

Interview with Jean François-Poncet: the state of mind of the French delegation (Paris, 16 March 2007)

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[Jean François-Poncet] In Brussels, we felt that we were making history. We felt that all the rest — North Africa — these were dramatic episodes, but the issue we were tackling was one that would affect the future in the much longer term. That is what we felt. It was not the feeling that was prevalent in France, not that of public opinion, and not that of the Government either. So which conclusions could be drawn from this? Perhaps this bizarre situation facilitated the negotiations because there was no fierce debate during the negotiations, as there had been for the European Defence Community. When we had finished, once the problem of ratification had raised its head, naturally there was a debate in Parliament — a debate that lasted a week and was tumultuous. Until that point, however, we were allowed to work in peace, and from that point of view, the Suez crisis and the war in Algeria did not harm the negotiations — on the contrary.