Telegram from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, V.M. Molotov, to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, I.V. Stalin, 16 November 1946

CIPHER TEXT

SOCHI, TO DRUZHKOV.

PRIORITY.

On November, 14 I received a letter from Bevin who writes that it is desirable if five permanent members of the Security Council make a suggestion expressing their common point of view on the “veto” issue. Bevin continues that if such a suggestion is impossible, then it would be good to at least discuss this issue informally between the five permanent members of the Council and to check the opportunity of a common agreement which could be submitted to the corresponding UNO committee.

Bevin’s letter has a note by him attached for common coordination between the five permanent Council members. Bevin has also sent the same letters to all the other permanent Council members.

Below is the text of Bevin’s note:

“It is necessary to recognise that usage of the ‘veto’ right at the Security Council in the last months has caused criticism of almost all the members of the United Nations Organization.

The government of His Majesty is one of the first to acknowledge the necessity of keeping unity among the great powers. But the way ‘veto’ was often used does not consider necessity of unity and thus its permanent usage makes achievement of unity even more difficult.

Perhaps at this stage it is impossible to raise the issue of Charter modification, but there is an opportunity to take some measures to actually avoid the situation which caused so much criticism.

1. The ‘veto’ powers may come to an agreement among themselves, when possible consult with each other before voting, if it is necessary to be united for efficient operation of the Council.

2. If there is no unity, it is possible to come to an agreement that the minority of permanent members, considering the fact that they act on behalf of all the United Nations, will use the ‘veto’ only when they consider the issue vital for all the United Nations, and explain their reasons.

3. Permanent members may come to an agreement that they will not use ‘veto’ against the suggestion only because it does not satisfy them sufficiently.

4. Permanent members may come to an agreement to support a procedure for the Security Council, at which issues will be raised for consideration of Security Council only after the other means of settlement have been used and these issues should be presented further to the Council in a corresponding form.

5. Permanent members may come to an agreement to support the establishment of additional rules of procedure for the operation of the Security Council; for example, appointment by the Council of a presenter or of a committee from among its members for consideration of any issue to make another attempt of reconciliation before passing to final discussion and voting.

6. Security Council work could be facilitated and appropriate application of the charter be provided, if it appeared possible to find a wording for ‘dispute’ determination, on which everyone would agree.

7. It would be a big advantage if it appeared possible to somehow provide a situation in which a permanent member could refrain from voting without imposing of automatic ‘veto’ on the suggestion. Similarly, the absence of a permanent member should not cause ‘veto’.”

I will additionally present my considerations on this issue.

In the morning of 18 November, I will speak with Bevin on this issue.

[…]

16.11.46. MOLOTOV.

New York

[RSASPH, f. 17, inv. 167, file 72, pp. 182–184]

Keywords: United Nations