful to the Soviet people for the sacrifices they made during the last war and are sympathetic to the legitimate security interests of the Soviet Union regarding its western border. Just as Great Britain expects that its historical, economic, and political interests in certain areas of the world will be respected, so the British government recognizes the historical basis for Russian influence in much of Eastern Europe. However, the British government views with alarm the recent attempts to expand Soviet control beyond those areas traditionally dominated by Russia.

Actions by the Soviet representatives to the joint commission governing Germany have consistently blocked the rebuilding of Germany along democratic lines and the reconstruction of the German economy. An economically healthy, free Germany, purged of extreme nationalism and militarism, is a prerequisite for the re-establishment of stable, open relations among European states. Soviet demands for reparations from the British zone will, if met, endanger this goal by impoverishing Germany. After World War I, the harsh conditions of the Versailles Treaty made it impossible for the democratic Weimar Republic in Germany to survive, and led to conditions that promoted the Nazis' rise to power. Poverty and political instability breed domestic instability, which can endanger the peace and security of other nations. The elevation of the German Communist Party to a position of unrivaled dominance in the Soviet zone seems to indicate the intentions of the Soviets to retain control of their occupation zone and to thwart the

long-range goal of German unification and redevelopment. These Soviet actions in Germany and the incessant propaganda attacks upon the administration of the western zones may force the United States and Great Britain to achieve, through closer integration of their occupation zones, this goal on their own. The heavy cost which German occupation places upon the national budget of Great Britain can be reduced only by the development of a unified, economically sound Germany.

Great Britain also views a free, democratic France as necessary to the maintenance of European security. Soviet financial support and direction of the French Communist Party, and Soviet-inspired propaganda that seeks to undermine the democratic forces within France and to foment unrest, are a disturbing development.

Recent Soviet actions in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean appear to threaten historical British interests. Since the end of the war, the Soviets have attempted to force the Turkish government to accept joint control of the straits connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and to grant them bases on Turkish territory. They have also sought to acquire naval bases in North Africa and have delayed withdrawing their troops from the joint occupation of Iran. All of this seems to be a concerted attack on traditional British interests. In addition, Soviet-inspired propaganda seeks to promote anti-British feelings in these countries. Historically, Britain has possessed vital national interests in the area stretching from Greece in the west to India in the east, and from Turkey in the north to Egypt in the south. While the present British government has renounced the outmoded colonialism of past British governments, this area and the lifeline to the empire that runs through the Mediterranean must be

kept open to the British economic and political influence. On numerous occasions over the past 100 years, ranging from small border actions to the two world wars, British military forces have been employed to maintain this vital interest. Any increase in Soviet influence in this area would probably result in a decrease of British influence, and a loss of British influence in this area would mean a loss of our Great Power status.

The security of Great Britain requires unimpeded access to its far-flung empire across the world's oceans and seas. Second only to the vital Atlantic link is our communications and trade lifeline through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the South China Sea to our colonies and dominions in Southeast Asia and the western Pacific. To protect this lifeline, military installations must be maintained. The establishment by a potentially hostile power of military installations along our line of communications will not be tolerated.

The harsh economic legacy of the past war has been a difficult load for the British people to bear. With the generous assistance of the U.S. government, the British government has been engaged in the reconstruction of its industrial and population centers. While some continued loans and credits may be necessary in the near future, we expect shortly to recover the economic and financial stability that will enable us to continue to fulfill our commitments as a Great Power.

The British government has no vital interests that conflict with the legitimate security concerns of any other nation and the British people wish to retain the friendship of the Russian people that was forged during the last war. Consequently, the British government remains willing to work with the Soviet government to reduce tensions and resolve issues of common concern.

FROM THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Excerpts from a Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee report to the British Cabinet, March 1, 1946

"The long term aim of the Russian leaders is to build up the Soviet Union into a position of strength and greatness commensurate with her vast size and resources.... They are determined that the development of Russia's national resources shall not again be disturbed by enemy attack, and are consequently preoccupied with the military security of the Soviet Union.... They will consider it important to create and consolidate round the frontiers of Russia a "belt" of satellite states with governments subservient to their policy. Consequently we consider that at any rate the short term aim of Russia is to avoid any course of action which...may provoke a war in which the British Commonwealth or the United States participate against her.... Meanwhile, if Russia considers attempts are being made to undermine her position in the countries already comprising her "belt" she will retaliate by using all weapons, short of major war.... Russia will seek by all the above means short of war, to frustrate these attempts. She will make full use of propaganda, of diplomatic pressure and of the Communist parties abroad both to this end and to weaken foreign countries.... Russia will seek, by all the above means, short of major war, to include within her "belt" further areas which she considers it strategically necessary to dominate. Turkey and the major part of Persia [Iran] are such areas, since the southern frontier of the U.S.S.R. has at present no such protective "belt." In choosing such territories Russia will, for diplomatic reasons, direct her main effort towards those areas where she calculates that she will not come up against firm combined resistance from the United States and Great Britain.... Elsewhere she will adopt a policy of opportunism to extend her influence wherever possible without provoking a major war, leaving the onus of challenge to the rest of the world. In pursuing this policy she will use...Communist parties in other countries and certain international organizations."

Excerpts of cables sent from the Moscow British embassy to the Foreign Minister, March 17, and March 21, 1946

"There is one fundamental factor affecting Soviet policy dating back to the small beginnings of the Muscovite state. This is the constant striving for security of a state with no natural frontiers and surrounded by enemies.... Until 1945 Britain and Russia were never left face to face.... Now all that has changed.... The only other world power is the U.S.A. and there is clearly no reason why Britain and Russia should be brought to combine against her as a menace to their interests or to the peace of the world. Therefore Britain and Russia are now in immediate contact as never before.... The Soviet Union... approaches a partner, whom she regards as potentially hostile, endeavours to exact the maximum advantage for the Soviet Union, if possible without any return, and, having obtained what she wants, reopens this issue or raises another at the earliest possible moment in order to achieve the next item on her programme.... The rulers of the Soviet Union do not believe in the same things which Western democracies believe in...they are incapable of doing so.... Every effort is being made to develop the Soviet Union into the most powerful state in the world.... The second objective is to weaken capitalist or social-democratic countries in every way.... Everything possible will be done to keep the Americans and ourselves apart.... The full weight of Soviet propaganda, and where possible active support, will be brought to bear in favour of the so-called oppressed colonial peoples and against imperialist domination.... Soviet policy in Middle East is developing so consistently with the existence of an all-embracing conception that I cannot believe that, if it is left to the Russians, Soviet expansion will stop at achieving a security belt, even if this included domination of Turkey and of Persia. Soviet attitude over Levant and Egypt and similar clumsy propaganda campaign just beginning in respect of Iraq, coupled with clumsy Soviet overtures in respect of Dodecanese and Tripolitania [Libya in North Africa] suggest a design to extend Soviet influence throughout Arab world and in Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean...."

Excerpts from a British Chiefs of Staff report to the Cabinet, April 18, 1946

"Recent developments make it appear that Russia is our most probable potential enemy.... In a conflict with Russia the early and whole-hearted participation of the U.S.A. on our side would be vital.... The sea and air communications in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans which link our main support areas are of vital importance.... We should take the necessary political, economic and military measures to maintain our position and influence in Western Europe, the Middle East and South-East Asia."