

## Letter from Maurice Couve de Murville to Antoine Pinay (Washington, 28 July 1955)

**Caption:** On 28 July 1955, Maurice Couve de Murville, French Ambassador to the United States, informs Antoine Pinay, French Foreign Minister, of the US leaders' reservations regarding the Soviet attitude and the outcome of the Geneva Conference on East-West relations.

**Source:** Ministère des Affaires étrangères ; Commission de Publication des DDF (sous la dir.). Documents diplomatiques français. Volume II: 1955, 1er juillet-31 décembre. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1988. 1027 p. p. 150-152.

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Washington, 28 July 1955.  
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With the return of the American delegation from Geneva, State Department specialists are being cautious in their assessment of the Conference and of the Soviet posture.

Private talks between the leading members of the American delegation and Soviet representatives convinced the Americans that the current Soviet leadership is genuinely seeking to practise a collective form of government and that they want to avoid the re-emergence of the sort of regime to which they had been subject under Stalin.

American specialists are not trying to underplay the importance of the new tone of the Soviet leadership. They are convinced that the Soviets want to avoid 'any incident' and are genuinely seeking détente, at least in international relations. But this assessment is accompanied by many reservations. On the one hand, the Americans say that they hope that this change of tone will be found not only amongst the Soviet leaders but also in the press in the USSR and its satellites and that the Communist media will put a stop to their attacks against 'American imperialists and warmongers.' On the other hand, while welcoming the unity demonstrated by the Western powers and, particularly, the excellent way in which Allied experts worked in Paris, the Americans are worried about the effect that the new Soviet tactic might have on public opinion in Western Europe.

They remain convinced that the Soviet aim is to induce the Western powers to drop their guard and, if possible, divide them. However, they do feel that, although the Soviets can put attractive proposals to Mr Adenauer, particularly on trade, and thus put the Chancellor in a difficult position, the Soviet Government is not yet able to submit proposals that would settle the reunification issue in a way that would satisfy German public opinion. Furthermore, the American authorities are very much aware of the uncertainty that the disappearance of the German elder statesman would create and the scope that it would give for Soviet manoeuvring. The State Department welcomed the French Delegation's position on German unification which, it is felt here, helped considerably to strengthen the Western powers' position.

The State Department noted in particular that, while the Soviets are seeking détente, the sole concession that they made was to adopt a civilised tone in international discussions and that, fundamentally, their position remains unchanged, as was shown by the attitude taken by Mr Molotov. Experts are rather concerned at the wording of ministerial instructions and fear that, in October, Mr Molotov will use last-minute concessions at the Conference of Heads of Government to defend his position that security takes priority over German unification.

The State Department believes that disarmament will be the central topic in future talks. It does not expect any sudden and spectacular decisions but tough discussions with steady progress. In order to prepare for them, Mr Stassen will push for the completion of the studies for which he is responsible, and the State Department believes that, towards 15 August, the American Administration will be in a position to inform its allies of its conclusions on the matter.