

Letter from François Seydoux to Antoine Pinay (Vienna, 25 July 1955)

Caption: On 25 July 1955, the French High Commissioner in Austria, François Seydoux, informs the French Foreign Minister, Antoine Pinay, of the Austrian Government's satisfaction at the positive outcome of the Geneva Diplomatic Conference on East-West relations.

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T. Nos 1374 to 1379 ⁽¹⁾. Urgent.
Limited circulation.

Vienna, 25 July 1955, 9 a.m.
(Received: 9.15 a.m.)

Vienna is far from displeased with the positive outcome of the Geneva Conference. From the very outset, in a cordial and relaxed atmosphere, the Austrian public gave a unanimous display of intense satisfaction (see my telegram No 1337 dated 20 July ⁽²⁾). Since then, optimism has continued unabated, and today, the closing communiqué and the statements made by the four Heads of Government have been welcomed with considerable delight by all parties. It is generally agreed that the Cold War is at an end and that East-West relations are entering a new phase.

How will the problems be resolved over the next few months and years? Will anything unexpected come out of Mr Adenauer's visit to Moscow? When and how will Far East issues be raised? People are asking questions about this, and some are clearly disappointed that no positive results have yet been recorded.

However, that is not the prevailing mood. On the contrary, the impression exists that a new mind-set emerged in Geneva, that personal contacts have been established, generating considerable hopes, and that the Soviets have demonstrated unusual readiness to reach agreement.

In more specific terms, Austrian leaders hoped that the Geneva Conference would endorse their policy. If they are still not entirely comfortable with the outcome — and they can never be so until the day when the settlement of the German question unburdens them of that nagging concern — they nevertheless believe that they were right not only to risk going to Moscow but to hope that a resolution of the Austrian problem would break the log-jam and lay the foundations for an overall settlement. The new situation is reflected in the fact that Vice-Chancellor Scharf, Chairman of the Socialist Party, whose unswerving attitude throughout the Cold War is well known, was the first to welcome the news from Geneva last night.

The closing communiqué from the Conference, coming as it does a few days before the entry into force of the State Treaty, allows the Government in Vienna to embark on a new stage in Austria's history with renewed optimism. Two months after 15 May, the Four Powers' Agreement appears to guarantee, for the second time, the country's yearned-for freedom and independence.

It is all the more fortunate that, in France, we have completed the Treaty's ratification procedure ⁽³⁾. Mr Figl was able to express his appreciation to me once again, mentioning those of our Ministers and Members of Parliament who had helped to speed up the requisite procedures. The Chancellor made similar remarks. I would add to those comments by giving full marks to our Delegation in Geneva for the work they did.

(1) This telegram was sent to London (Nos 874-879) and Bonn (Nos 428-733).

(2) This telegram No 1337-1343 has not been reproduced. Optimism in Austrian political circles resulted mainly from the fact that, with hindsight, they saw the growing détente as justifying their attitude.

(3) The debate on the ratification of the Austrian Treaty by the French National Assembly was held on 12 July. On that occasion, Mr Pinay said that Austrian neutrality could not be compared with that of Switzerland, because Austria was taking its own measures to ensure its neutrality. The Treaty placed no constraints on military activity. Austrian neutrality was understood to preclude interference by any foreign power. There was a unanimous vote in favour of ratification.