

December 31, 1968

Memorandum to Dr. Kissinger

From: V.A. Walters

Subject: France

1. I know of no NATO Exercise which shows that Western Europe can be held without the use of French real estate and resources. If this is so then we must draw the necessary consequences therefrom.
2. De Gaulle's attitude towards us has very little to do with his treatment by Mr. Roosevelt during WW II. It stems largely from two beliefs on his part.
  - a) The overwhelming power of the U.S. produces an imbalance in the coalition of Western powers and insures U.S. "hegemony" thereby depriving him of the primacy of France in Europe. He believes that in a Europe of the Six, France could be the dominant factor because she outweighs economically all of the other countries except Germany, but that Germany is so burdened with guilt that she will not dispute France's primacy for the foreseeable future. De Gaulle believes that the US is seeking to get Britain into the Common Market in order to counterbalance France and deprive her of her rightful leadership.
  - b) Now that the Soviet Union has the means to strike at North America, the US will not go to nuclear war for anything less than a Soviet nuclear strike on North America. He is reinforced in this belief by his view of the Cuban crisis. After he had agreed to the US intervening in Cuba we did not do so, thus if the U.S. is unwilling to fight to prevent the establishment of a Communist government 95 miles from the U.S, why should he believe that it would fight to prevent the installation of Communist governments in Paris Bonn or London 3500 miles away. He wants a nuclear strike force, not to compete with SAC or the Soviet Long Range Air Army or Rocket Troops, but so that he will have the ability to transform a conventional Soviet attack on Europe into a nuclear conflict whether the US wants it or not. He feels that the Soviets know him and his resolution and thus his possession of a nuclear capability is an additional deterrent.
3. It is not easy to deal directly with these beliefs because they are more emotional than rational. We can however circumvent many of the disadvantages of these beliefs. We must not expect De Gaulle or one of his successors (Gaullist or non Gaullist) to return to NATO in sackcloth and ashes. De Gaulle and indeed most thinking non communist Frenchmen were alarmed by the events of May, by Czechoslovakia and by the monetary crisis. There exists an environment in which much may be achieved to repair the damage done by France's withdrawal from the NATO military organization. I believe we can obtain a very great degree of military cooperation and joint planning conditioned on France's sovereign decision to join the Alliance in War. Right now there is contingency planning at the highest military level. This is known and tolerated by De Gaulle. It can be broadened and expanded if we do not seek public political sanction and are discreet. It was De Gaulle who said "There is no greatness without some mystery." We should let him have some mystery.
4. He is well aware of the special relationship between the US and Britain, particularly in the field of intelligence. He resents France being excluded.
5. The events of last May showed that the French Armed Forces can wield considerable influence on the life of the nation. We should do all we can so that when De Gaulle passes from the scene, this influence will be exercised in a direction favorable to

the security interests of the United States and its allies. We are losing touch with the younger generation of French officers, the older ones are drifting further away. We should embark on a broad program of exchanges to convince the younger officers that the community of interests between France and the United States is far greater than any apparent divergences of a temporary nature. This program should also include visits by senior officers whose future is still ahead of them. Such a program could usefully be a two way proposition as there is a considerable amount of "to hell with France" in the U.S. Armed Forces. Understandable but impractical.

We should explore in a positive sense the feelers that De Gaulle and some of his ministers are putting out. We must try and determine what can be done now and what must await a later date. When De Gaulle finally goes it will not be the disorganized quarrelsome opposition that will succeed him. The Gaullist party will break into its two basic components (Center and left). This will open new perspectives for political action.

I believe we should move vigorously at the outset of a new administration. De Gaulle is basically well disposed towards the President Elect. He regards him as a man of strength courage and tenacity. He may make concessions to Mr. Nixon that we would never have made to Mr. Johnson. I am not sure but this is possible. He may really want to turn a new page in Franco American relations.

It seems to me that as soon as possible after the inauguration you should see him on behalf of the President and try to ascertain what he really wants and how far we can go towards meeting that without putting a premium on withdrawal from NATO.

the Security interests of the United States and its allies. We are losing touch with the younger generation of French officers, the older ones are drifting. We should embark on a broad program of exchanges to convince the younger officers of the common interest between France and the United States which is far greater than any temporary differences. We should also sponsor visits by senior officers whose future is still ahead of them. This could well be a two way program as there is a considerable amount of "to hell with France" sentiment in the US Armed Forces. Understandable but impractical.

We should explore in a positive sense the feelers that De Gaulle and some of his ministers are apparently putting out. We must try and determine what CAN be done now and what must await a later date. When De Gaulle finally goes it will not be the disorganized quarrelsome opposition that will succeed him. The Gaullist party will break into its two basic components (Center and left). This will open new political perspectives.

I believe we should move vigorously at the outset of a new administration. De Gaulle is well disposed towards the President Elect. He regards him as a man of strength and tenacity. He can make concessions to Mr. Nixon that he could not to Mr. Johnson. He may really want to turn a new page of Franco American relations. I believe that as soon as possible after the inauguration you should see him on behalf of the President to ascertain what he really wants and how far we can go towards meeting that without putting a premium on withdrawal from NATO.