

Memorandum by UK Chiefs of Staff on the defence of Western Union (London, 18 August 1948)

Caption: In a memorandum dated 18 August 1948, the UK Chiefs of Staff set out their point of view on Western Union Defence Organisation. These proposals are intended as a basis for discussion at the meeting of the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Source: Military Committee of the Five Powers. Western Union - Defence Organisation. Report by the Chiefs of Staff, F.P. (48) 27. London: 25.08.1948. 2 p.

National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>, Records of international organizations, DG. Copies of records of the Brussels Treaty Organisation and Western European Union. Brussels Treaty Organisations and Western European Union: Microfilm copies of files, DG 1.

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F.P.(48) 1718TH AUGUST, 1948.MILITARY COMMITTEE OF THE FIVE POWERSWESTERN UNION - DEFENCE ORGANISATIONMemorandum by U.K. Chiefs of Staff

The proposals set out below outline the British view on Western Union Defence Organisation and are intended as a basis for discussion at the meeting of the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee.

2. Our report is confined to the peacetime organisation but it has been necessary to take into account the probable organisation in war in order that the peacetime machinery may fit easily into the wartime organisation. We therefore outline below our views on the Allied Organisation for the overall direction in war into which this peacetime organisation must be capable of fitting.

Overall Direction in War

3. Political. The direction of war must remain ultimately the responsibility of the Allied Governments. Thus provision must be made in war for all the allied nations taking part to be represented when major policy decisions are made.

There will in any case be a requirement for regional Defence Committees, e.g. a Western Union Defence Committee, and other Defence Committees composed of States with special joint interests and ties, ~~e.g. the British Commonwealth of Nations who will decide policy on matters of their particular concern.~~

4. Military. The overall military direction of war must remain the responsibility of a combined Chiefs of Staff whose composition must be the subject of a separate consideration.

In the case of Western Europe the Combined Chiefs of Staff will exercise overall direction through the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee. It will be no part of the function of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to exercise control over the internal defences of any allied country. This must always remain in the hands of the Government of the country concerned, advised by their own Chiefs of Staff.

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Object of Western Union Defence Organisation in peacetime.

5. The object of an effective Western Union Defence Organisation in peacetime is -

- (a) To provide an agreed defence policy which should include agreement on the roles of the forces of the various nations and the contribution which each will make.
- (b) To provide forces of the required quality and size to implement this policy and to weld them into an effective fighting machine.
- (c) To agree plans for war and the framework of a Command Organisation which could smoothly and rapidly be expanded for the conduct of operations.

6. The organisation is defined under three main headings -

- (a) Governmental Control.
- (b) Higher Military Direction.
- (c) Command and Planning.

ORGANISATION FOR GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL

7. Present Situation

The Brussels Treaty, which set up the Western Union, included agreement on the formation of a Western Union Consultative Council comprised of the Five Foreign Ministers. This Council, which has now been established, is assisted by a Permanent Commission comprising the Ambassadors in London together with a Foreign Office representative. To advise the Consultative Council on matters of defence the Five Defence Ministers meet at intervals and, as a first step towards co-ordinating military efforts, the Military Committee of the Five Powers has been formed.

8. Political Developments required in peace

In order to attain its objects the Western Union Defence Organisation must include the necessary machinery for giving high level political decisions. The present arrangements for occasional meetings of Defence Ministers might be reconstituted in the shape of a formal Western Union Defence Committee capable of giving or rapidly obtaining the necessary political decisions.

HIGHER MILITARY DIRECTION

Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee

9. The Western Union Defence Committee must have co-ordinated military advice. This can only be given by the creation of a Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee. In theory this Committee should consist of all the Chiefs of Staff of all the countries concerned, but this would produce a committee of unmanageable size. The alternative is that it should consist of four members, one of the Chiefs of Staff from each of the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and Holland. From the military point of view Luxembourg might be represented adequately by

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Belgium or France. To give continuity there should be a Permanent Secretary General for all meetings. It would facilitate dealings with the Combined Chiefs of Staff if he were British.

10. Functions of Committee

The function of the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee would be to advise the Western Union Defence Committee on all matters affecting the defence of the Western Union as a whole including overseas territories and to investigate and consider in common all matters which may be referred to it by the Western Union Defence Committee. Within this broad directive its special tasks would be to ensure that within Western Europe -

- (a) the military resources of the five countries are organised to meet the strategic requirements of the Allies.
- (b) the forces of the various nations are welded into an effective fighting machine.
- (c) the combined resources of the five nations are allotted in the best way.
- (d) a proper balance is maintained between the conflicting requirements of internal security and home defence on the one hand and the European battle on the other.
- (e) the necessary military resources are placed at the disposal of the Commander of the European battle in war and that the exact area of his responsibility is defined. It will be necessary to keep this under constant review.

11. Staff required

The individual members of the Western Union Chiefs of Staff would obtain the bulk of their staff studies and advice from their own national planning and other staffs. But they would also need a combined staff in order to -

- (a) co-ordinate the views of the various countries;
- (b) keep under review the progress of the action which they have ordered - e.g. co-ordinated air defence, standardisation etc.;
- (c) prepare the necessary Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee papers for submission to the Western Union Defence Committee or any subordinate Commander they appoint.

12. As soon as the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee is formed the existing military Committee could be reconstituted as the combined staff of the Chiefs of Staff.

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13. Secretariat

To ensure co-ordination of work in the defence field it is desirable that there should be an integrated secretariat for all bodies responsible either to the Western Union Defence Committee or the Western Union Chiefs of Staff. The Secretary-General should be responsible for co-ordinating their work.

14. Service Co-ordination

Because of the flexibility of its composition, the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee will be in a position to affect international co-ordination on a one Service as well as a Joint Service basis. For the former the recent institution of Service Advisory Committees will be particularly useful.

~~15. Link with the United States and the Commonwealth~~

~~The link between the Western Union Chiefs of Staff and the machinery for Commonwealth defence will be provided in peace by the common British membership of both organisations.~~

16. The United States have certain direct interests in Europe. First, the American occupation forces will remain in Europe and plans for their employment in war must be co-ordinated with the Western Union Powers. Secondly, much of the aid - both economic and military - which the Western Union Powers will need for their rehabilitation will be supplied from American sources. We, therefore, recommend that a United States representative should be accredited to the Western Union Chiefs of Staff.

ORGANISATION FOR COMMAND AND PLANNINGSystem of Command

17. The Western Union Chiefs of Staff are not an appropriate authority for preparing detailed plans to fight the battle in Europe. In any case, we do not consider that effective plans could be prepared by a Committee, particularly when so many nationalities are concerned. This planning must, in our view be the responsibility of one man. To this end a Chairman of the Western European Commanders in Chief should be appointed who should be responsible to the Western Union Chiefs of Staff. This Chairman must be vested with full powers of decision and therefore the Officer nominated should be qualified to be either the Supreme Commander or the Deputy Supreme Commander on the outbreak of war. Militarily the formation of the necessary Headquarters would ensure that effective action was, in fact, taken in peacetime: it would also show the world that we meant business and do much to weld the forces of the countries concerned into an effective fighting machine.

18. The responsibilities of a Supreme Commander on the Western front in war might not be quite as comprehensive as those normally vested in a Supreme Commander because the land battle in Europe would be fought from and based on the territories of the Western Union countries. The Governments of these countries must remain responsible for the general running and defence of the countries and in particular for air defence and internal security. It is most important, however, that a proper balance should be struck between the conflicting requirements of the internal security and air defence commitments on the one hand and the battle on the other. It is for this

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reason that we have already recommended (para. 10 above) that amongst other things the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee should be responsible for ensuring -

- (a) that the exact area of responsibility of the Supreme Commander is kept under constant review.
- (b) that the correct balance is maintained between the internal security and air defence commitments on the one hand and the European battle on the other.

19. In view of the magnitude of the task and of the need to have a command organisation which can be effective in war, the Chairman of the Commanders-in-Chief will require in peacetime -

- (a) A Deputy Chairman (if required in peace)
- (b) An Army Commander-in-Chief (designate)
- (c) An Air Force Commander-in-Chief (designate)
- (d) A Naval Adviser

20. The role of the Chairman and of his Service Commanders in Peace would be, under the direction of the Western Union Chiefs of Staff, to -

- (a) Plan the battle to hold the enemy in Europe with the resources allocated by the Western Union Chiefs of Staff.
- (b) Advise the Western Union Chiefs of Staff on the requirements to fight the battle so that the forces allocated are organised, trained and equipped in the manner necessary to implement his plans; and to ensure that the necessary operational and administrative facilities are available at the outbreak of war.
- (c) Prepare the necessary operational directives to formations likely to be under the command of the Supreme Commander in war so that they know their immediate role. This applies particularly to the Allied forces of occupation in Germany.
- (d) To visit and maintain contact with Commanders and formations who come under his command in war.

21. It is not, however, thought that either the Chairman or his Service Advisers would normally assume executive command in Peace. The reasons are -

- (a) that a large proportion of the combined forces will not be embodied in peace (e.g. French Reserve Divisions, British T.A. Divisions).
- (b) that those forces which do exist in peace (e.g. the forces stationed in Germany) have roles or duties such as internal security or the training of national servicemen which must

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decide to a large extent their location, organisation and training and which cannot be his concern.

It is for the Western Union Chiefs of Staff to decide whether there should be any exceptions.

22. As soon as the Chairman and the Service Commanders-in-Chief (designate) have been appointed they should relieve the three Military Governors in Germany of the responsibility for overall emergency planning and for control of European operations in the event of a Russian attack.

Nationalities of Commanders

23. We consider that the Officers selected in peace should be of the same nationality as the Commanders in war. We set out below our views on the nationalities of the various Commanders in war.

24. It is considered that the Supreme Commander in war should be American. This is an added reason why the United States should be invited to accredit a representative to the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee.

25. We suggest that the Deputy Supreme Commander in war should be a British Air Force officer. In addition to his duties as Deputy, dealing with the land, sea and air operations as a whole, he would have a vital function to perform as a co-ordinating link between the air operations in direct support of the land battle and the strategic, fighter and coastal operations by the air forces based in the United Kingdom. All air operations in direct support of the ground forces should be directed by the Air Commander-in-Chief in the same way that the Army Commander-in-Chief controlled the land operations as a whole.

26. We consider that the Commander, Army Forces should be French, since the preponderance of the land forces will be French.

27. We suggest that the Commander, Air Forces, should be British. The Royal Air Force has been intimately concerned in the training and equipping of the tactical air forces of all the other countries of the Western Union, so that an R.A.F. officer would be the most suitable Commander for the combined tactical air forces.

28. We consider that the functions of a Naval representative do not warrant the appointment of a Naval Commander-in-Chief and that his appointment should be "Flag Officer, Western Europe". We consider that he should be French, since the French will play the predominant part in the Naval organisation of the ports in Western Europe and the precise arrangements should, therefore, be subject to French opinion.

Liaison with Other Commands

29. A Supreme Commander in war will command only the European battle. Although he will not be directly concerned with either the internal security and air defence of the European countries or with the adjacent theatres of war, he will have the closest interest in their plans and operations in which he will be largely dependent. In war he will, therefore,

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require the closest possible liaison with Governmental agencies and Commanders and other forces fighting in his area, or adjacent to it - e.g., fighter commands, A/A commands, Naval commands, transport organisations and so on. It will be necessary to establish the contacts required in peace.

Conclusions

30. (a) The following should be established in peace now -

- (i) The Western Union Defence Committee at Governmental level.
 - (ii) The Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee.
 - (iii) Army and Air Force Commanders-in-Chief and a Flag Officer, Western Europe.
 - (iv) A Chairman of the Commanders-in-Chief Committee, consisting of the Service representatives in (iii) above, together with a Deputy.
- (b) The Chairman of the Commanders-in-Chief Committee should be American. The Deputy (if required in peace) should be a British Air Force Officer. The Land Forces Commander-in-Chief (designate) should be French. The Air Force Commander-in-Chief (designate) should be British. The Flag Officer, Western Europe should be French.