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To : The Secretary
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Subject: Does de Gaulle Want to Torpedo the NPT?

Since the announcement that the United States and the USSR had reached agreement on the text of Article III of the draft non-proliferation treaty, there have been indications that President de Gaulle may have decided to undertake a more active campaign to thwart it, or at least try to prevent German adherence to it.

The French Position. French officials have long maintained that 1) the non-proliferation treaty which has been under negotiation in ENDC would not halt the spread of nuclear weapons, since any country that felt a real need for them would acquire them somehow; 2) the treaty was not even a measure of disarmament, in that it did not provide for any cutback in the arsenals of the nuclear "haves" and, indeed, only consolidated their monopoly; 3) for these reasons France would not sign the treaty; but 4) it would not advise other nations to sign or not to sign.

Behind this detached, analytical posture there has appeared to be another, unspoken component of French policy, to the effect that France would in fact welcome the conclusion of an NPT to which the Federal Republic would be a party because the FRG would thereby renounce not only its own nuclear option (leaving France as the only nuclear power in Western continental Europe) but also such devices as the multilateral force. It has also been thought that Paris would

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be still happier if German-US friction were engendered along the rocky path to FRG accession. For this reason, it has been widely concluded that the French would not make a major issue of the treaty with the Germans, nor would they use their position as a member of Euratom to raise serious obstacles to the eventual working out of an agreement on inspection between that organization and the IAEA.

Has There Been a Change? There is some reason to believe that French policy has not been, or in any case is not now, as outlined above. Evidence supporting the view that the French may after all wish to see the treaty abort (or at least see the FRG not become a party to it) is fragmentary but, taken cumulatively, not without weight. 1) Less than a week after the US and the USSR announced that they had reached agreement on a text for Article III, French Defense Minister Messmer, on January 22, publicly denounced the NPT because it was not a disarmament measure and would create new threats to world peace. 2) On January 25, Messmer said at a press conference in Baden-Baden that the treaty would force non-nuclear states to tie themselves closer to the nuclear powers and would therefore tend to consolidate the blocs. 3) On January 27, General de Gaulle, visiting the French War College, was quoted in the press as having remarked that Japan, which had recently concentrated its energies on economic development, would inevitably move toward expanding its political power and would thus of necessity seek commensurate military power. (On January 30 the General confirmed to Ambassador Bohlen that he had meant that Japan would one day want nuclear weapons, largely because of its proximity to Communist China.)

What Messmer said last week has been said many times in the past by French officials, and General de Gaulle denied to Ambassador Bohlen on the 30th that

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there had been any change in French policy on this matter. What is notable now is that Messmer should have repeated these arguments so soon after Article III was tabled in Geneva; that he should dwell (according to press accounts) on the allegation that the NPT will consolidate the two blocs; and that he should say this in Germany, where, of course, the French preach the importance--from the point of view of Germany's eventual reunification as well as of European security--of the breakup of the two blocs in Europe. Taken in conjunction with de Gaulle's apparent designation of Japan, just at this moment, as a future nuclear power, treaty or no treaty, one can wonder whether the French may not be deliberately trying to stimulate the Germans to reject the treaty in one way or another. If not, these French spokesmen are behaving with remarkable imprudence.

Why Failure of the NPT Would Suit de Gaulle. It would not be unreasonable in terms of his overall foreign policy considerations for de Gaulle to adopt this posture at this time. 1) Throughout the last half of 1967, it became clear that the General was obsessed with the growing "threat" of US power and, because of Soviet "acquiescence" in this development since the Middle East war, with the danger that the two blocs, far from breaking up as he desires, might be reconsolidated in what some Gaullists call a "new Yalta." The NPT appears to de Gaulle as a manifestation of Soviet-American entente at the expense of others. Preventing the success of this major Big Two effort might well have come to take a high place on de Gaulle's policy agenda. 2) While the French do not want a nuclear Federal Republic, they may well believe that a) Bonn's signature on the NPT would not inhibit such a development if other circumstances eventually favored it; and

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b) the danger of such an event is now very slight in any case since the Federal Republic would not be likely to risk its new policy in Eastern Europe by even talking about "going nuclear." 3) Further, it is known that de Gaulle looks forward to an eventual negotiation with the USSR and its allies on broad European problems, including the German question. He may think it better to reserve German renunciation of nuclear weapons for bargaining on that occasion than to see the FRG give away its signature now for nothing except a consolidation of the European status quo at its own (and France's) expense. It is true that de Gaulle does not seem to think that events are moving as rapidly toward such a negotiation as he may have hoped a few years ago. But he takes the long view of things and may still consider it worthwhile for Germany and its European friends to retain this bargaining power.

De Gaulle, of course, must realize that German refusal to sign the NPT would also tend to have a negative effect on the FRG's Eastern policy. But he may well believe that the setback to German relations with the United States would more than balance this drawback.

Implications. We cannot firmly conclude that the General will do everything he can to wreck the NPT (or even that he now hopes that the FRG will, in one way or another, reject the treaty). We can say, however, that 1) French behavior vis-a-vis Germany since January 18 has been careless, to say the least, if this is not the case, and 2) such a policy would be entirely consistent with de Gaulle's current outlook. But if this is his policy, we can expect that the French, among other actions, would not hesitate to use their membership in Euratom to make the negotiation of an inspection agreement between that organization and the IAEA as difficult as possible.

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