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FRANCE: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
on 2 December 1964

by

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I want to say how privileged I am to be among you today. Perhaps, if you don't agree with everything I say, at least I can help you to better understand our point of view. I realize that there are a certain number of false problems, and that whatever problems we have, we don't have them just for the sake of being difficult. We have reasons, and we think that these problems can all be solved.

Before I start speaking of our position on a certain number of world problems, I think it might be useful if I said something about modern France. We all have ideas and notions about other countries and other people, yet I know by my own experience, when I arrived in your country almost four years ago, that I had any number of misconceptions, and there were many things that I didn't know at all. Regardless of what one reads or hears about a country, nothing really replaces the personal experience—the human contact. This is, I think, a very gratifying idea; whatever the world has become, the human factor is still the most important.

Though I wouldn't say that there are many people in the United States who still think that the Frenchman is a man with a beret, big moustache, and feeding on snails, yet there are probably things about modern France with which you are not quite familiar. For instance, if I wanted to characterize modern France I would say that we have become the youngest country in Europe, which seems amazing when I am referring to a country that has been known so long as the sick, old, and dying man of Europe. It is a fact that our birthrate in the 19th century, and the beginning of this century, has at times been so low that there have been more deaths than births. I think that the major reason for this is the fact that the efforts we made in the Napoleonic wars were such that we never really recovered prior to World War II, and every time we were

about to recover there was a new catastrophe, or something else new which put us down again; whether it be the war with Prussia in the last century, or the first world war; there was always something. After World War II the French population started increasing very rapidly with the result that 31% of our population is now under 20 years of age. The population was 40 million after World War II, and now it is over 48 million.

The increase creates problems: larger houses for larger families; larger schools and colleges; more teachers and professors—all at a time when we lend almost 30 thousand teachers and professors to our French schools abroad, chiefly to our former colonial possessions who keep French as their official language and come to us for assistance. If we do have problems, at least we have the very gratifying hope that very soon we will have more and more young people among our elite. It is not that we despise our elderly statesmen and their experience, but we think that in our times, and if we want to be a modern country, we must have a high proportion of young leaders in all walks of life.

Another characteristic of modern France is that women have at last achieved the equality of rights with men which Napoleon had refused them when he made our legislation a century and a half ago. Before 1945, women could not vote in France. Normally they would not have a banking account of their own, and if they did, every one of their checks had to be countersigned by the husband. (We do think there was some virtue in this.) Now there is a perfect equality of rights in all fields, and women are catching up for the time they have wasted. To give you an example, we have about 5 thousand judges in France. Before World War II there were only 20 women judges. Now there are more than 350, which, by the way, is a higher proportion than you have in the United States. That change, which is mainly due to General de Gaulle's initiative, is, I think, beneficial to France.

Another characteristic is the stability of our institutions, and there, of course, I get into the political field. France has long been known as the country with changing governments which reminded us of the game of musical chairs. Ministers would stay for six or eight months, perhaps a year, then would be ousted. What were the reasons for this situation? First, the tendency of all peoples around the Mediterranean to be overindividualistic and show no patience when they disapprove of their Government's actions. The second cause of changing governments was the fact that our institutions did not encourage political stability. It all

goes back to the time when Napoleon's nephew in the middle of the last century was elected President of the Republic, and then one fine day declared himself to be Napoleon III. (As far as we can judge now he was not a very good emperor.) Ever since then there has been the concern in the back of every Frenchman's mind not to have this happen again. This is why the constitution of the Third Republic, and later that of the Fourth Republic, were drafted so that the Executive had weak powers and the Legislative strong powers. It was a poor calculation because it didn't prevent the collapse of the Third and Fourth Republics and yet it did distort completely the system of government. How does one expect administrations to find the time to make good decisions, and to have enough prestige to implement them, if they know that only a few months later they will not be the government any more? The system worked more or less when there were no vital problems at stake and no great danger to confront us, but as soon as there was something difficult to solve it ceased to function. This is how the Third Republic fell when Germany occupied France in 1940; this is how the Fourth Republic fell in 1958 at the time when we were at the eve of a civil war on the very thorny Algerian problem. General de Gaulle was then called back to power. Some people who brought him back hoped that he would be a dictator, but they forgot that he has always been a man who believes in democracy. For instance, after the war his prestige was so great that if he had wanted to declare himself Emperor of France he could have gotten away with it. Yet he insisted upon having a constitution in 1945, and it was because he did not like the one he was given that he retired in 1946. In 1958, he said, 'I will come back if you want me to, but under one condition: give me a constitution that works; give me a constitution that allows the government to have power and guarantees stability.' This is how we have the constitution of the Fifth Republic.

Of course, you will find people who will say, 'Well, what you have is all right, but it is everything but a democracy; it is not a republic.' To this I will answer that the constitution has been voted by the entire French population and more than 78% approved it; that the members of the parliament are elected by the population; that parliament makes our laws, and votes our budget. (Every year there are major changes in the budget under the influence of the parliament.) The parliament controls the government and can overthrow it. But the great difference with previous regimes is that the President of the republic, if he thinks that the government was overthrown unduly, has the power to dissolve the parliament and call for a new election. This in fact happened in 1962 when

Prime Minister Michel Debré was put in minority by the parliament and replaced by Monsieur Georges Pompidou. The proof that the system is right is that more than one third of the people who were in the parliament before were not reelected by the population; thus the population showed that they disagreed with the way with which Michael Debré had been treated. I think that a government can have power and still be a democracy. Can we claim, just because we have a strong personality at the head of our state, that it isn't a democracy? Can one say that Germany was not a democracy just because Adenauer, its Chancellor, was a man of courage, of wisdom? Can one claim that England ceased to be a democracy when Churchill was at the helm? Can one say that your country is less a democracy when you have a president with determination and courage? Of course not. On the contrary, I would go so far as to say that democracy is better protected with a government who knows what it wants and fights for it, than when it is exposed to the dangers of extremism which uses the facilities of the democratic system to destroy democracy.

Another characteristic of France, I think, is its prosperity. We find French people grumbling; we always grumble—it is one of our national characteristics. But in fact the people never lived so well. The standard of living has been increasing ever since the beginning of the 1950s and very much so in the last years. Our industrial output has been increasing by 5.5% every year in the last ten years and the standard of living has been increasing by 4.5%. We have realized that we had to make a great effort to have this economic strength. We have realized that the time has gone when the possession of a colonial empire meant might and prestige. We don't have to blush at what we did in our colonial time; we think we did a lot to help those populations in the countries once under our colonial rule. To take one example, when we arrived in Algeria 134 years ago there were only 2 million inhabitants; when we left there were over 11 million inhabitants. Why? Because we gave 17 million free medical consultations every year; we built numerous and modern hospitals; we equipped that country; we gave their elite the education they required to take their state in hand, and we still grant that country considerable help although it is now independent.

In different degrees France also has made great efforts to equip all its other colonial possessions and to educate their elite. We realize that in the second part of the 20th century, if people want it, they must be granted independence. This is why De Gaulle toured our possessions in Africa and the Malagasy and told them,

'If you want to be free go ahead. If you want to stay with us for a time you are welcome, but whenever you want independence we will be glad to grant it to you.' Guinea chose to become independent immediately; the others chose to remain with us for a certain time, but when, one after another, they chose to become independent we discussed in a very friendly atmosphere the technicalities of shifting from the colonial system to independence; we presented them in the United Nations and ever since then they come to us for help, assistance, and advice. We have military agreements with most of them so as to give them protection until they have their own strength.

I spoke earlier of educational aid, but there are also the fields of technical aid, economic health, and financial aid, which puts us, by the way, at the head of all the nations in the world which try to help the developing countries. France gives 2.6% of its gross national product to help developing countries of the world, chiefly former colonial possessions, and we are tending to help our former colonial possessions as much as we can with equipment so that as soon as possible they can do without our help. We would like to grant our help to other areas, too, if it were only to avoid the accusation made by communist or neutralist propaganda that what we have set up is 'neo-colonialism,' a new form of power in those former colonies. We have enough on our hands in Europe and elsewhere to keep free of any colonial ambitions whether direct or indirect.

Our prosperity has several causes. I would say that one of the chief causes, and, believe me, we shall never forget it, is the Marshall aid. The importance of the aid you granted a certain number of European countries, including former enemies, was essential; and the way in which you gave it, and the time in which you gave it, were essential. Let us not forget that Europe was physically and morally exhausted by World War II; most of these populations were on their knees and desperate. There is nothing like a desperate people to be an easy prey for communism. It is a fact that both in Italy and France (I speak only of these two countries) communism had a very strong position immediately after the war. As far as my country is concerned, the communists had lost a lot of influence in the war when Russia tied in with Hitler, but then the French communists were clever and they joined the underground movement. They very courageously took a great part in the underground fight so that they appeared, little by little, as nationalists. At the end of the war their position was very strong. The Communist Party had almost a million members.

Now they have 220 thousand, which we think is 220 thousand too many, but they have lost a lot of ground.

The way you gave us the Marshall aid was very important. Instead of giving us each something, you asked the Europeans to get together to share the Marshall aid, which was a way of encouraging the first cooperation at a European level, and we think, this was a very clever and good move.

Another cause of our prosperity is what we call our economic plan. It all started after the war when we had to rebuild our country. Jean Monnet devised a plan at the national level by which our few means were applied to our most urgent needs. That plan for recovery, for reconstruction, was a four-year plan and it worked so well that we felt encouraged to keep on having economic plans every four years and we have done it. That system of economic plans has helped us to harmonize and boost our economy. Of course, when one speaks of planning in the economic field, people think in terms of the communist system. We believe that we should not let the communists have the monopoly of a good technique, if it can be usefully adopted to our Christian and democratic world. And that's what we tried to do.

The great differences between our plan and the communist plan are: first, our plan is not made by the state but by the citizens themselves. The French plan is devised by about four thousand Frenchmen, a third of whom are bankers and industrialists, another third engineers, and finally, workmen of Labor Unions. These people are divided into twenty different specific commissions, each of which studies a different field of our economic life. Their studies are put together, harmonized, and thus we have an economic plan for the next four years. Of course, it doesn't always work; sometimes something must be changed in the course of those four years because circumstances have changed or there was a miscalculation, but in general, it works well. The second difference with the communist system is that, in our system, no one is obliged to follow the plan, but everybody does, because experience shows that it pays to do so.

Before explaining our foreign policy to you I would like to say a few words about Charles de Gaulle as a man for whom I worked for two and a half years. He is difficult to understand, but he is a fascinating man. He can be explained by the fact that he was born in a family of soldiers and professors and there is a little of the soldier and a little of the professor in him. He was born in the

eastern part of France in an area that has been invaded time and time again in the course of a century, where people have suffered a good deal. They don't talk very much, they work hard, and De Gaulle is that same type: a man of great physical courage. I could cite the fact that when his car was attacked a year and a half ago, there were a hundred and fifty bullet holes through it. He refused to duck, and then as he was shaking all the debris off, all he said was, 'I am afraid that these gentlemen are very poor shots.' That's the sort of man De Gaulle is. He has a sense of humor.

I remember one day during what we call the 'crisis of the barricade,' when some French officers started a revolt in Algeria, there was a very tense and difficult moment when someone called me up to the office of my direct chief who wanted the file I had and said, 'Come up quickly.' I took the only elevator there was in the Elysee Palace, which was built in the 18th century—anyhow, it goes up at that speed. When I got up in that long corridor on the second floor and opened the door quickly I heard a bang and there I saw General de Gaulle rubbing his forehead, looking at me and saying, 'What, you, too?'

He is also a man who knows how to draw a line between business and feelings. He showed his feelings when President Kennedy died, but when it comes to discussing our mutual interests then, of course, he is a difficult partner; that is true. But it would be a great mistake to think that he hates Americans; he does not, and I know that in private conversations I have heard him often say how he admired your forefathers and the way your country was set up—the way you built your army in a matter of months during the war. In many ways he admires your country, and has many American friends. But he does not mix feelings and business.

As to our foreign policy: first of all it is often said that De Gaulle does this and he does that, forgetting that behind De Gaulle there are the French people. We have a Gallup poll, too; it has a very long and difficult French name, but it is not a governmental agency. In September there was a poll taken and it was found that 40% of the French population agreed completely with General de Gaulle's foreign policy; 21% did not like his foreign policy, and the rest were not quite sure what they liked. It is interesting to see that during that inquiry they were asked, 'Who is the best ally?' Fifty-three per cent of the answers were, 'The United States.' And this is a very high proportion if you

remember that we have a good number of communists in France. That means that the great proportion of the people who are not communists believe in the United States as a friend and ally and this is also important to know.

The primary object of our foreign policy is to contribute to the creation of a United Europe. This, of course, may surprise many. People think that De Gaulle is an ultranationalist who does not want a unified Europe and who wants to have nothing to do with an Atlantic Alliance. If we were ultranationalists do you think that we would have decided to forget our past enmity with Germany and to become friends with our former enemy? This we did; we first did it because we thought it was reasonable. Nature has put us there, one close to the other, and as we have found, more and more people of both countries think that it is a little less useful and a little more awful to fight every twenty-five years and kill millions of people, and for what? Then little by little we came to like them and they came to like us. I don't mind saying that if people with courage had not started this reconciliation our former enmity would have continued. I know that in my family, as a child, I never heard anything my parents said that would incline me to like the Germans. I never found anything in my history book that really encouraged me to understand the Germans and get along with them. (The same was true in Germany.) And it did require people like Jean Monnet and General de Gaulle; people like Konrad Adenauer, who in 1925, had the courage and foresight to say, 'If these two people instead of putting all their means and intelligence into destroying one another regularly would put those means and intelligence into building something together, great things could happen in Europe.'

And we found a man in France like Robert Schuman. He was born in France on the German border; he was at times in a German school, and at other times in a French school. He had been in the German army and in the French army; he was bilingual, he knew both people, and he knew very well that with good will they could get along. But that was not enough. One cannot forget centuries of difficulties by just good words. We had to start on a material basis and this was why Robert Schuman, in 1950, suggested that Germany and France start an economic experience together. In our part of the country of Europe we make steel with German coal and French ore, but there was a double custom tariff, and all sorts of things in between those two raw materials. We decided to suppress all that was between those two raw materials and manufacture steel together as if we were but one people. Of course people feared the worst, but

it worked; it worked so well that we felt encouraged to offer other people in Europe to join in the experience and try to broaden the scope of that economic experience. This is how, little by little, we came to the European Common Market which, as you know, is a group of six countries who signed the Treaties of Rome in March 1954. The six countries decided that they would gradually do away with custom duties between them so that after 12 years Germans would no longer pay duty when buying French goods, nor would Italians when buying Belgium goods. We decided to build up a common exterior tariff to protect this new organization as long as we were not strong enough to compete with the big concerns of the rest of the world and, to be perfectly frank, to compete with American companies. Do not forget that the biggest concerns in Western Europe are but midgets compared with yours, and it would be suicide to decide to renounce all tariff protection immediately. The day will come, but it is not there yet.

We decided also that those six European countries would have but one economic policy, and last, but not least, it was decided that we would try and achieve political unity. Already the custom duties have been lowered by 60% on industrial goods and about 35% on agricultural goods compared with what they were in 1958 when the Common Market started operating. As far as the building up of the common economic policy, it is a much slower process. You must realize what it implies. It means that before we open our borders to free trade, free travel, and free work, we must level out; we must harmonize the legislations of the six countries in all fields.

You must imagine that just within a few years a French workman will be able to go to the Italian, German or Belgium border, get into these countries by showing his identity card, apply for a job with perfect equality of rights with the nationals of these countries, draw the same salary, the same fringe benefits, send his earnings home, and come to and from as if the borders had ceased to exist. Europe will be much closer to unity when each man has an opportunity to realize that the man on the other side of the border has two eyes, two arms, two legs, many defects and some qualities, the same as he has, and that after all, men are not so different. There are many things that bring us together in addition to our economic link and our mutual interest in defending Europe. All this is slow, but it is coming.

The political unity is very slow, but how could it be otherwise? As long as one discusses technical problems it is easy to

find compromise solutions because technicians from all countries in the world have in common their technique as a link. However, when it comes to political unification of countries which for 20 centuries have been independent, have fought one another, have hated one another, mistrusted one another, behind a double barrier of military defense and custom duty fences, how does one expect these people to accept overnight the idea that their country is meant to become, little by little, the province of something bigger? How would you, our American friends, feel if your President one day said, 'Well, I think that the time has come for the United States of America to become, little by little, the province of something bigger that is not yet in existence, but we hope will work. The time has come for the United States to give away slowly but surely its sovereign rights.' The least that we can say is that you would like to think it over. That is the frame of mind in Europe. The contrary would be surprising. This does not mean that it will not work. I, for one, am quite convinced that the day will come when we will have the United States of Europe. I am not convinced that it will come as quickly as the founding fathers of the Common Market hoped it would. There are, after all, many things to change, not only in the material field, but in the psychological approach to so many things. I am quite confident that we have gone so far that we can't go back. I am quite confident that the people have already found out by their pocketbook that it pays to unify.

In our technological era small countries, whatever their talent, their dedication, and the intelligence of their people, are doomed because we need bigger units, bigger markets, and we must move up to the European dimension. This does not mean that France, Germany, Italy, and England, when they become part of the United States of Europe will disappear, or that their personality will be watered down. I think that because of our historical background in Europe there will be much more autonomy retained by each of these countries than each of the 50 states of your Union, but they will have to become one day the elements of something bigger. We think that it would not be wise, as some have advocated, to set up a Western European Federal Government and say, 'There you have got your Europe.' It looks very nice on paper, but people are not that way. You must build with what you have; you must be realistic and start from the roots. The roots we have are, on the one hand, the little man, the individuals and, on the other hand, the nations. We must get these people accustomed to live together, to work together and know one another better. In the Fouchet plan, which was a French plan for the political

unification of Europe, we suggested that our heads of state meet twice a year and that our ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense Cultural Affairs, and Finance meet once every three months. This was a very good approach.

When I was with De Gaulle I saw many important foreign visitors coming to him, and it is very comforting to realize that these people are like you and me. They never have quite the same attitude towards the man and towards the problem after they meet. The human factor comes into play and they come to know one another; they have mutual esteem and understand one another much better than by a communiqué. All this is important. We think that political unification of Europe will come. It will be slow. Mr. Spaak, the Belgium Minister of Foreign Affairs, came out with new ideas in September, and only a few days ago the Germans came out with a new plan, too. We would not approve of everything they suggested, but these plans would be a good basis for discussion.

Now, you as Americans will think that all this is very fine. Americans encouraged the unification of Europe in the way you gave the Marshall aid. Every one of your successive administrations has encouraged the unification of Western Europe. But now there are Americans who dread the consequences. Some fear them in the economic field thinking that we will decide to have less and less trade with you and the rest of the world and that it will hurt your trade. To this I will answer that you have been selling the six Common Market countries 72% more industrial goods now than you did before the Common Market started operating, and at the same time you have bought only 32% more of our industrial goods, so that the balance is in your favor. In the field of agricultural goods, which is a field very important to you, you have been selling us 31% more than you did before, and you only buy 2% more of our agricultural goods. So, who is inward looking?

Now the chicken war. There will be thousands and millions of chicken wars until the end of the world because nothing is perfect. There will always be conflicting interests, but, with good will, every conflict can be solved. Speaking of chickens, you industrialized the production of chickens about six years ago; before that you didn't sell chickens to Europe. The people who industrialized the production of chickens in the United States did not make sure that there was a market for it in Europe. We had been producing our own chickens for two

thousand years and we like them. Besides, what you can do, we can do. We also modernized the production of our chickens with the result that we produce 14% more chickens every year. And even if we get up in the middle of the night to eat a little more chicken, we only eat 4% more chicken than we used to. Whatever economic problems we may have pertain less to the fact that the Common Market exists, than to the fact that we live in a wild world where some nations like yours and ours have made such technological progress that they can produce far more than they can use, at a time when two thirds of the population of the world is starving. It is one of the grotesque tragedies of our time which has nothing to do with the existence of the Common Market. You don't sell more chickens to Switzerland, which is not a member of the Common Market, than you do to us. All this will be solved the day the big producing countries sit around a table and see how much they produce, how much they can use, how much they can sell, and decide to adapt production to the needs of the world market. This has been tried for coffee; it doesn't always work, but it has to be done for everything—wheat, chicken, etc. If not, we will have major catastrophes.

To sum up, I do not think that we are a threat to your trade. On the contrary, we believe that in our small world we will have more and more exchanges and will buy from you more than we did, because we can now afford it. Prosperity calls for prosperity and we think that far from being a menace to you we may well be an asset.

We have a very strict sense of our solidarity. We know that when your stock exchange in New York has a problem, we have the very same problem in Paris, Rome, London, and Hamburg. We are all in the same boat. I boast of our prosperity. We never had so much money in our national reserve bank. We have four billion, five hundred million dollars worth of money in our reserve, one and a half billion of which are American dollars. Whatever would hurt the American dollar would hurt us. There is more and more solidarity in this world, and this also is a danger, but also a comforting idea in many ways.

Now, the political scene, and that is where our problems will be more difficult for a time. Let us face facts. There are people in the United States of America who cannot accept the idea, now that we are growing closer to it, that Europe should become independent, autonomous and an equal. Please forgive me for being so straightforward, but I don't have time to be very diplomatic. In other words,

what do the Europeans wish? They wish to do now, under far more difficult circumstances than yours, what your forefathers were doing in the 18th and 19th centuries; that is to say, building the backbone, the structure, of your big, beautiful country. You could afford doing it behind isolationism, behind the Monroe Doctrine, and in fact you retired from the world while you were building yourself. You very nearly missed it, do you remember? You started building customs barriers, I think it was, between New York and some neighboring state. You very nearly made the mistake of splitting several states or several economic groups, and it was only through the wisdom and dedication of some of your statesmen that you kept your unity. We have to build that unity after centuries of difficulties, and now when we are right in the midst of world problems. We are determined to do it, but we need your understanding. We want to be (and this is psychologically quite understandable) the major architect of the United States of Europe. We want to feel that we are building our own home—that we are masters in our own house. This does not mean that we will cease to trade with the United States, or that we will not be just as friendly as we were before. In other words, what we are trying to do (and I am going to use an image which has been used very often, but I think it good) is to have a free world with two major pillars to sustain it—the United States of America and the United States of Europe, independent of one another but closely linked in all fields. This can be and must be.

I come now to the point which is important to you: that of defense. How do you expect the United States of Europe to exist if defense is not included in its sovereign rights? Mind you, we were very pleased to see the United States take in hand both our foreign affairs and our defense immediately after World War II because Europe at that time was, politically and literally speaking, nonexistent. We can thank the Lord that you were there with your power and your might, and that you could take care of saving the free world. But now, thanks to your encouragement, Europe is becoming stronger, better organized, and wants to have its fate in its own hands. We must organize a system by which we share in the decision-making—a system by which we have our own defense in close cooperation with yours in all fields. But we must have all the elements of our personality. To those who say that we might become a Third Force which would float halfway between Washington and Moscow, I will answer that we have the same origins in Greece and Rome, in Christianity, in democracy. We have been through the same ordeals together; we are in the same boat. We have the same things to fear, the same things to hope

for, and it is nonsense to believe that a United Europe would be anti-American. Europe wants to be Europe; that is the only problem.

In the field of defense, how does this work? I would like to say first of all that we make a greater effort than people usually think. We are accused of not doing much, yet France gives 21% of its national budget and 7.2% of its gross national product for defense purposes. This puts us, by the way, second only to the United States. We are difficult at times in the framework of NATO because we want it to remain an alliance and not to become an integrating agency in which the personalities of European nations now, or that of Europe later, would be watered down. Integration is only possible among equals. There is, and please forgive me, someone who said that the alliance of the horse and of the man is a noble alliance providing you are the man. And we don't want to be the horse. We think that first of all we must build that equality; we must build your European equal partner. Let Europe become the United States of Europe, and then I think that we will be able to have the partnership which you suggest. Psychologically speaking, I am sure that you understand that if you try to build a partnership between the huge United States and each of the individual European countries, all the human reactions and the complexes will remain, and you will not build something genuinely strong, balanced and lasting.

Also, in the field of defense, I want to discuss the M.L.F. Why do we want to have our own deterrent? First, we want it because precisely we think that as long as 'Europe' does not exist we must retain responsibilities for the defense of our country. At a time when there are nuclear weapons we cannot see why we should be deprived of them if we can make them. Why should we be condemned to fight with bows and arrows if others have modern weaponry? Secondly, we want to see atomic weapons in the hands of Europeans. How would our American friends feel if their security depended essentially upon a nuclear force stationed in Europe and in European hands only? Your pride would suffer and you wouldn't feel 100% sure of always being protected at the time you want and as much as you want. The third reason is that, quite frankly, we fear the notion of 'flexible response' because it has never been precisely defined to us. I can see why you have introduced this notion. You want to avoid a worldwide nuclear war. We understand and respect that idea, but it is easy to have it when you are here in the United States. We are 150 miles away from the Russians and we fear that with the 'flexible response'

strategy you will first resort to so-called classical means of defense, and you will only decide to escalate to atomic weapons too late for us, at a time when we will be already swimming in the Atlantic Ocean. We don't have much time and much back-ground; that is our problem. All these reasons make us very desirous to have our own modern means of defense. You might ask me: 'Do you not believe in President Kennedy, in President Johnson, and in the American people who promised nuclear protection to the Europeans?' We believe in this promise for two reasons. The first is that we do not think it would be in the interest of the United States to see all Europe in the hands of the Russians; the second reason is we believe that when the Americans promise something they keep their promise. But the important thing is whether the Russians believe in it, and we have reasons to think that they are not 100% sure that you will risk your national life, your cities, and your industries, to defend this or that country of Europe. On the other hand, they know very well that however small our national deterrent may be, we will use it if they threaten us; it has a psychological effect of deterrence; it gives us the respect of our potential enemies and that is all we want. We do not particularly want to use our bombs.

Today the United States tells the Europeans that since they want to have atomic power, the best solution would be a 'Multilateral Force.' Why are the French not interested in this proposition? First of all, we are not the only ones to be rather reserved about the MLF. It is true that the British seem interested, but only to a certain extent, and that the Germans are quite in favor of the plan because the MLF would put their finger as close as possible to the atomic button. Because of the commitments they made in 1954 they are not allowed to manufacture atomic weaponry, but this multilateral force would give them an opportunity to play a part in that field. Everybody does not agree on the MLF. In England a representative of the Labor Party, Lord Kenneth, said on the 21st of November, 'A plan which is a matter of concern to our friends, and which hardens our enemies at a time when we are trying to ease East-West relations, is obviously absurd. This plan has already stalled the disarmament negotiations in Geneva; it has widened the gap between the United States and France; and it seems that it might destroy one of the most gratifying hopes of postwar Europe, namely, reconciliation between France and Germany. One thing is sure and that is that the plan for the MLF has weakened NATO more than the Russians could even dream of doing.' This is an English point of view. Then you will find that the Italians have been very cautious and have not

committed themselves. Monsieur Spaak has not been too favorable to the idea in Belgium. General Couzy, a Dutch general, at a recent meeting of NATO said: 'The setting-up of a nuclear force to which the United States would only participate with 5% of its national nuclear power, would add practically nothing to the military power of the allies, and would certainly not be a contribution to the political unity of the Alliance.' Then you find people such as Mr. Manlio Brosio, the Secretary General of NATO, who also says that the MLF can only exist if it is incorporated into NATO politically and militarily, and that this could only be done by a unanimous decision of NATO (which, I think, would be for the time being very difficult to obtain). Even your press, which seems to be generally very much in favor of the MLF, gives a number of letters from the readers who are against the plan and this is important because these people really represent public opinion. I have read some of them which are very concerned with the whole idea. We do not think that MLF is very realistic, and we think that it is a danger for the future unity of Europe. If some European countries are committed elsewhere, how do you expect these countries to be one day a part of a European defense organization? They cannot serve two masters at a time.

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I would like to finish by saying that we seem to have considerable problems at times because of the gross exaggeration by a press which sells more newspapers with big oversensational headlines than it does with plain truth. Our relations seem to be stressed and difficult and sometimes desperate. Someone in the 18th century, I think it was La Rochefoucauld, said that things are never quite so good or quite as bad as they look. This is true. I was mentioning President Kennedy. When he died we had to work for a month and a half in the French Embassy, translating and transmitting thousands of letters we got for Mrs. Kennedy or for your government from schools, colleges, and very humble citizens—the most extraordinary reaction. I remember the case of a young couple in Grenoble who decided to call their firstborn John Fitzgerald. They had never come to the United States; they knew nothing about the United States, and it was only a few days after President Kennedy was murdered. I was in France on my vacation this summer and in my small town of Tuffé, 120 miles west of Paris, on the 4th of July there was a French and an American flag on the Town Hall. I can tell you that no one gave them instructions. They just decided to do it. You will find a lot of that. What is important is that we have been your first friends and are very proud of being your first allies. We have never been

at war and I can't see how that could ever happen. We helped you a lot in your war for independence. We gave the equivalent of about three yearly budgets of the time at the end of our royal period, and we were glad to do it. You have repaid us thousands of times since in World Wars I and II and with the Marshall aid. We share the same problems. Every time the chips are really down—whether it be the Cuban situation in October 1962, (when De Gaulle was the first Head of State to tell President Kennedy that he had done the only thing he could do) or whether it was last year when the Russians gave so much lip service to so-called 'peaceful coexistence' talk, (and had been menacing your military convoys on the road to Berlin) our solidarity was there in spite of our family quarrels and discussions. This is true and always will be, and as I end I wish to repeat a few words made by your former President only months before he died: 'I sometimes think that we are too much impressed by the clamor of daily events. It is the profound tendency of history and not the passing excitement that will shape our future.' I am sure that this is true and certainly true of our relationship.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Mr. Gerard de la Villesbrunne

PRESENT POSITION: Counselor of Embassy, French Embassy,
Washington, D.C.

EDUCATION:

Law degree at the University of Paris
Graduate of the Institute of Political Science of Paris

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

1939-40 Joined the French Forces at the declaration of war
1944-45 Served in the 'Free French Forces'
1945 Entered the diplomatic service
1945-47 Worked with the French section of the quadripartite
Allied Council in Austria
1947-51 Secretary of Embassy at the French Legation in Vienna
1951-53 Officer, East European Desk, Ministry of Foreign
Affairs in Paris
1953-56 Member, French Embassy in Rio de Janeiro
1956 Charge d'Affaires of French Embassy in Managua
1956-57 Officer, Desk for Far Eastern Affairs, the Ministry
of Foreign Affairs in Paris
1959-61 Special Assistant on General de Gaulle's staff
Mar '61 Counselor, French Embassy in Washington

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Croix de Guerre, Legion of Honor, French Society of the
Cincinnati.