

The Geneva Conference has lifted the fear of war—laid the basis for co-existence—and, in South Africa, too, made possible new advances to freedom.

GENEVA AND AFTER

By BRIAN BUNTING

IF there is one proof that the Geneva conference of the Big Four was an outstanding success, it is that no one has been able to claim it as a failure. The Big Four themselves were unanimous that the conference had promoted the cause of peace.

Marshal Bulganin said: "Geneva was a new step in the relaxation of world tension although it could not be expected to solve all the problems immediately."

President Eisenhower said: "New contacts have been established and there is evidence of new friendliness in the world."

French Premier Faure said: "The impressions I bring back from this week of conference at Geneva are favourable . . . We have set our feet upon a road which . . . I firmly believe to be the right one."

Sir Anthony Eden said: "We are heading the right way towards peace."

Even the man who had proclaimed for weeks beforehand that the talks would be a failure, Mr. Dulles, was compelled to admit on returning to America that it was "a good conference."

Perhaps the most homely note was struck by British Foreign Secretary Mr. Harold Macmillan, who said joyfully on returning to London: "There ain't going to be no war."

Fear of War Lifts

And that is really the true significance of Geneva—that it has lifted the fear of war from mankind. The fear that lay at the back of everybody's mind—the fear of war, of awful death in an H-bomb armageddon, of radiation sickness falling from the skies on the most distant and peace-loving communities through no fault of their own—this fear has been, if not entirely eliminated, at least greatly diminished. Collectively, mankind is breathing more freely today than it has done at any time since the end of World War 2.

We in South Africa are amongst those who have felt so far removed from the possible centres of war that many of us have not been inclined to take the war danger seriously. Yet thousands of South Africans died in the last war, and South Africans have been killed in action as recently as the Korean war. Now that South Africa is a uranium power, and particularly since the South African Government's shameful conclusion of the Simons-town agreement with the British Government, there is no doubt we would be involved in any future East-West conflict whether we liked it or not.

But if South Africans have often tended to be complacent about this issue, other peoples have not. A Gallup Poll taken in America just before the Geneva conference showed that public problem No. 1 for the majority of Americans was how to maintain world peace. If that is true of America, sheltered behind its massive air defences, surrounded by vast oceans, with its forward bases throughout the world thousands of miles away, how much truer is it of the people of Europe, which has already been the battlefield of two world wars; or of Japan, which has

already felt the destruction of atomic weapons?

In the last five years the world has several times been on the brink of atomic war—during the Korean war, during the Indo-China fighting in April 1954, during the Quemoy-Matsu crisis earlier this year. The nightmare uncertainties and tensions of the cold war have led the nations of the world into a ruinous armaments race, have resulted in the thwarting of social progress and the abrogation of civil rights in countries preparing for war under the banner of anti-Communism. The division of the world into military blocs separated by the so-called iron curtain made friendly relations between nations, as well as peaceful trade, practically impossible. Hatred and suspicion reigned, fanned by a sensational and venal press whose guiding principle for 10 years has been to condition its readers to the necessity, inevitability, even in some cases desirability of an anti-Soviet war.

Why the Cold War?

What was the source and origin of the cold war? We need look no further than Churchill's notorious Fulton speech and the Truman Doctrine to find the answer. It has been the attempts of the imperialist powers to prevent the destruction of the capitalist market in the social revolution of the 20th century. In the space of little more than a generation, one third of the human race has been removed from the capitalist orbit and is today busy building a new type of society in which the exploitation of man by man has been eliminated. The frantic military and political struggle of the Western powers in the last 10 years has been designed to prevent any further development of this social revolution, and, if possible, to win back some of the territory lost to socialism during and immediately after the last war.

The simplest and most blatant example of Western imperialist intervention to prevent social change was provided last year in Guatemala, whose democratically elected Government was overthrown by means of an armed revolt instigated, financed and equipped by the United States for the sole reason that it had embarked on a moderate programme of reform. Such things as land reform are not allowed in Latin America, which is a sphere of enormous and expanding investment by the United States monopolists. But since it is difficult to justify to Americans, who owe the birth of their own republic to an act of revolution against imperialism, such naked repression of another people's freedom and independence, the Big Lie has had to be created that all peoples everywhere who are fighting for their rights are merely the agents of a foreign power—the Soviet Union.

In Eastern Europe, Korea, Indo-China, Malaya, Kenya and North Africa—look where you will—the freedom struggle of the people is denounced by the imperialists, resisted with every weapon and calculated brutality in their armoury. "The first important truth of the international situation," said President Eisenhower in August 1954, "is that the Communist dictatorship—ruthless,

strong, insatiable—is determined to establish its sway over all the world. This truth requires no elaboration: all Americans recognise it to be a fact.”

Facts or Lies?

Yet it is a “fact” which has never been proved true, which, in fact, the imperialists have found it more and more difficult to establish. Strange that this ruthless, strong and insatiable dictatorship, aiming at world conquest, should yet be the only world power whose troops have not been involved in fighting since the end of World War II—while the troops of the “peace-loving democracies” have been engaged almost non-stop in one or other type of war ever since! Yet this has been the “fact”—let’s rather call it a lie—which has been advanced to justify their whole international and foreign policy, their whole conduct of the cold war, their anti-Communism, their assaults on democratic rights, their subversion of the labour movement, their outright murder of thousands, nay millions of human beings in their series of colonial wars.

Now, at Geneva, the Western statesmen have been compelled to admit that what they have been preaching for 10 years has indeed been a lie. “I have spoken to every member of the Soviet delegation,” said President Eisenhower half-way through the conference, “and I am profoundly convinced that they all sincerely desire peace as I do.” The far-reaching implications of this admission have yet to be realised. They make nonsense of everything the United States Government has said and done since Potsdam. They make nonsense of the cold war. They make nonsense of the anti-Communist campaign. They make nonsense of the political philosophy of imperialism and the colonial wars.

If this has been the only achievement of the Geneva conference, it has yet proved itself the most significant outcome of any international conference, almost, one can say, since World War I—for it lays the foundation, by agreement, for peaceful co-existence. What does peaceful co-existence mean? It means simply that nations with different social systems can live together side by side without war. That there will remain differences between them goes without saying; but there will be an abiding agreement to settle those differences by negotiation and not by fighting.

Spheres of Co-existence

The Geneva conference defined three spheres in which further efforts were to be made to establish a secure basis for peaceful co-existence: (1) European security and Germany—to be discussed at the meeting of Foreign Ministers in October; (2) Disarmament—to be discussed at the next meeting of the disarmament sub-committee of the United Nations due to be held in New York on August 29; (3) Development of contacts between East and West—in which sphere we have seen perhaps the most spectacular development of all, with an ever-swelling flood of delegations and individual visitors pouring across the East-West borders. Equally significant has been the subsequent meeting in Geneva between the Ambassadors of People’s China and the United States to discuss the issues between the two countries. Irrespective of the outcome of these talks, they have set in motion a process which cannot fail in the end to result in the resettlement of the Formosa problem and the admission of People’s China to the United Nations.

But peaceful co-existence does not merely mean the

relaxation of tension in international affairs. It must also be made to mean the relaxation of tension in the internal affairs of the nations as well. And here—to bring this discussion down to our own earth—there is a task to be faced by every democratically-minded person in South Africa.

The success of Geneva conference was due to the presence at the conference table of an additional two powers. One was the H-bomb, which had brought realisation to the warmongers that there were no longer any positions of strength, that in any future war there would be no victors and possibly no survivors. The Einstein-Russell-Jolio-Curie statement on the H-bomb had appealed: “In view of the fact that in any future world war nuclear weapons will certainly be employed, and that such weapons threaten the continued existence of mankind, we urge the Governments of the world to realise, and to acknowledge publicly, that their purposes cannot be furthered by a world war.” The Geneva conference has gone far towards granting this request to humanity.

The second additional—and the greatest—power at the conference table was the power of the common man. It was the united action of the world peace movement, supported by the millions of the world’s peoples whose one plain desire was to live in peace, which prevented the outbreak of atomic war time and again when it threatened during the last 10 years, which compelled the warmongers to abandon their designs and try to live with people they had previously plotted to atomize.

In a recent issue of the *New Statesman*, Max Lerner discussing “America and the New Friendliness,” said: “Eisenhower and Dulles, who are now reaping the harvest of the New Friendliness, have had to be pushed into it. Only grudgingly did they finally accept the idea of a Geneva meeting . . . It is as if, in Tawney’s great image of the European rulers after the French Revolution, ‘they walked reluctantly backward into the future, lest a worse thing should befall them’.”

People for Peace

It was their own people’s, and the world’s people’s, desire—and hard work—for peace which drove them to the talks and helped save the peace. Now it is the task of the South African people to draw courage and inspiration from the achievement of Geneva, and work for the relaxation of political tension here, now. If, as the Big Four have pledged, there is to be no war; if, as Eisenhower has conceded, the Russians want peace—then the justification for the Suppression of Communism Act, for the bannings and exilings, for the shutting down of newspapers, for the thousand and one invasions of the democratic rights of our people which have been perpetuated by Swart—the justification for all this disappears.

Not only must the direct work for peace be intensified—for the threat of war may still be renewed if the people’s vigilance is relaxed; but Swart’s Little Lies—about poisoned wells and bush fires, about conspiracies and treason and sedition—all these Little Lies which have been advanced to justify the police terror under which we live must be nailed once and for all. For they are all part of the same Big Lie which Eisenhower disavowed at Geneva; and they have the same purpose—to hold down the freedom struggle of the people.

Let us learn the lesson of Geneva, then, and go forward, confident in the justice of our cause, in the strength of our people, to win peace, freedom and equality for all in our own country.