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BICCENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
5 April 1963

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Recent Reports on the Situation in France

1. The adverse effects of the recent French labor crisis on De Gaulle's domestic prestige have quickened speculation over his intentions and raised doubts in Europe about his freedom of action. Recent cables analyzing the problem range from ominous predictions of imminent political collapse to hints of early overtures for a settlement of allied nuclear differences.

EO 12958 3.4(h)(1)-25Yrs

2. On the extreme side is the alarmist picture painted [redacted] who see--perhaps wishfully--instability everywhere in France. They sketch a remote and unheeding De Gaulle placing the blame for social unrest on the shoulders of his ministers; the latter are depicted as increasingly intent on dissociating themselves from the President. A less scaremongering view is expressed by Socialist leader Guy Mollet, who draws satisfaction from the evidence that De Gaulle is not invincible, and contemplates the political damage suffered by the Gaullist party, the UNR. (C)

3. Also in the alarmist category is the charge by a Socialist functionary in the Ministry of the Interior that Gaullist leaders have plans to eliminate prominent non-Gaullists and seize power if De Gaulle dies prematurely. Similar impressions were received at the Bilderberg Conference by Belgian Foreign Minister Spaak from such embittered and frustrated anti-Gaullists as Mollet, Antoine Pinay and Wilfred Baumgartner. Once De Gaulle goes, Spaak says, the "fascist-minded gang" surrounding him will prevent Senate President Monneville from taking over, and civil war will result.

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4. After hearing UNR Secretary General Georges Baumei explain France's insistence on an independent nuclear force, Spaak became more than ever convinced that De Gaulle wants to drive the US out of Europe. He believes De Gaulle would be mollified only by acceptance of a tripartite directorate, which is unacceptable to the other continental NATO countries as well as to the UK and the US. Unchecked nationalism in a Europe without the US would, he says, then destroy both the European integration movement and NATO.

5. Perhaps the most surprising item in the series of reports is the opinion voiced by General Pierre Gallois to a Paris embassy official on 2 April. Gallois is a retired air force general who now holds an executive position with the Dassault Aircraft Co.-- manufacturer of the Mirage IV supersonic bomber which will be the first generation nuclear weapons delivery system. He has been the most frequent and ardent advocate of the French national nuclear deterrent and as such has brought De Gaulle's views on strategy to a wide variety of audiences.

6. In his 2 April discussion, however, he turned 180 degrees from his customary spirited defense of the French nuclear force and described it as obsolete before it is in being. He said a Soviet pre-emptive strike would wipe out the French airfields to be used by the Mirage IV and that technical difficulties were causing significant slippage in acquisition of the second generation weapons and delivery systems.

7. France does not have the resources to compete with the super powers, he said, but American policy has left De Gaulle with no choice but to try to forge an independent nuclear force. Gallois predicted De Gaulle would come to a reconciliation with the UK if for no other reason than "nuclear realities." He said France wanted more than anything to have the discrimination of the MacMahon Act removed, and if the US were to make such a gesture, France would be content to be regarded as a "secondary" nuclear power.

8. Confirmation for Gallois' pessimistic view of the state of the French program comes from an official

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of the [redacted] who cites slippage in bomber production and difficulties in rocket and missile development. [redacted] EO 12958 3.4(h)(1)>25Yrs (C)
 that the French failure to consider the US offer to discuss provision of Polaris missile technology was a major self-deprivation. He said that the Polaris missile would have fitted well into the projected French program.

9. The significance of Galleis' statements must be gauged in relation to a review of French foreign policy moves in January, as explained by De Gaulle on 3 April to Otto of Hapsburg. De Gaulle rationalized his action in "postponing" British accession to the Common Market as necessary to prevent a future Labor Government under Harold Wilson from wrecking the EEC. Having accomplished his long-range objectives, and recognizing that his actions had caused a certain dislocation in the alliance, De Gaulle now felt it was time to patch up differences. He stated that it was important not only to get actual problems within the alliance straightened out, but to restore the impression that the alliance was working smoothly.

10. It is hard to say what these various items add up to. While De Gaulle's domestic prestige has definitely been tarnished by the inept fashion in which the recent mine strike was handled, there is no real evidence that his internal political position has been permanently weakened. It is possible, however, that the turn for the worse on the domestic scene has prompted him to reconsider his policies on both the domestic and international fronts.

11. Although Galleis' view may be colored by the fact that his advice--to adopt the Mirage IV for low-level attack--was recently rejected, it seems clear that the whole weapons system program is running into some difficulty. It is possible that the conciliatory views De Gaulle expressed to Otto of Hapsburg are a reflection of his appreciation of these difficulties. He may be casting about for a way to renew discussions with the US in the hope of obtaining technological aid for the French

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program without losing face. There is no evidence, however, that De Gaulle is about to renounce his announced international objective of obtaining a nuclear strike force which he can manipulate independently.

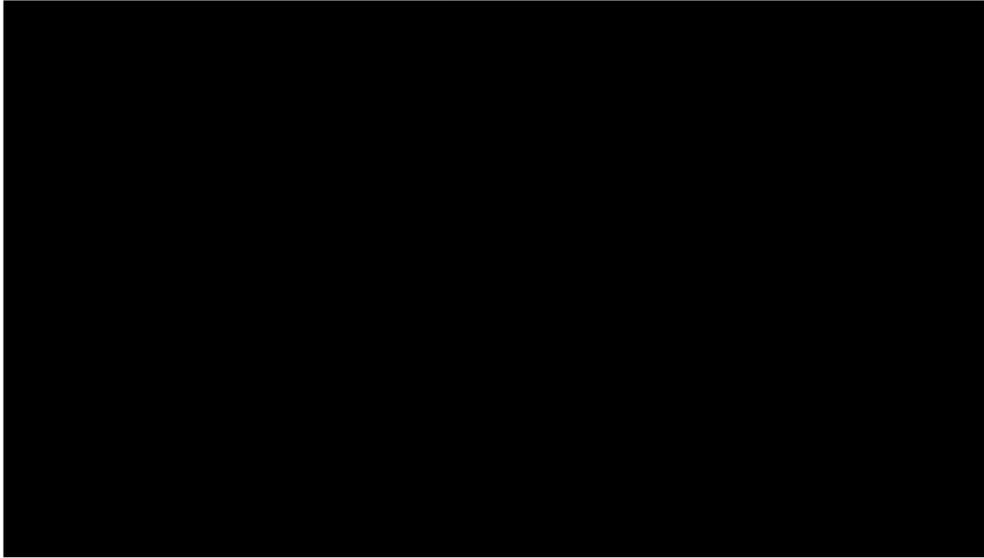
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