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BRIEFING PACKAGE

6 November 1968

FRANCE

- I. De Gaulle is reappraising his foreign policies following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia which was a big blow to his detente efforts.
 - A. He probably does not fear a Russian military move against Western Europe but is worried about the skittishness of his neighbors.
 1. De Gaulle is concerned that his fellow Europeans will draw closer together under the US rather than French banner.
 2. Thus he is casting about for a policy initiative to prevent this from happening.
 3. He is also worried that if the Vietnamese war is brought to an end, a Soviet-US rapprochement will leave France out in the cold.
- II. One of these casts has involved proposals for greater US-French cooperation in nuclear matters.
 - A. One such proposal envisages that France would get the same US nuclear knowledge and equipment that the UK gets, with no quid pro quo mentioned.
 - B. A further variation on this theme is that the UK would then be asked to join with the French to

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provide the nuclear umbrella for Europe but the US would still underwrite it.

- C. France may be using this nuclear issue to find out whether the US is interested in expanded bilateral ties.
- D. In any event, although the atmosphere in US-French relations has improved, De Gaulle is still opposed to what he calls American "hegemony" and as yet has made no substantive changes in those areas where his policies conflict with US policies.

III. De Gaulle of course remains adamantly opposed to strengthening NATO lest this in turn strengthen US as opposed to French interests.

- A. He does not want to make NATO the focal point of Western reaction to the Czechoslovak invasion.
- B. He has made it clear that France has no intention of resuming its role in the integrated military structure of NATO.
- C. He is against NATO's flexible response strategy and the build-up of conventional forces in Europe.
 - 1. He would like to insure an automatic US response with military weapons as the main deterrent to the USSR.

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- IV. But despite Czechoslovakia, De Gaulle has not abandoned hope that he can work out a special relationship with the Soviet Union which will enhance his ability to influence world affairs.
- A. The French President has emphasized that, in the light of the invasion, a policy of detente and the disappearance of the "policy of blocs" is even more imperative.
- B. Although sharply condemning the Soviet move, De Gaulle has established a policy of "business as usual" with the USSR and Eastern Europe in cultural, scientific and economic areas.
- C. There has been a curtailment of activity on the political front, however, pending a change in the Soviet posture.
- V. In other areas of foreign policy De Gaulle will also try to maintain French independence and gain recognition as a factor in world affairs.
- A. He remains opposed to British entry in the European Communities.
1. De Gaulle, with the tacit acquiescence of Bonn, has resisted efforts by the other EC members to foster closer political ties between Britain and the EC.

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2. The French are promoting a program to foster internal development of the community and have offered to accept a new formulation for "commercial arrangements" with the UK and possibly other EFTA countries - both tactics which Paris hopes may sidestep the issue of British entry.
 3. Such commercial arrangements with no guarantee on ultimate British entry would be inimical to US interests and contrary to existing trade agreements.
- B. France will continue to refuse to sign the Non-proliferation Treaty, decrease the amount of aid it gives to underdeveloped countries, and promote a French role in any Middle East settlement.
- C. Paris has been scrupulously correct in observing the role of neutral host to the Vietnamese negotiations.
1. De Gaulle still believes that France is particularly well-suited to play some role in any settlement and is holding himself ready for such a role.

VI. At home the Gaullist regime is again solidly entrenched and the outlook for stability is good.

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- A. De Gaulle's own political position seems stronger than ever and his health remains good for a man of his age-78 in November.
 - B. The Gaullist party has a massive parliamentary majority - 354 seats out of 487 - and thus can pass reform bills to attenuate the discontent which led to the student and labor upheaval last spring.
 - 1. The leftist parties are in disarray and are unlikely to be able to challenge the Gaullists.
 - 2. The Communist party is undergoing a severe internal crisis, both as a result of damage to its prestige during the May events and as a consequence of the Czech crisis.
 - 3. This forced the leadership to issue a categorical condemnation of the Soviet invasion for domestic political reasons.
 - C. New social disorders on the scale of last May and June are unlikely, as the government is moving to meet labor and student demands and the security forces are better prepared.
 - D. The economy is strong and should rapidly recover its losses and continue to expand at least through mid-1969.