

June 19, 1954

**Telegram, Zhou Enlai to Mao Zeong, Liu Shaoqi, and
the CCP Central Committee**

Citation:

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<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121156>

Summary:

Zhou Enlai informs Mao Zeong, Liu Shaoqi, and the CCP Central Committee that the proposal concerning a comprehensive settlement raised by the VWP Central Committee has failed to hit the important points and they are not willing to make concessions on the Laos and Cambodia questions.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

We believe that the proposal concerning a comprehensive settlement raised by the VWP Central Committee has failed to hit the important points, and [they are] not prepared to make concessions on the Laos and Cambodia questions. This will make it difficult for the negotiation to continue, and this is not compatible with the international situation and will not serve our long-rang interests. At present, the proposal from our side should take Vietnam as the emphasis, and should be prepared to make due concessions in Cambodia and Laos. Given the actual strength of the resistance government in Cambodia, it is impossible [for our side] to request division of zones in Cambodia, and it is only possible [for our side] to continue the negotiation by following the policy of on-site ceasefire mutual consultation, supervision by countries of neutrality, and political settlement.

If we take the initiative to make concessions in Cambodia and Laos, we will be able to ask for more gains in Vietnam as compensations to us. Our position in Vietnam is relatively strong in various aspects, we will not only be able to keep our gains there, but also are capable of gradually consolidating and expanding our influence.

The situation we are facing now is that if the concrete military solutions we are to introduce are reasonable we will be able to strive for cutting a quick deal with France, thus reaching an overall settlement. This will allow us to push the new government in France to resist America's interference, and will also allow us to delay [Western powers'] rearmament in Europe. This is beneficial to both the East and the West, and this is the key question that we must make clear [to the Vietnamese]...

Although Mendes-France favors stopping the war in Indochina, he is not a genuine left politician, and his purpose is to use the slogan of peace to form a majority among various bourgeoisie parties. As he has to satisfy requests from various aspects, his [attitude] is by no means stable. However, he is different from Bidault in the sense that he has made it clear that his cabinet will survive only under the condition that the war stops in Indochina. Therefore if we can reach an agreement on ceasefire with France, it will be beneficial to the whole situation. The emphasis of our strategy at this stage should be placed upon encouraging the [peace] initiatives by the French, and make the French not listen to the Americans completely, make the British support stopping the war, and quickly reach an armistice agreement [with them] as long as the conditions seem reasonable...

Therefore we must hold tight the direct negotiation between France and Vietnam. Now France's international status is declining continuously. Because of the defeat at Dien Binh Phu, France has further lost face, and thus is unwilling to have direct contact with Vietnam. At this time, we should lend a hand to France, so as to achieve an armistice. In the aspect of public opinion, we should isolate the United States, and strive for Britain's support for an armistice by France. The policy of pulling France toward an armistice is a policy that all of the three countries on our side has endorsed. Generally we also have same opinions of the political situation in France. The prospect for reaching a settlement on Indochina had never been so promising.

However, it is difficult now to reach a consensus [with the Vietnamese] solely through telegraphic exchanges. Therefore, during the adjourn of the foreign ministers meetings at Geneva, it is necessary for me to make a trip to Nanning, Guangxi on my way back home after visiting India. Please ask the VWP Central Committee to send a few more leading comrades, and I will personally report to them the actual situation and explain to them the issue of division of zones with a proper emphasis.