

IN '45, BRITAIN DEvised A PLAN TO FIGHT SOVIETS ``OPERATION UNTHINKABLE'' EVEN CONTEMPLATED THE USE OF 100,000 DEFEATED GERMAN SOLDIERS.

Cornwell, Susan. **Philadelphia Inquirer** [Philadelphia, Pa] 04 Oct 1998: A.4.

Abstract

None available.

UK WORLD WAR II USSR HISTORY

The plan was handed to Churchill just two weeks after the Germans surrendered in Europe, according to the long-secret documents, reported in the Daily Telegraph on Thursday.

Churchill said an Anglo-American attack on the Soviet army was ``purely hypothetical," but ordered such a plan because he was worried that Soviet leader Joseph Stalin might not adhere to Allied agreements in Europe, the Telegraph reported.

``The overall or political object is to impose upon Russia the will of the United States and British Empire," said the ``Operation Unthinkable" report devised by Churchill's war cabinet staff and given to the prime minister on May 22, 1945, by his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Hastings Ismay.

Historians said the documents would have a great effect on Russian interpretations of the origins of the Cold War.

Russian historians ``will now say that the Soviet position of being defensive, of being mistrustful of the allies, was essentially correct," said John Erickson of Edinburgh University, an expert on Soviet history.

He said the report was so sensitive that he was surprised it was not destroyed long ago.

The papers were discovered by a Telegraph reporter trawling through recent releases in the Public Records Office in suburban London, where top-secret papers are made public decades later.

``Operation Unthinkable'' envisioned using as many as 100,000 German troops to back up half a million British and American soldiers attacking the Red Army's forces through Germany and Poland, with July 1, 1945, as a possible starting date.

The strategy reflected Churchill's concern that Poland should get a ``square deal'' after the war, and it was hoped that 10 divisions of Polish troops would join the assault.

But the papers noted the Soviet army's numerical superiority and said there was no reason to think an Anglo-American force could succeed in invading the Soviet Union where Hitler had failed.

``A quick success might induce the Russians to submit to our will at least for the time being, but it might not,'' said the ``Operation Unthinkable'' plan, according to the Telegraph.

``That is for the Russians to decide. If they want total war, they are in a position to have it.''

When Britain's military chiefs of staff saw the plans, they suggested that Britain should be thinking of defense instead.

``We are not in a position to take the offensive with a view to achieving a rapid success,'' the chiefs of staff said in a report to Churchill on June 8, 1945.

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