

'The "Spirit of Geneva" as the basis of Russian propaganda' from Corriere della Sera (28 October 1955)

Caption: On 28 October 1955, the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera ponders on the reality of the new political orientation of Moscow's leaders which became apparent during the Geneva Conference, held in July 1955, which was attended by representatives from the United States and the USSR.

Source: Corriere della Sera. 28.10.1955, n° 256; anno 1955. Milano: Corriere della Sera. "Lo "spirito de Ginevra" base della propaganda russa", auteur:Ottone, Piero , p. 8.

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Big Four Conference

The 'Spirit of Geneva' as the basis of Russian propaganda

Moscow attaches more importance to a general improvement in the atmosphere than to an agreement on the actual problems

From our correspondent

Moscow 27 October, evening.

Over the past three months, the 'Spirit of Geneva' has become the great Soviet propaganda slogan. Its reiteration in articles and speeches has almost become an obsession. According to Moscow, this 'spirit' implies the end of the Cold War and in practice the creation of a new state of mind, a new atmosphere and new trust among the great powers, rather than the solution of specific problems.

The conference that opened today too, according to the Soviets, should primarily serve to reinforce the 'Spirit of Geneva'. The Americans do not agree: President Eisenhower said back in July that the Geneva spirit is meaningful only if it helps to find practical solutions. He was mainly thinking about the problem of German unification. But the Russians continue to attach more importance to a general improvement in the atmosphere than to solving actual controversies.

In today's editorial, *Pravda* listed the following conference objectives: 'to consolidate and promote the "Spirit of Geneva", to find practical solutions for the international problems still to be resolved in order to consolidate trust between states, to enable further détente and to strengthen the cause of peace.'

The key phrases are the 'Spirit of Geneva', trust, détente and peace. There is, of course, also talk of actual agreements. The Soviet Union is looking for some results on the second and third items on the agenda, i.e. disarmament and economic and cultural exchanges. It has high hopes for disarmament in particular. *Pravda* points out today that the positions of the Western States and the Soviets have come far closer, that there are still certain difficulties, but that it would, in the words of the newspaper, be a 'crime' not to overcome them.

The forcefulness of its language proves how much importance Moscow attaches to an agreement on arms limitation. On the subject of Germany, *Pravda* reiterates what we already know. The Soviets want to see the European security problem solved before German unification. Using a strange sophism, the newspaper claims that this was the agreement reached between the four Heads of State at last July's conference and pretends to be astonished that the Western States 'are now trying to reverse the issue'.

This is not true: the concluding statement by the Big Four was that German unification should take place 'in accordance with the national interests of the German people and the interests of European security.' It is one thing to say 'in accordance with those interests' and another to say that security should take precedence. Everybody knows that the three Western powers in Geneva had no intention of the two expressions being confused. At all events, *Pravda's* statement is interesting because it indicates what Molotov's first argument will be during the discussion. The article is also devoted to a forceful indictment of power politics. *Pravda* claims that such politics will bring the Western powers nothing but failure and disappointment.

This is another affirmation that can be easily countered: in 1947, 1948 and 1950, when the Western powers were weaker than they are now, Soviet policy was more uncompromising; now that the North Atlantic Treaty and numerous American military bases exist, it is Soviet policy to wish to put an end to the Cold War. The truth is that no State in the world ever wants to negotiate from a 'position of weakness', the Soviet Union even less than anyone else. But *Pravda's* arguments hint that Moscow would like a period of détente in which to put an end to the arms race.

If the Russians call for a proportional reduction in the forces of both blocs, not just the dismantling of

Western forces, their requests might receive a favourable response from the Western powers.

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