A THING OR TWO

Reynolds' Stinkbomb

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I hope Gen. de Gaulle will not take too seriously the stinkbomb set off by Sen. Reynolds of North Carolina to celebrate his arrival.

Sen. Reynolds suggests that we demand military bases in the French colonial empire. He implies that the grant of bases would clear the way for recognition of the French National Committee.

This may at first glance seem to confirm the murmurings of Axis propaganda, which has been telling the French that we have designs upon their empire. Reynolds does not confirm Axis propaganda. He merely has the habit of coinciding with it.

Before Pearl Harbor, the gentleman from North Carolina also had the knack of coming up with the right line at the right time when it was calculated to cause the most trouble for the anti-Axis forces.

Gen. de Gaulle will understand from France's own unhappy experience that here, too, seniority often takes precedence over sense. This explains how it happened that a man of Reynolds' outlook and sympathies, publisher of an anti-Semitic and pro-fascist sheet before Pearl Harbor, was allowed to continue serving as chairman of the key Senate Military Affairs Committee.

The answer to those who might like to blackmail bases from de Gaulle is an easy one: If de Gaulle and the French National Committee are not sufficiently representative of the French people to be accorded recognition as a provisional government, how can they be representative enough to negotiate any grant of postwar bases to the United States?

Gen. de Gaulle may rest assured that American public opinion, which supported him against Darlan, Giraud, Peyrouton, Pucheu and other State Dept. and White House washouts, will also support him against any Leahys or brass hats who would like to take advantage of French distress to obtain bases.

It may be that the French people when they have reconstituted the Republic, will feel it to their advantage to make such grants as a measure of protection for themselves as well as for the U. S. A. Such grants will be of value to us only if freely given.

In any case the events of the past few years have shown that a country's security depends on world organization for peace rather than on bases. The U. S. A., Britain, Holland and France had a chain of the world's greatest bases in the Far East — all of them advertised as "impregnable" — and the bases went down like ninepins before the Japanese. Not more bases but collective action at the very beginning, when the invasion of Manchuria began, was the key to our security.

So in welcoming Gen. Charles de Gaulle to Washington, in paying homage to one of the great heroes and one of the great Frenchmen of our time, I think we can assure him that American public opinion does not expect him to barter the French Empire to win our good will. He has it already. He earned it.—I. F. STONE