

Letter from Jean Le Roy to Antoine Pinay (Moscow, 4 August 1955)

Caption: On 4 August 1955, Jean Le Roy, French chargé d'affaires in Moscow, informs Antoine Pinay, French Foreign Minister, of the optimism with which the Soviet Premier, Nikolai Bulganin, reported on the outcome of the Geneva Conference to the Supreme Soviet.

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Moscow, 4 August 1955, 9 p.m.
(Received: 7 p.m.)

This is in reference to my earlier telegram.

The tone of Premier Bulganin's report to the Supreme Soviet on the outcome of the Geneva Conference was one of deep-rooted optimism. The contrast with Mr Molotov's speech to the Supreme Soviet less than six months ago could not be greater. That speech should be reread for an understanding of the measure of the changes that have taken place. The accusations, indeed the insults, of the past have been replaced by words of understanding and good will.

Of course, the account of how détente came about is extremely misleading and gives Moscow all the credit. What is more, the Soviet position continues to be put forward with vigour, but they are open to, and even welcome, dialogue.

Before coming to the report on the events in Geneva itself, the Premier described in general terms the atmosphere that reigned on the eve of the Conference. He referred to the tension in international relations since the end of the war and went on to state that the Soviet Government had striven, 'particularly over the last 18 to 30 months' (the only reference to Stalinist policy), to put an end to the Cold War. He went on to list the recent Soviet initiatives: the 10 May proposal; the signing of the treaty on Austria; the normalisation of relations with Yugoslavia; Nehru's visit; the invitation to Bonn, and the opening of negotiations with Japan.

The record of the meeting follows the sequence of the Geneva talks and adds very little to what we already know about the Soviet position.

1. *Security in Europe.*

Following, I must say, an objective analysis of the discussion between the Four Powers, Bulganin ended with a less hackneyed formula than normal: 'Each country has its own life,' he said. 'Its people can be believers or atheists, Communists or anti-Communists, but they can all agree on one point, and that is the defence of peace.' Referring to the Eden Plan and the British idea of a limited treaty ('a potentially positive idea,' in his words), he added that the proposals put forward in Geneva were not at all the last word and discussions would resume in October.

2. *Germany.*

Once again, Bulganin's analysis was deliberately low-key. He said the Western powers had made no bones about the fact that, to their mind, a unified Germany should be in the Western camp. He went on to say, however, that, 'The Soviet Union cannot and will not subscribe to this point of view which is incompatible with the Soviet Union's security.' The Premier also stressed the reality of the situation in Germany and the existence of two 'sovereign' governments. Without referring (as Molotov had done with so much emphasis) to the Bonn Government, he talked of the Pankow Government as the 'Socialist' Government which could not be abolished. He summed up by saying that, 'Under current conditions, Germany cannot be unified by simply joining together its two parts, since any such plan ignores the reality of the situation.'

3. *Disarmament.*

The Premier's lengthy presentation of Soviet proposals added nothing new. On the other hand, it is interesting to note the initial response that the Russians made 'officially' to the spectacular proposals on air traffic control made by President Eisenhower. According to Bulganin, the Soviets believed that the plan as

outlined was not realistic, given the size of the two countries ‘where you can hide anything you want’. This remark provoked laughter in the audience.

4. The Premier’s comments on *East-West relations* were quite concise. The USSR was a strong supporter, as illustrated by the plans drawn up to increase contacts between the Soviet Union and Great Britain, such as naval visits.

5. Bulganin regretted that *the Far East* was not on the agenda, but he was able to report on the difficult discussions between the delegations on the subject of both Indo-China and China.

The Premier’s summing up was very cordial. He spoke at length about the climate of confidence that had been established in Geneva, ‘particularly during private talks’. One of the main results of the Conference, he said, was to facilitate personal contacts between the leaders of the four major powers. He referred to the optimistic comments made by Senator George, and he invited applause for Mr Eden as well as for Your Excellency and for the Premier. He summed up by saying, ‘We have no doubt that, during future talks, we shall be able to overcome current difficulties and, in the interest of peace, find the answer to outstanding issues.’