Cypher Telegram from the Soviet Delegation in Paris on Bramuglia’s view on the Berlin Question, dated 12 October 1948

(p.186) Cypher Telegram TOP SECRET

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Экз№1 – Send to:

№2 – c. Stalin. №3 – Stalin, №4-Molotov, №5 – c. Beriia, №6 – c. Malenkov, №7 – т. Mikoian, № 8 – c. Kaganovich, №9 – c. Voznesenskii, №10 – т. Булганину, №11 – Kosygin, №12 – Vychinskii, №13 – Zorin, №14 –Gusev, №15 – Copy, №16 – Dossier № 17 – 10 Department. № 18 – on file.

From Paris № 33471 20 o'clock 25 minutes 11.X.48 copy №2

Soviet Delegation Special №№276-279

TOP PRIORITY

TO MOLOTOV

I have just received Bramuglia[[1]](#footnote-1) with regards to the Berlin question[[2]](#footnote-2). He reported that after various negotiations between the Sextet with the Three Western Powers, the Sextet decided it could come to a resolution on the Berlin question and take it off the agenda, if the Four Powers agreed on the issues, he passed this onto me in written form. He warned me to consider that I did not receive anything from him, since these provisions were not laid out in written form at the meeting of the Six Members of the Security Council. Here is the text of the document:

“1. The simultaneous withdrawal of limitations imposed by the USSR, the USA, Great Britain and France on communications, transport, and trade between Berlin and Western zones in Germany and between Western zones and the Soviet zone in Germany.

2. The immediate convening of the Council of Ministers of the Four Great Powers with the intention of reaching a full resolution of questions which arose with regards to Berlin, and all other questions connected with Germany as a whole”

I responded that the first provision was unacceptable, since although it speaks about the simultaneous lifting of limitations, in my opinion it does not differ from the original proposal about the preliminary lifting of limitations. Moreover, the first provision narrows the question, leaving aside a whole range of issues such as the introduction of a separate Mark in Berlin and others. For all these reasons, the first provision is unacceptable.

Regarding the second provision to pass on the matter to the Council of Foreign Ministers, we ourselves recommended that solution in the dispatch from 3 October and, therefore, we do not have objections to that proposal[[3]](#footnote-3).

Bramuglia then asked me what I could suggest as a substitute for the first provision, to which I replied that I do not see any opportunity to propose anything as a substitute for that provision. It would be best to omit that point. Then Bramuglia noted that the proposed provision number one is close to one of the provisions of the directive of the Chiefs from 30 August. I responded with a question, why could one not use the Chiefs' directive of 30 August as a foundation for the solution of the situation in Berlin at the Council of Foreign Ministers.

At the same time I noted that since such a directive had been negotiated, it should be accepted as the foundation for the resolution of the Berlin question. Bramuglia responded that in his opinion, it would be good if the directive of 30 August were accepted as the foundation.

Bramuglia asked me if I could tell him about the reaction of the Soviet government towards his proposal. I promised to give him a response in the following couple of days.

11-48 Vyshinsky[[4]](#footnote-4)

[RGASPH. f.17. inv. 167. fold.74. pp. 178-186]

Keywords: great power relations, post-war Germany, United Nations

1. Bramuglia, Juan Atilio (1903–1962), Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs (1946 - 1948), President of the UN Security Council (1948 - 1949). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This cypher message sheds light on the details of the informal negotiations that A. Ya. Vyshinsky held at the time of the UN Security Council session held in Paris during which, at the insistence of the Western powers, the Berlin question was included in the agenda. This was the first attempt to involve the United Nations – after an unsuccessful appeal on 29 June 1948 to Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the UN (1946-1952), by the city council and authorities of Berlin. After consultations with the permanent members of the Security Council it was established that none of the great powers would support this initiative. However, on 26 September 1948 the foreign ministers of the Western countries themselves initiated the raising of this matter at a session of the UN Security Council, with an official note regarding this being sent to the Soviet Union. In a note of reply dated 3 October 1948 the USSR declared that to use the UN Security Council for the purpose of resolving this issue was illegal. It was proposed that the Council of Foreign Ministers be convened “to consider the matter of the situation in Berlin and also the German problem as a whole, in conformity with the Potsdam Agreement between the Four Powers”. (This text is published in the collection entitled, ‘The Soviet Union, Issue 1’, pp. 96–111.) Despite this protest, the issue was put on the agenda for the Security Council session. Vyshinsky received instructions following a decision of the Politburo taken on 3 October 1948. He was instructed to vote against the inclusion of the Berlin question in the agenda of the Security Council session, not to engage in any debate and to limit himself to setting out the content of the USSR’s note of reply. In the event of the question being discussed, the Soviet representative was to take no part in it; neither was he to leave the chamber so that no decision directed against the USSR could be taken. (Note from V. M. Molotov to J. V. Stalin on the instructions for A. Ya. Vyshinsky in the event of discussion of the Berlin question at the UN Security Council published in the collection, ‘Soviet-American Relations, 1945–1948’, pp. 665-666.) After the US delegation had set out its position, stating that the situation over Berlin constituted a “threat to international peace”, no discussion took place and the matter was postponed indefinitely. A group of UN Security Council members was formed who were “not directly involved in the dispute over the Berlin question”. This group was headed by Juan Bramuglia, the Argentine Foreign Minister, who had assumed the role of mediator in the dispute between the great powers. The first conversation between Bramuglia and Vyshinsky took place on 8 October, with discussion continuing on 11 and 13 October. From the text of the document it follows that Moscow was not satisfied with the excessively tough line taken by Vyshinsky in these discussions. For more detailed comments, see the collection, “The USSR and the German Question, 1941–1949: Documents from the Archives of the Russian Federation” (Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage, 1941–1949: Dokumente aus den russischen Archiven), 4 vols, Vol. IV: 18 June 1948 – 5 November 1949. Department of Historical Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Historical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Recent Historical Research in Potsdam. 2012, pp. 663–664. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On 2 October 1948 Molotov sent instructions for Vyshinsky to Stalin for approval. Vyshinksy had represented the USSR at the UN Security Council during the discussions over the Berlin question. The document is published in the collection, *Soviet-American Relations, 1945–1948*, ed. by A. N. Yakovlev (Moscow: 2004), pp. 665-666. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Vyshinsky, Andrey (1883 - 1954) - Soviet jurist and diplomat. Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union (1940 - 1949), Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union (1949 - 1953). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)