November 11, 1970

Mr. President:

Here is an article I did on De Gaulle and which I gave you earlier this year.

I thought you might like to look at it again at this time.

Henry A. Kissinger

Attachment

No Objection To Declassification in Full
2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

K Brilliant perceptive profound 11/11/70

THE ILLUSIONIST

Henry A. Kissinger

Few countries have known the travail which France has suffered since it lost much of its young generation in World War I. Victorious in 1918, France knew better than any of its allies how close to defeat it had been. Inchoately, the survivors of that catastrophe realized that France could not stand another trial like the one just surmounted. Deprived of its youth, fearful of its defeated antagonist, feeling misunderstood by its allies, France experienced in the interwar period an almost uninterrupted succession of frustrations. Domestically, the

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7 foreign policy, France was torn between its premonitions and its sense of impotence. Nothing could have expressed France's feeling of insecurity better than the fact that it began to build the Maginot Line at a moment when its army was the largest in Europe and Germany's was limited by treaty to 100,000 men. What made the action all the more poignant was that the Treaty of Versailles had specifically prohibited Germany from stationing military forces in the Rhineland -- the territory which had to be crossed before an attack on France could be launched. In other words, at the height of its victory France felt so unsure of itself that it did not think itself able to prevent a flagrant breach of the peace treaty by its disarmed enemy and constructed a defensive line inside its borders for that contingency.

As if paralyzed by seeing her fears come true, France stood by while Germany rearmed and proceeded to abrogate one after another of the restrictions put on it by the Treaty of Versailles. The French collapse of 1940 was as much moral as military. Even though France emerged among the victors of World War II, its leaders were aware, despite all the rhetoric and perhaps because of it, that France had been saved largely through the efforts of others.

Once more, peace brought no respite. Instead, the Fourth Republic experienced the same governmental instability as the Third, and in addition it had to go through the searing process of decolonization. Humiliated

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

in 1940, the French army had barely been reconstituted when it was obliged to engage in nearly two decades of frustrating colonial wars each of which ended in defeat.

President de Gaulle's brutal tactics sometimes give the impression that a powerful, self-confident France has been a permanent feature of the postwar landscape. It is all but forgotten that between 1958 and 1962 France was on the verge of civil war three times. So well has De Gaulle succeeded in his tour de force that his critics act as if the only problem for Europe were to moderate excesses of French assertiveness -- a notion which would have been inconceivable five years ago. But less than a decade has passed since a wise French author could write:

...the pretension to indifference...is never completely absent. It attracts like nostalgia.... At the very moment when we are torn out of our solitude, we go on dreaming of it;...we want to stand by the wayside and watch the traffic go by.... Our victory in 1918 cost us too dearly. Since then we have wanted to recoup; the result is we have lost everything. Strictly speaking the French nation no longer exists. She is disintegrated at this moment. She proved unable to secure her lands against invasion because she was no longer strong enough to do so alone, and because her allies were not able to come to her aid quickly enough to prevent occupations. This is why France has had such a strong inclination to declare herself neutral. Then no one would have had the right to enter her.... We are living like a ruined landlord unwilling to seem bankrupt.... We have not been so unhappy in France for a hundred years; our literature has not been so sad; and only because during this time we have experienced hardly anything but deceptions: the Republic in difficulties, socialism bankrupt, our wealth gone, our wars badly conducted.

This spiritual malaise must be understood as the essential background for President De Gaulle's policy. A certain egocentricity on our part causes us to see many of his actions as being motivated primarily by a desire to annoy or to humiliate us. In fact, his central concern is likely to be quite different. For the greater part of his career, he has had to be an illusionist. In the face of all evidence to the contrary, he has striven to restore France's greatness by his passionate belief in it. At first he was the leader of an insignificant fraction of Frenchmen casting their lot with the Allies. His primary task, as he saw it, was to reestablish the identity and the integrity of France. Churchill and Roosevelt could concentrate on the tangible goal

of military victory. To De Gaulle, the war had an intangible purpose. Victory was empty if it did not also restore the position, indeed the soul, of France. Churchill and Roosevelt understandably considered the quest peripheral to their central objective and treated De Gaulle's insistence as an irritating interruption of more important problems.

The conflict between the pragmatic and the intangible that started during the war has continued to this day. The United States, blessed with stable government, its sense of identity enhanced by its war experience, could pursue single-mindedly whatever technical schemes its bureaucracy thought up at any given moment. To De Gaulle,

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

governing a country wracked by a generation of conflict and decades of frustration, the mode of reaching a goal has been as important as the objective itself. He judges the merit of a policy not only by technical criteria but also by its contribution to France's sense of identity.

Though De Gaulle often acts as if opposition to United States policy were a goal in itself, his deeper objective is pedagogical: to teach his people and perhaps his continent attitudes of independence and self-reliance. The "folie de grandeur" of which De Gaulle is so often accused is a peculiar kind, for it is tied to a profound awareness of the suffering and disappointments of his country. In 1960 this caused him to speak as follows:

Once upon a time there was an old country all hemmed in by habits and circumspection. At one time the richest, the mightiest people among those in the center of the world stage, after great misfortunes it came, as it were, to withdraw within itself. While other peoples were growing around it, it remained immobile. In an era when the power of States depended upon their industrial might, the great sources of power were stingily meted out to it. It had little coal. It had no petroleum. Furthermore, its population was no longer growing as, in some years, it numbered fewer births than deaths. In the doubt and the bitterness which it came to have about itself as a result of this situation, political, social and religious struggles did not cease to divide it. Finally, after two world wars had decimated, ruined and torn it, many in the world were wondering whether it would succeed in getting back on its feet.

De Gaulle has chosen to revitalize France by an act of faith powerful enough to override a seemingly contrary reality. In his view, an almost

 as the embodiment of the general interest and the French people. Thus, during the revolt in Algiers in 1960, De Gaulle could say: "Finally, I speak to France. Well, my dear country, my old country, here we are together, once again, facing a harsh test." The effort to achieve greatness required that France regain -- wherever possible -- the right of independent decision. France could agree with the decisions of others: but it had to make clear that this represented a voluntary act and not the abdication of the impotent.

This is why De Gaulle never tires of insisting on his imperturbability in the face of Soviet threats or American criticisms. During the height of the Berlin crisis of 1960, he spoke as follows:

But however resounding these commotions may be, obviously they could not succeed in upsetting or intimidating France. We are today strong enough, stable enough, sufficiently self-assured not to allow ourselves to be impressed by word battles or gesticulation.

In De Gaulle's concept, a great nation moves at its own pace; its objectives are dictated by its interests. Its sense of purpose enables it to become the master of events instead of their prisoner.

Consequently the dispute between France and the United States centers, in part, around the philosophical issue of how nations cooperate. Washington urges a structure which makes separate action physically impossible by assigning each partner a portion of the over-all

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7 partner has a real choice. Therefore, each ally must -- at least theoretically -- be able to act autonomously. Washington, postulating a community of interests, relies on consultation as the principal means for solving disagreements. In its view, influence is proportionate to a nation's contribution to a common effort, somewhat like share-owning in a stock company. Paris insists that influence depends not only on the existence of consultative machinery but also on what options are available in case of disagreement.

Where United States spokesmen stress the concept of partnership, De Gaulle tends to emphasize the idea of equilibrium. Many United States officials assert that all disputes can be settled by talking things over in a

"community spirit." To De Gaulle, sound relationships depend less on a personal attitude than on a balance of pressures and the understanding of the relation of forces. If these are correctly calculated, negotiations can be successful. If not, goodwill cannot serve as a substitute. Philosophic convictions thus combine with personality to produce De Gaulle's aloof and uncompromising diplomatic style:

> Man "limited by his nature" is "infinite in his desires." The world is thus full of opposing forces. Of course, human wisdom has often succeeded in preventing these rivalries from degenerating into murderous conflicts. But the competition of efforts is the condition of life. Our country finds itself confronted today with this law of the species, as it has been for two thousand years.

world and the trend of history. A great leader is not so much clever as lucid and clear-sighted. Grandeur is not simply physical power but strength reinforced by moral purpose. Nor does competition inevitably involve physical conflict. On the contrary, a wise assessment of mutual interests should produce harmony:

> Yes, international life, like life in general, is a battle. The battle which our country is waging tends to unite and not to divide, to honor and not to debase, to liberate and not to dominate. Thus it is faithful to its mission, which always was and which remains human and universal.

De Gaulle's nationalism is in the tradition of Mazzini, who thought that nations which achieved their independence would respect the dignity of others. His diplomacy is in the style of Bismarck, who strove ruthlessly to achieve what he considered Prussia's rightful place, but who then tried

to preserve the new equilibrium through prudence, restraint and moderation. His policy is bound to clash with ours because he is operating in a different time-frame.

The United States as the leader of the Alliance inevitably concentrates on solving immediate problems. De Gaulle is more concerned with the period ten or fifteen years hence. Precisely because he is sure that the United States will protect Europe in the immediate future, he wants to use this respite to establish insurance for the far future. He is looking ahead to a time when present leaders will have disappeared and American attention may be focused on other continents. Protestations of American

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

good faith are therefore in a sense beside the point as is the rhetorical challenge that De Gaulle describe the circumstances in which the American guarantee might fail. De Gaulle need not be able to describe the circumstances which might arise when the convictions of existing leaders are no longer relevant in order to wish to reserve some measure of control over the destiny of his country or his continent. However arrogant his style, De Gaulle's approach to history is relatively humble. He is the leader of a country grown cautious by many enthusiasms shattered; turned skeptical from many dreams proved fragile; a country to which the unforeseen is the most elemental fact of history. American leaders while personally humble are much more confident that they can chart the future. What cannot be described concretely has little reality for them. Involved,

ultimately, are differing conceptions of truth. The United States, with its technical, pragmatic approach, often has analytical truth on its side. De Gaulle, with his consciousness of the trials of France for the past generation, is frequently closer to the historical truth.

Though most American leaders tend to ascribe Allied tensions to the obstinancy of one man, the structure of present disputes is not novel. During World War II, many senior American leaders committed to assumptions about Soviet good faith and a world-wide system of collective security reacted with considerable hostility to Churchill's attempt to

WS

about the postwar European balance of power were then considered short-sighted and a symptom of old-fashioned nationalism. However, a subtler style, the prestige of Great Britian's heroic wartime effort and a common language prevented the conflict from being so explicit. In our impatience to realize Grand Designs we are often reluctant to admit that a statesman must concern himself with the worst -- and not only the best -- foreseeable contingency.

Whatever the deeper reasons for the disagreement, De Gaulle's belief in the continued role of the nation-state was bound to come into conflict with the American conviction of its obsolescence. The problem is not that De Gaulle wishes to reactivate Europe's traditional national rivalries as so many of his American critics allege. On the contrary, he affirms the goal of unity for Europe as passionately as his detractors. But where the American and European "integrationists" insist that European unity requires that the role of the nation-state be diminished, De Gaulle argues that unity depends on the vitality of the traditional European states. To De Gaulle, the states are the only legitimate source of power; only they can act responsibly:

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

> ...it is true that the nation is a human and sentimental element, whereas Europe can be built on the basis of active, authoritative and responsible elements. What elements? The States, of course; for, in this respect, it is only the States that are valid, legitimate and capable of achievement. I have already said, and I repeat, that at the present time there cannot be any other Europe than a Europe of States, apart, of course, from myths, stories and parades.
>
> The States are in truth, certainly very different from one another, each of which has its own spirit, its own history, its own language, its own misfortunes, glories, and ambitions; but these States are the only entities that have the right to order and the authority to act.

Thus De Gaulle's proposals for European unity invariably envisage a confederation of states rather than supranational institutions. In his press conference of September 5, 1960, he called for regular consultation between the European governments, for specialized subordinate agencies

and for an assembly composed of delegates from the national parliaments. He urged a European referendum "so as to give this launching of Europe the character of popular support and initiative that is indispensable."

This affirmation of the need for European unity has been repeated regularly:

> ...France...must help to build Western Europe into an organized union of States, so that gradually there may be established on both sides of the Rhine, of the Alps and perhaps of the Channel, the most powerful, prosperous and influential political, economic, cultural and military complex in the world.
>
> ...Western Europe must form itself politically. Moreover, if it did not succeed in doing so, the Economic Community itself could not in the long run become stronger or even continue to exist. In other words, Europe must have institutions that will lead it to form a political union,

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

> ...Western Europe appears likely to constitute a major entity full of merit and resources, capable of living its own life, indeed not in opposition to the New World, but right alongside it.

Most of these ideas were incorporated in the Fouchet Plan for European integration proposed by France in 1961 to its partners in the Common Market.

It is often argued that these proposals are a subterfuge for a design to establish French hegemony in Europe -- the mirror image of the French claim that American conceptions camouflage our thirst for domination. It is impossible, of course, to be certain about De Gaulle's "real" designs. However, if French hegemony is his aim, he has chosen a curious road toward it. If a united Europe makes its decisions on the

basis of a unanimous vote of its member states -- as De Gaulle has proposed -- it can be dominated, if at all, by moral leadership alone. France could achieve pre-eminence only if French leaders succeeded in identifying themselves with the main currents of opinion in Europe. The other states are not likely to be so blind to their interests or so unsure of themselves as to refrain from casting their veto if they disagree with French policy.

American hostility to this line of thinking reflects in part our preference for federal institutions, in part our ambivalence on the issue of European unity. The United States, while advocating European unity, has recoiled before

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7establish closer relations with each other than they do with the United States. Especially in the military field the United States has discouraged the emergence of a European point of view and has dealt with its partners either bilaterally or through integrated commands where we are likely to be dominant. De Gaulle, by contrast, considers defense a principal attribute of autonomy. He therefore resists establishing organic links between the United States and individual European countries which would tie the defense of Europe to American weapons or American conceptions. In his view, Europe should concert its own policy and then deal with the United States as a unit.

This is why De Gaulle has opposed the Nassau Agreement, which tied the British nuclear program to that of the United States, and the proposed NATO multilateral force. Both programs, in his view, would make Europe completely dependent on the United States. Whatever influence Europe could exercise would depend on its ability to sway essentially American decisions. Europeans would be lobbyists and not partners. De Gaulle considers such a role demeaning for a great power, and he is convinced that it will destroy the moral substance of the "integrated" partner:

> France had been materially and morally destroyed by the collapse of 1940 and by the capitulation of the Vichy people . . .

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

> That is why, with regard to the United States -- rich, active and powerful -- she found herself in a position of dependence. France constantly needed its assistance in order to avoid monetary collapse. It was from America that she received the weapons for her soldiers. France's security was dependent entirely on its protection. With regard to the international undertakings in which its leaders at that time were taking part, it was often with a view to dissolving France in them, as if self-renouncement were henceforth its sole possibility and even its only ambition, while these undertakings in the guise of integration were automatically taking American authority as a postulate. This was the case with regard to the project for a so-called supranational Europe, in which France as such would have disappeared, except to pay and to orate; a Europe governed in appearance by anonymous, technocratic and stateless committees; in other words, a Europe without political reality, without economic drive, without a capacity for defense, and therefore doomed, in the face of the Soviet bloc, to being nothing more than a dependent of that great Western power, which itself had a policy, an economy and a defense -- the United States of America.

De Gaulle opposes not the Alliance, but the concept of integration on which it is based. In his view, to assign tasks on the basis of a division of labor will erode France's identity:

It is intolerable for a great State to leave its destiny up to the decisions and action of another State,however friendly it may be. In addition, it happens that, in integration. . . the integrated country loses interest in its national defense, since it is not responsible for it. The whole structure of the Alliance then loses its resilience and its strength.

Integration would lead to an abdication of responsibility and a sense of impotence. Ultimately, this would demoralize France's foreign policy. It would oblige France and Europe to accept the tutelage of the United States forever.

Thus De Gaulle, in 1959, withdrew the French fleet from NATO command. He argued that naval power by definition was designed for use in areas not protected by NATO commitments. According to De Gaulle, this was

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

the reason that the major portion of the American and British fleets remained under national control. When the French army returned from Algiers, most of it was stationed in France and not "integrated" into NATO. This was done not only because of De Gaulle's objection to the concept of integration but also for a more mundane reason, which showed how brittle the seeming cohesiveness and power of France really was:

. . . it is absolutely necessary, morally and politically, for us to make our army a more integral part of the nation. Therefore, it is necessary for us to restation it, for the most part, on our soil; for us to give it once again a direct responsibility in the external security of the country; in short, for our defense to become once again a national defense.

In De Gaulle's judgment, twenty-five years of humiliating conflict and several military revolts against legitimate authority made it more important to integrate the French army into French society than into NATO.

Few of De Gaulle's policies have so embroiled him with America as his insistence on an autonomous nuclear striking force. He argued:

We are in the atomic age and we are a country that can be destroyed at any moment unless the aggressor is deterred from the undertaking by the certainty that he too will suffer frightful destruction. This justifies both alliance and independence. The Americans, our allies and our friends, have for a long time, alone, possessed a nuclear arsenal. So long as they alone had such an arsenal and so long as they showed their will to use it immediately if Europe were attacked -- for at that time Europe alone could be attacked -- the Americans acted in such a way that for France the quesltion of an invasion hardly arose, since an attack was beyond all probability. . . . It is impossible to overestimate the extent of the service, most fortunately passive, that the Americans at that time, in that way, rendered to the freedom of the world.

Since then the Soviets have also acquired a nuclear arsenal, and that arsenal is powerful enough to endanger the very life of America. Naturally, I am not making an evaluation -- if indeed it is possible to find

ther -- but the new and gigantic fact is there. From then on, the Americans found and are finding themselves confronted with the possibility of direct destruction.

These views have caused American spokesmen to charge De Gaulle with fomenting distrust of the United States. He has been lectured on his ignorance of the technical requirements of nuclear strategy and ridiculed for excessive pretensions. Actually, his analysis of the situation does not differ radically from Secretary McNamara's. Both agree that the growing Soviet nuclear arsenal confronts the United States with an unprecedented challenge. Both insist that NATO strategy must be adapted to new realities. They disagree less in their analysis than in the conclusions to be drawn from it. Looking at NATO from the point of view of division of labor, the United States considers French resources better spent on conventional forces than on nuclear arms. From the perspective of vindicating France's identity, De Gaulle is not so concerned with the

technical aspects of strategy as with the political problem of choice. The United States considers central control over nuclear weapons crucial for the contingency of general war; De Gaulle gives priority to France's impact on the conduct of day-to-day diplomacy. Secretary McNamara strives for strategic options; President de Gaulle seeks political ones.

Differences between France and the United States over the future of Europe have been compounded by disagreements over the scope of Atlantic policy. These have gone through two contradictory phases. During his first three years in office (from 1958-1961), De Gaulle repeatedly urged the coordination of Western policies on a world-wide

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

basis. In September 1958, he proposed a global Directorate composed of the United States, Great Britain and France. The United States rejected this with the argument that it could not designate one of its European partners to speak for the others. No attempt was made to explore De Gaulle's reaction to the possibility of a wider forum.

De Gaulle returned to the theme of the need for coordination in his press conference of March 25, 1959. In 1960, he made yet another plea for a common Western world-wide policy:

> We feel that, at least among the world powers of the West, there must be something organized -- where the Alliance is concerned -- as to their political conduct and, should the occasion arise, their strategic conduct outside Europe, especially in the Middle East, and in Africa, where these three powers are constantly involved. Furthermore, if there is no agreement among the principal members of the Atlantic Alliance on matters other than Europe, how can the Alliance be indefinitely maintained in Europe? This must be remedied.

This idea was pressed particularly urgently with respect to the

Congo crisis in 1960.

When nothing came of these proposals, De Gaulle reverted to his usual, perhaps preferred, tactic of acting unilaterally and trying to force his partner's hand. After 1961, he stopped urging concerted Western action. Instead, he stressed that only a strong Europe would receive a respectful hearing from the United States or the U. S. S. R. Increasingly, De Gaulle seemed to expect that the development of Europe's economic strength and sense of identity would leave the United States no choice but to concede a coordination of policy.

This is not to say that De Gaulle's policy was primarily a reaction

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7

to being rebuffed by the United States. Rather, two changes in the international situation caused him to consider American support less crucial and made independent action appear rewarding. When he proposed the Directorate, a global showdown appeared possible. The Lebanese crisis had just occurred; Soviet intransigence was at its height. This impelled De Gaulle to try to insure American support in case war proved unavoidable. Since 1961, the Soviet military threat has seemed to recede, and the need for concerted action has diminished proportionately. Indeed, with the growth of American involvement in Asia and Latin America, the shoe is now somewhat on the other foot. It is the United States which presses its European allies to share its global responsibilities and the Europeans who are reluctant to assume world-wide commitments.

The reduction in the Soviet threat has brought to the surface sharply conflicting views of East-West relations. As in most other controversies, each side has accused the other of the same offense: of planning a settlement, if not at the expense of, at least to the exclusion of its ally. In the United States, De Gaulle's comment that Europe extends from the Atlantic to the Urals is often cited as proof of a thinly veiled desire to negotiate directly with Moscow. In France, United States bilateral dealings with the Soviet Union are taken as an indication that the United States is seeking a separate accommodation with the U.S.S.R.

 debating points. De Gaulle's statement that one day Europe would again extend from the Atlantic to the Urals did not imply a deal with the Soviet Union:

> On our old continent, the organization of a western group, at the very least equivalent to that which exists in the east, may one day, without risk to the independence and the freedom of each nation and taking into account the probable evolution of political regimes, establish a European entente from the Atlantic to the Urals. Then Europe, no longer split in two by ambitions and ideologies that would become out-of-date, would again be the heart of civilization.

The reorganization of Europe to which De Gaulle refers is to take place after Communist ideology no longer dominates in the Soviet Union, that is, when Russia is once more a national, and not an ideological, state pursuing a policy dictated by its national interests. This is the precise eventuality postulated by four American postwar administrations as the prerequisite of a final settlement.

Indeed, French and American analyses of Soviet trends are not so different as the controversy sometimes suggests. Both are of the view that at some point the Soviet system will be transformed. Both believe that this transformation will mark the starting point for fruitful negotiations. They disagree not over the fact of evolution but its nature, not over the ultimate desirability of a diplomatic settlement but about who will be the spokesman for the West when it takes place. Above all, they differ about the nature of a stable international order and the role of individuals in relation to it.

The United States has a tendency to believe that peace and stability

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7 ill-will rather than by objective conditions. If tension persists, it is because Communist leaders continue to be unreasonable; it can be alleviated by establishing an atmosphere of trust and good personal relations or by a change of heart on the part of the Soviets. As a result, United States policy toward the Soviet U nion has oscillated between two opposite approaches. During periods of tension, the United States tends to assume that Soviet policy is conducted by highly purposeful, ideologically inspired men operating according to careful, long-range plans. During periods of detente, American leaders have often acted as if a settlement could be achieved by good personal relations with their Communist counterparts.

Either approach leads to an avoidance of concreteness. When the Soviets are aggressive, negotiations are believed to be useless, and, when they are conciliatory, there is a reluctance to disturb the favorable atmosphere. In either case, American policy statements envisage a world where all conflict has ended and nations live under "the rule of law."

De Gaulle's view is more historical. Peace to him is not a final settlement but a new, perhaps more stable, balance of forces. "Now, in the last analysis and as always, it is only in equilibrium that the world will find peace." An equilibrium can never be permanent but must

ulle, is not caused so much by the personal attitudes of individual Communist leaders as by the dynamics of the system which they represent. To him, internal instability is the distinguishing feature of Communist leadership groups.

> During my lifetime, Communist ideology has been personfied by many people....Each of these holders in his turn condemns, excommunicates, crushes and at times kills the others. In any event, he firmly fights against the personality cult of the others.

Having erected an unnatural system, Soviet leaders are under constant pressure to divert attention by foreign adventures.

> ...there is in this uproar of imprecations and demands organized by the Soviets something so arbitrary and so artificial that one is led to attribute it either to the premeditated unleashing of frantic ambitions, or to the desire of drawing attention away from great difficulties: this second hypothesis seems all the more plausible to me since, despite the coercions, isolation and acts of force in which the Communist system encloses the countries which are under its yoke, and despite certain collective successes which it has achieved by drawing upon the substance of its subjects, actually its gaps, its shortages, its internal

failures, and above that its character of inhuman oppression, are felt more and more by the elites and the masses, whom it is more and more difficult to deceive and to subjugate.

Since in De Gaulle's view Soviet aggressiveness does not reflect a real grievance but domestic instability, it must be resisted and not accommodated by the West. To yield to Soviet blackmail would not alleviate internal Soviet stresses but only supply an incentive for further demands. Thus during the Berlin crisis De Gaulle spoke as follows:

....we do not allow ourselves to be moved by all the tumult, all the flow of invective, of formal notifications, of threats, launched by certain countries against other lands and especially against ours. This is all the more true in that we realize the tactical element that enters into all this staging by those who, so to speak, make it their job to upset others.

...In their camps the struggle between political trends, the intrigues of clans, the rivalries of individuals periodically lead to implacable crises, whose sequels -- or even whose premonitory symptons -- cannot help but unsettle them. Moreover, we know that in those countries there are conflicting national grievances in spite of the absolutism of their ideology. We realize therefore only too well what they readily indulge in virulent utterances and sensational outbursts in order to lead people astray -- within their own country and outside -- without, however, overstepping certain bounds.

De Gaulle rejected the "exploratory" conversations on Berlin urged by the United States and Britain as a means of determining Soviet intentions. He refused to join the talks because:

...so long as the Soviet Union does not put a stop to its threats and its injunctions and bring about an actual easing of the international situation, we believe that we have spared our allies and ourselves the catastrophic retreat, dramatic rupture or tragicomical engulfment, in which the conference would obviously have ended.

And he did not participate in the Geneva disarmament conference, predicting that it would do nothing except present irreconcilable plans.

Views differ, finally, about the significance of the Sino-Soviet split and about policy toward Communist China. The United States, convinced of the importance of intentions in the conduct of foreign policy, is tempted to back the Communist power which professes the more peaceful goals. De Gaulle, believing that an equilibrium is the only reliable basis for stability, is more concerned with establishing a counterweight to the stronger Communist partner. He is prepared, if necessary, to play off its weaker Communist opponent against it. The United States, with its global responsibilities, sees in Communist China an objective threat to its interests. De Gaulle, leading a country primarily

No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-292-5-14-7 its power into the center of Europe as the principal danger. China, to him, is a distant country which could become useful in diverting Soviet energies. What is involved here is a certain divergence of American and European interests; De Gaulle's analysis is far from unique in Europe, even if his methods of implementing it are.

In short, peace according to De Gaulle is achieved not by a personal reconciliation but by the establishment of a more stable equilibrium. France and Europe must contribute in bringing about this balance not as the object of policy but as its author. De Gaulle is thus concerned not only with the fact of negotiations but also with France's role in them.

He would object to any settlement that France did not help to formulate -- regardless of his opinion of its substance. The major thrust of De Gaulle's policy is to make it impossible for the United States to deal with the Soviet Union over the heads of France and the rest of Europe.

De Gaulle's thought is remarkably consistent. Convinced that only those capable of assuming responsibility can form meaningful associations, he can logically affirm his faith in the Atlantic Alliance while insisting on the identity of Europe and the uniqueness of France. To De Gaulle, the two notions are complementary -- though this may seem disingenuous or even cynical to many Americans.

as faced a very special challenge. Even in the best of circumstances, any leader of a country which has been ravaged by two world wars, and which barely avoided civil war in 1958, in 1960 and again in 1962, would have had to face the problem of restoring France's faith in itself. How well De Gaulle has succeeded is shown by the fact that three years after the end of the Algerian war France, far from being torn to pieces by internal schisms -- as most observers expected -- is the European country most active in international affairs.

Although De Gaulle has often exaggerated his psychological mission, he has posed an important question which the West has yet to answer. There is merit in his contention that a political unit must mean something to itself before it can have meaning to others. Before a state can

contribute usefully to common decisions, it must be convinced that its opinions matter. The tendency of his opponents to refuse to take his challenge seriously and to treat De Gaulle as a relic to be outwaited has prevented a meaningful discussion from which a new common conception of Atlantic relations might have emerged. Difficult as it may be to deal with De Gaulle's France, we would do well to remember that it contributes to the general interests of the West far more than a France wracked by dissension or abdicating from the international stage.

But if his critics have shown little compassion for his special circumstances, De Gaulle has often thwarted his own aims by his abrupt

and take of negotiations, the French President has moved through a series of faits accomplis to force his allies to accept his objectives. A rationalist, he has acted as if his views were certain to prevail by virtue of their inherent validity and that the feelings of other statesmen were, therefore, irrelevant. A profound believe in historical necessity, he has acted as if the logic of events would always override the sensibilities of others.

No doubt, this is a heroic posture. But man is not governed by reason alone. History may appear inevitable in retrospect; but it is made by men who cannot always distinguish their emotion from their analysis. The paradox of De Gaulle's position is that he claims to speak for Europe, but he has not found it possible to create a following outside of France that considers him a European statesman. He has alienated many potential

supporters by his excessive rationalism and unilateral tactics. Many individuals who share De Gaulle's aspiration that Europe play a more automomous role in world affairs have been driven into opposition by his wounding insistence on intellectual submission to his maxims. His rigid defense of an extreme conception of sovereignty has antagonized even those who do not see the choice between a federal or confederated Europe as an issue of principle. Although France and the United States seem to agree on the principle of a strong and autonomous Europe, De Gaulle's methods suggest that he will cooperate only if others accept his unilateral pronouncements. His tactics create the impression that he desires

 to pursue policies contradictory, if not hostile, to those of the United States.

Ironically, De Gaulle has become a symbol on both sides of the Atlantic of principles contrary to his pronouncements and probably to his intentions. He has enabled many in Europe not previously noted for their devotion either to European unity or to Atlantic partnership to advocate some ideal model of either relationship in order to thwart whatever progress is possible now. By evoking so many memories of authoritarian rule, De Gaulle has polarized the discussion within Europe in a manner that makes it next to impossible to come to grips with the substance of his thought. A strong Europe was bound to present a challenge to American leadership. But by couching this challenge so woundingly, De Gaulle has spurred American self-righteousness rather than

the objective reexamination of Atlantic relationships which the situation demands.

History will probably demonstrate that De Gaulle's conceptions -- as distinct from his style -- were greater than those of most of his critics. But a statesman must work with the material at hand. If the sweep of his conceptions exceeds the capacity of his environment to absorb them, he will fail regardless of the validity of his insights. If his style makes him unassimilable, it becomes irrelevant whether he is right or wrong. Great men build truly only if they remember that their achievement must be maintained by the less gifted individuals who

are likely to follow them. A structure which can be preserved only if there is a great man in each generation is inherently fragile. This may be the nemesis of De Gaulle's success.

Though De Gaulle has performed an enormous feat in lifting his country's sights almost by an act of will, there exist objective limits which great and strong-willed statesmanship may extend but cannot change altogether. De Gaulle's insistence that France and the United States are equal is true in a moral sense, but if pushed too far it must bring into the open a permanent disparity of strength. The superiority of American resources is likely to prevail in any confrontation regardless of the validty of the competing views. By generating so much personal ill-will among American leaders, De Gaulle may rend the fabric of illusion on which his policy depends. The irony of the Franco-American rivalry is

that De Gaulle has conceptions greater than his strength, while United States power has been greater than its conceptions.

In the meantime, there is something of a Greek tragedy about the dispute between the United States and France. Each chief actor, following the laws of his nature, is bringing about consequences quite different from those intended. Either the "American" or the "French" concept of Atlantic relationship might have succeeded. Competing as they do -- with no comprehension by one side of the real intentions of the other -- they may bring on what each side professes to fear most: a divided, suspicious Europe absorbed once again in working out its ancient rivalries.

ed in what is ardently desired. But there is another and perhaps more poignant tragedy, that of fulfilling one's desires and then finding them empty.
