

MEMORANDUM

18 LJM-605

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DATE: 7-22-49
LJM-605



TO: Hans Speier

FROM: L. J. Henderson, Jr.

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH WSEG ON THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC AIR OPERATIONS

COPIES TO: F. R. Collbohm; J. R. Goldstein; File

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Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WWS
Date: MAR 07 2016

As you know, it is planned to have a meeting with WSEG on the morning of August 19th, at which your presence is requested. Although Phil Morse believes he probably will not be there, it is my understanding that Generals Barnes and Gavin, Admiral Parsons, and the principal members of the Research staff will be present. I spent about three-fourths of an hour with Morse and Horvath, who was formerly Deputy Director of the Navy ONS and is now a permanent staff member of WSEG, discussing the details of this meeting. The background, briefly, is as follows:

WSEG has been asked by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to evaluate the strategic bombing operation and plan. This of course fundamentally means strategic atomic bombing. WSEG has divided this problem into two parts,

- (1) the deliverability problem (very closely allied to what Ed Faxson has been working on for the past month or so) and
- (2) the "effects" problem.

For the time being WSEG is putting most of their emphasis on the deliverability part of the question since this is something they can get their teeth into fairly easily.

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With respect to the "effects" problem, they are for the moment making use of the so-called Harmon Report, a copy of which I am endeavoring to get for us. As I understand it, this is a study made for the JCS by a group of consultants, including Warren Weaver, and presumably it deals with the question of what happens if you go over and drop a lot of atomic bombs on the USSR. You will note that I have not said where in the USSR, i.e.,

As we all knew, very little research or effort has been put on just what the "effects" would be under varying strategic plans and from the psychological, social, economic, international relations, etc. points of view. This is what the WSEG would like to discuss in the meeting on August 19th, presumably leaving the economics side out for the time being. It would appear that the STRAP results, such as they may be, would bear directly on this question. However, I might point out that they are looking at the problem from the overall NME standpoint and therefore are concerned with the relation between the tactical and strategic uses of the A-bomb rather than merely the strategic use alone. This, as you will recall, is a matter which I think was brought up by the Advanced Study Group, and which I believe we decided to leave out of STRAP in order to keep the working sessions from rambling all over the place.

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It is pretty clear that WSEG has not done any systematic thinking on these subjects, but the following suggested points in which they are interested may be listed:

(1) What is the comparative military worth of dropping A-bombs on [redacted] or of limiting the attacks to [redacted] and attempting to minimize the killing of civilians? Here the idea is that it would eventually be desirable to have some kind of a relative measure which might have some meaning, rather than to argue about it philosophically.

(2) As a part of (1), is there a negative or a positive military worth in dropping A-bombs on [redacted] and does this vary with the number of bombs dropped or the number of [redacted] attacked?

(3) From the psychological and administrative standpoint, what is the recuperation time after a massive [redacted] attack?

(4) Assuming for the moment that we decide [redacted] should not be attacked, and that we for one reason or another do not want to attack [redacted] (either the point of diminishing returns has been reached or there is some other reason for not doing this), what are the effects of dropping an A-bomb on a [redacted] or on other [redacted] etc? In general, what are the tactical capabilities of the A-bomb, assuming a way can be found for achieving sufficient accuracy? The idea here is to find out if the A-bomb can be effectively used in support of ground force operations, or to prevent the Red Army from over-running Europe, for example.

It will be obvious to you that the above questions reflect the very early state of WSEG thinking. They also equally obviously are only in part, perhaps even in small part, questions which relate to the application of social science or to the interest of the Social Science Division. However, some of them, particularly the question of [redacted] may be primarily social science problems. The people in WSEG realize that you are not concerned with the economics aspects, nor with the deliverability or "hardware" aspects. I also pointed out to them that we had not directly engaged in research on problems of morale, etc. which

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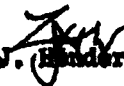
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would be important in considering the effect of the tactical use of A-bombs against [redacted] I also tried to indicate that we had not endeavored to conduct research on the characteristics of the Russian people as a whole, but were trying to concentrate on certain key subjects such as the conditioning of [redacted] and its reactions, the administrative and power setup, and related subjects. However, our studies in psychological warfare of course must assume certain reactions among [redacted]

The above is about the best I can do to indicate what they are going to be interested in. I think you might talk a little about STRAP and possibly briefly about some of the projects we have under way which relate to the problems outlined. After that I believe you will probably be bombarded with questions. My personal reaction is that you may want to consider having Nathan Leites and Phill Davison with you and possibly Bill Radlin. I don't believe there is any limitation on the number of people you can bring, and of course I should like very much to be there myself. Naturally, if Charlie Hitch is in town, I think he would find the meeting interesting, but I suppose that he will still be out in Santa Monica because of the continuation of some of the STRAP activities.

L. J.  Henderson

LJH, fh

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Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
Date: 07 Mar 2016 Authority: EO 13526 + 5 u.s.c. § 552
Declassify: _____ Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part: X
Reason: 3.3(h) 50x5
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