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E. O. 12812 - Sec. 3(E) and 3(D) or (E)
Dep. of State letter, August 1973
By NLT, NARS Date 1-24-75

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 11, 1948

SUBJECT: Berlin Situation



PARTICIPANTS: Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador;
Secretary of State George C. Marshall;
and Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Counselor, Department of State.

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The British Ambassador called on me this morning at 12:15 p.m. to give me the instructions he had received from Mr. Bevin, an advance copy of which he had already given to Mr. Bohlen.

The Ambassador said that he had nothing to add to what was in Mr. Bevin's message since he knew from his talks with Mr. Lovett and Mr. Bohlen that we were fully familiar with Mr. Bevin's view on this subject. He said, however, in thinking it over he thought he might be able to make somewhat plainer the thoughts that lay behind Mr. Bevin's position.

He felt Mr. Bevin fully agreed with our interpretation of the Soviet actions in Berlin but was doubtful whether the public saw their significance as clearly as we did and that it would be rather difficult to prove Soviet inspiration. In such circumstances the issue would become one of charge and countercharge and might serve to blur what Mr. Bevin obviously felt was the main issue, that is, Soviet bad faith in the negotiations, and that for this reason it would be a mistake to introduce this new element into the Moscow discussions.

The Ambassador said he had nothing further to add, but hoped he could get a reply from the Department as soon as possible. I told him that we would, of course, give immediate consideration to Mr. Bevin's message and would give him a reply as soon as we could.

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E. O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 3(D) or (E)
Dept. of State letter, Aug. 9, 1973
By NLT/_____, NARS Date 11-24-78



Since the receipt of the Military Governor's report on the Berlin conversations, the United States and French Ambassadors and Sir W. Strang have been working on the text of a communication to be addressed to the Soviet Government. The texts of two aide-memoires have been provisionally agreed among them, one dealing with the Berlin conversations and the other with the question of the recent Berlin disorders.

2. Mr. Douglas called on me this afternoon to say that very early this morning he had received from Washington a redraft which combined the subject matter of the two drafts prepared here and differed in certain very important points from them. He was still discussing this latest draft with Washington and had prepared a revised draft of his own which he thought might meet the situation better than the new draft prepared in Washington. Before communicating further with Washington, he wished to have my reaction.

3. He explained that the main point of the Washington draft was that it added the Berlin disorders to the three points mentioned in paragraph 5 of Berlin telegram No. 1822 as matters upon which satisfactory assurances were to be sought in Moscow. He also said that the draft aide memoire on the Berlin discussions, produced in London did not make it quite clear that if satisfactory instructions were not sent to Marshal Sokolovsky, the Berlin discussions could not be resumed. The State Department also thought that the draft aide memoire on the Berlin disorders was too weak in his terms.

4. In view of the importance of Mr. Douglas' communication, I asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to join me in the discussion with him. The Chancellor was present for part of the time.

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5. After looking through the drafts which Mr. Douglas had brought with him, I asked him whether the intention of the United States Government was that if the Soviet Government declined to give the necessary assurances about the restoration of order in Berlin, this would mean that they, for their part, would decline to resume discussions in Berlin. Mr. Douglas confirmed this. I then asked whether, supposing satisfactory assurances were received on the three points which had arisen during the Berlin discussions but not on the question of restoration of order in Berlin, the United States Government would still decline to agree to the resumption of the Berlin discussions. Mr. Douglas confirmed that this was their intention.

6. I told Mr. Douglas that I quite agreed with him that the Soviet action in Berlin was, like the blockade and other things, a part of the general attack of the Soviet Government upon the position of the three powers in Berlin. My difference with him was not on the interpretation of these events but on the method of handling them. As General Robertson had explained in his telegram No. 3213 BASIC, which I showed to Mr. Douglas, the raising of the question of these disorders would invite a counterattack in which they would be able to make a case. Important as they were, these Berlin disorders were in the nature of a side issue and the Soviet Government would only be too glad to see us offer battle on this ground. I did not know whether we should reach agreement in Moscow on the three points arising out of the Berlin conversations but I thought there was a fair chance. On the other hand, I saw no prospect of an affirmative reply from the Soviet Government to a peremptory demand that, as a condition for the resumption of the Berlin discussions, they should give orders to the Soviet Commander-in-Chief in Germany to take steps to prevent the continuance of recent attempts to overthrow the city government. To make such a demand would be to invite a break. I was quite willing to make a representation to Moscow about the disorders, but not in such a way as to prevent the questions raised in the Berlin discussions from being treated on their merits.

7. The Chancellor of the Exchequer supported my argument on this point. He said he thought that it would be better if the question of the Berlin disorders were dealt with in Moscow, not in writing but orally by the three representatives. We were much more likely to get what we wanted from the Soviet Government in this way than by erecting the question formally into a major issue forming an integral part of the present operation. By adopting the latter course we should also give the Russians the impression that they had got us rattled and this was the last thing we wanted to do.

8. Mr. Douglas repeated his arguments and said that the view he had represented was strongly held in Washington. I said that the proposal filled me with the deepest misgivings and seemed to take too little account of the risks we were running in this operation. In London we were in the front line and I had a responsibility to the people not to run into an unnecessary break with all the consequences that this might involve. I was quite willing that an oral representation about the disorders should be made in Moscow and that its terms should be strengthened, for example, on the lines suggested by General Robertson. I was not prepared to agree that the receipt of Soviet

assurances about the disorders should be a precondition for the resumption of the Berlin discussions. I begged Mr. Douglas to represent my view to Washington and to urge them to accept the London draft, with such minor drafting modifications as might seem good to them. Mr. Douglas promised to communicate with Washington again and let me know his Government's views as soon as possible.

9. I asked whether the State Department had made up their minds whether the approach should be made to Stalin, as I had proposed, or to Molotov as they had preferred. He said that if I would agree to the proposal we had just discussed, the United States Government would be willing that the approach should be made to Stalin. I said that I could not bargain on these matters.



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