

'The Four-Power Agreement', from Le Figaro (25 July 1955)

Caption: On 25 July 1955, commenting on the Geneva Conference, held from 18 to 21 July, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro analyses the signs of détente that have become apparent between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Source: Le Figaro. dir. de publ. BRISSON, Pierre. 25.07.1955, n° 3383; 129^e année. Paris: Le Figaro. "Accord des Grands", auteur:Massip, Roger , p. 1;4.

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The 'Spirit of Geneva' holds sway

Four-Power Agreement with a view to further negotiations

Ministers have been issued with directives and will meet in October

Nothing has been settled, but the status quo is confirmed and new prospects are open for the future

(From our special correspondent **Roger Massip**)

Geneva, 14 July

After six days of deliberations, the Geneva Conference has culminated in the publication of a joint communiqué which reflects agreement on intentions.

When the Big Four met a week ago, no one believed that they would manage to settle in a few days the major problems that have been dividing the two blocs. These concern Germany and the organisation of security and disarmament. At the same time, the general feeling was that a publicly acknowledged failure of the talks would have to be avoided at all costs.

The communiqué published yesterday evening is proof that the Big Four have managed to reconcile the contradictory terms of the initial position. Nothing has been settled, but nor has anything been lost. The Four Powers have asked their Foreign Ministers to study the problems that have just been discussed in Geneva. For that purpose, they have been issued with 'directives' and will meet on the shores of Lake Geneva in October to resume negotiations.

If the Heads of Government had not been present in Geneva, talks might have soured, and the participants would no doubt have coldly gone their separate ways.

In fact, the deliberations, while they were laborious and to a large extent negative in tone, were nonetheless always cordial. The Conference ended with expressions of good will, a meeting was scheduled for a future date, and the status quo was, for the time being, confirmed in a relaxed climate. Of course, it was from the psychological standpoint that the Conference produced its best, and only, results.

The outcome was evident from day one. The tone of the speeches was encouraging, and the personality of President Eisenhower became the key element of the meeting. History will no doubt show that the 'spirit of Geneva', which will henceforth constitute the basis for the Big Four's diplomatic work, was achieved thanks to his authority and influence.

That emotional element was on display up until the very end. At the start of the conference, President Eisenhower spoke directly to Marshal Zhukov, his comrade in arms, in a declaration that gave an unusual twist to the Conference and deeply impressed the negotiators from Moscow.

On Saturday, following a Friday that was so difficult that, during the evening of 22 July, the worst was feared, the US President turned once again to Marshal Zhukov. They met in private very early in the morning. Nothing transpired from that meeting, but no one could doubt that their talk served to rescue the Conference and help it to conclude satisfactorily.

It was characteristic of Marshal Bulganin that, in his last speech, he sought to underscore the conciliatory spirit that prevailed in Geneva and that he went so far as to emphasise that, by remaining faithful to such an attitude, peace would be achieved.

This is where the personal contacts established in Geneva played their part. The Four Powers met, talked together, both in public and in private, and, better still, they managed to overcome certain difficulties inherited from a past weighed down with all kinds of misunderstandings and strife.

The future is not entirely rosy

All this does not mean, however, that there are no clouds on the horizon. The Soviets have not budged from their traditional position on how to solve the German Question. They left unanswered the proposals tabled by President Eisenhower concerning disarmament and the means to overcome mistrust, one example of which is reciprocal aerial inspection and photography of military installations in the United States and in the USSR.

The problems have yet to be untangled, but they are no longer likely to explode. The Foreign Ministers, who have been given the task of studying the problems, will be helped by constant reference to the speeches delivered in Geneva this week, by the allusions to the mutual expressions of good will and, lastly, by the frequently expressed desire to maintain peace.

No one would dare claim that these results are negligible. The Geneva Conference has fulfilled its mission. Peace prevails, and the scales must henceforth be tipped not towards more tension but rather towards détente in order to remedy the instability that, for ten years, has so seriously threatened the security of nations everywhere.

Roger Massip