

Broadcast speech by Pierre Mendès France (10 July 1954)

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In a moment, I shall leave my office at the Quai d'Orsay and get on a plane to Geneva. It is there, this evening, that I shall meet Mr Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister. As you know, I have already met Mr Eden, Mr Bedle Smith and Mr Chou En-lai. However, I still have to meet Mr Molotov and explain France's position to him.

To complete this briefing concerning my immediate plans, I would add that, tomorrow, I shall work alongside the members of our delegation and the delegation from the associated States who have been laying the groundwork for over two months. I shall also meet Mr Krishna Menon, the Indian delegate and, on Monday morning, once he has arrived, I shall again meet Mr Anthony Eden so that we can harmonise our action in pursuit of peace. This will complete the preparatory stage. By Monday afternoon, we shall be ready to begin work.

Following lengthy endeavours and meticulous preparations, we are at the beginning of the final and the most difficult stage. We must now be certain that we have left nothing to chance and that we have not overlooked any of the elements which may prove necessary in achieving our aims. This evening, I am certain. Let me explain the basis for my hopes.

Firstly, there is France's desire for peace, an indisputable desire, since it was clearly and officially expressed by the National Assembly at the most recent vote on the appointment of the Government.

Secondly, there is the support offered to us by our friends and allies and confirmed in the communiqué signed in Washington by President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill, when they demonstrated their confidence in us and offered their support, for which I have thanked them.

There is also the strength of our military positions in Vietnam, a strength which has increased thanks to the success of concentration operations which General Ely had been planning for two months and which have just been carried out thanks to the sending of reinforcements and thanks also to the announcement made to the National Assembly of measures which the French Government would recommend, should the negotiations fail.

These are the essential elements at the disposal of the French delegation. I have worked day after day to achieve them. All my actions over the last three weeks have been undertaken with a view to the final round of talks, due to begin on Monday and last until 20 July.

I am now leaving with a clear conscience and with the feeling that I have done my best to prepare for this new and decisive stage which awaits us, one which, I hope, will lead to the peace which we all want. Nobody could cast doubt on my intentions or my policy as the representative of your Government. I have tirelessly reaffirmed these intentions and this policy for several years. If, at any time, I say to our interlocutors that their proposals are unacceptable, they should make no mistake — the proposals would indeed be unacceptable. In particular, they will recognise, even if they had been tempted to forget it, that any attempt to dissociate France from its allies and friends will meet with irrevocable failure.

All things considered, nobody could claim that we are close to a breakthrough at the present time, since agreement has not been reached during the negotiations on several important issues. In the days to come, differences, misunderstandings, problems and mishaps will arise. Whenever a difficulty is resolved, there will be another one and another one, right up until the last minute. These difficulties must be overcome.

And, as I still have a moment, let me use it to dedicate this message to the young people in our country. I have wanted to talk to them every day for the last three weeks. Preoccupied with daily events and by this huge task, reports of which you have read in the press, I have not been able to do so until now.

But how can I not speak to you, the young women, girls and young men of France, you who are working with concern and sometimes with anxiety for your future, while the increasingly overwhelming tragedy of

the Indo-China War, through which we have been living for years, has had such serious effects in preventing you from making plans, starting out and building your future. Peace will bring a doorway to the future and to better prospects for everyone but, above all, for you.

This evening, I say to you that I shall devote all my energy to success. Your plans, your ambitions and your hope, always uppermost in my mind, give me the strength to strive for a positive conclusion, if it is humanly possible to do so.

And, while we are working in Geneva, think with greater faith about your role in the nation. If, tomorrow, we have succeeded in this initial and difficult task, be ready to buckle down to the huge task of reconstruction which awaits us all.

And now I must leave.

Until next Saturday, good evening.