

~~TOP SECRET~~

C.O.S. (45) 680 (O)
4TH DECEMBER, 1945.

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

FUTURE S.O.E. ACTIVITY

Copy of a letter dated 3rd December, 1945 from the Foreign Office to the Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Under cover of a memorandum by S.O.E. marked C.O.S. (45) 671 (O) of the 22nd November, a draft telegram concerning S.O.E. activity in the British zone of Austria is submitted for the approval of the Chiefs of Staff. E/50/4

2. The Foreign Office have discussed this draft with representatives of S.O.E. and S.I.S.; but before making any comments in detail they consider that in the first place the question should be decided whether an S.O.E. organisation is required in Austria at all. Further, in our view, it is unprofitable to consider Austria in isolation. The more satisfactory procedure would appear to be to consider in which, if any, of the countries where we have military commitments it is desirable that there should be an S.O.E. organisation.

3. So far as Europe is concerned we presume that this effectively reduces the field to Austria and Germany. In the view of the Foreign Office there is no political requirement for S.O.E. activities in either of these countries in so far as their object is to deal with any German or Austrian Nazi or other political movements. Moreover, the Foreign Office would see considerable political objection to the creation of even a skeleton organisation in which Germans and Austrians took part whose object was to anticipate a Russian invasion in accordance with the third part of paragraph 14 of the S.O.E. directive. — 295

4. So far as Austria is concerned the Foreign Office would consequently favour the suspension of all S.O.E. activity. So far as Germany is concerned the Foreign Office would similarly be against the continuance of an organisation to carry out similar duties to that proposed in the draft telegram on Austria. It appears however from the review of S.O.E. activities of October 1945 that the existing S.O.E. organisation in Germany is used for other purposes, and the Foreign Office do not understand why these functions of a secret police character should devolve on S.O.E.

5. We do not know whether there are considerations of a Service character which should be taken into account and of which we are ignorant. We should however, be glad to know as soon as possible whether the Chiefs of Staff agree with our view that in Europe only Austria and Germany need be considered, and that even in these countries there is no present need for S.O.E. activities.

6. While the Chiefs of Staff are considering these questions it seems to us that the same problem should be decided for the Middle East and Far East. Otherwise there will be no means of determining the size and kind of body that is actually required for S.O.E. and later for the S.O. Branch of the Secret Service.

7. So far as the Middle East is concerned, we recognise that there are certain special activities hitherto undertaken by S.O.E. which we should like to see continue for the present. These are:

- (1) Sharq el Adna broadcasting station;
- (2) Arab News Agency;
- (3) Work of Assistant Press Attaché, Tehran, in influencing Persian press;
- (4) Ownership of the newspaper "The Iraq Times"; and
- (5) Britanova news agency in Turkey.

We do not consider that S.O.E. should undertake any other activities in these areas and should be glad to know whether the Chiefs of Staff concur in this view.

8. So far as the Far East is concerned we understand that S.O.E. as a separate organisation has already ceased to exist in the area of the South East Asia Command and that all ex-S.O.E. activities and personnel have been taken over by H.Q., S.E.A.C. We are further of the opinion that the termination of the war against Japan has brought to an end the need for any S.O.E. organisation in other Far Eastern Countries outside the area of South East Asia Command. We should be glad to know whether the Chiefs of Staff concur in this view.

9. Finally, we are informed that S.O.E. are running an Agency in India called the Globe Agency. At first sight it is not apparent why such activity within the Empire should be undertaken by an organisation like S.O.E. which was designed to operate in foreign or enemy-occupied countries. Whatever may have been the origin of this activity in war-time, the reasons for its continuance in peace-time within the Empire would clearly need to be of a wholly exceptional character.

10. In expressing the above views the Foreign Office is fully alive to the importance of paragraph 11 of the S.O.E. directive, which lays down that they should maintain an organisation which is capable of quick and effective expansion in time of war. But their understanding of this direction is not that S.O.E. should here and now set up an organisation abroad which would be able to function if war broke out without notice tomorrow. It is rather that when we pass from a green to an amber light period, S.O.E. should then set up their organisation in approved countries abroad to meet the threat which has taken shape. Meanwhile, in our view their preparations for such expansion should be confined to this country.

11. It is in the light of this understanding that we recommend (i) that S.O.E. should not operate abroad at present except for those activities in the Middle East listed in paragraph 7 and (ii) that this decision should be reviewed in six months' time and thereafter brought up regularly every six months.

12. It would be most helpful if the Chiefs of Staff could treat this as urgent.

(Signed) ALEXANDER CADOGAN.

Offices of the Cabinet and
Minister of Defence, S.W.1.

4TH DECEMBER, 1945.