POST

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST APRIL 6 · 1963 20c

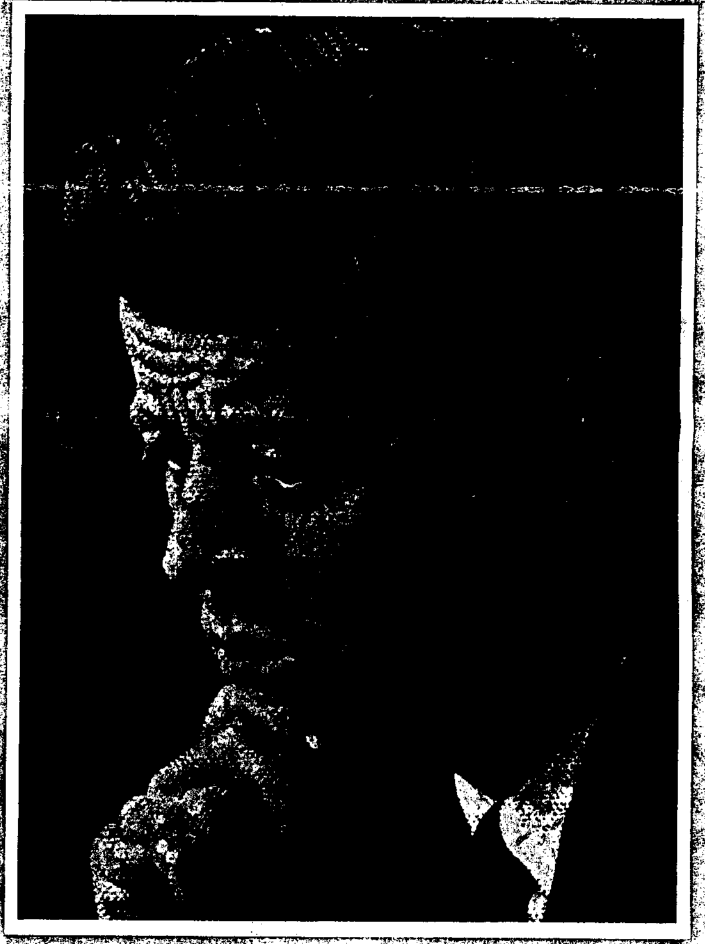
Easter Bonnets
The mad hatters who make them

Canadian Elections
Will anti-Americanism triumph?

A WORRIED PRESIDENT:

THE CRISIS IN HIS FOREIGN POLICY

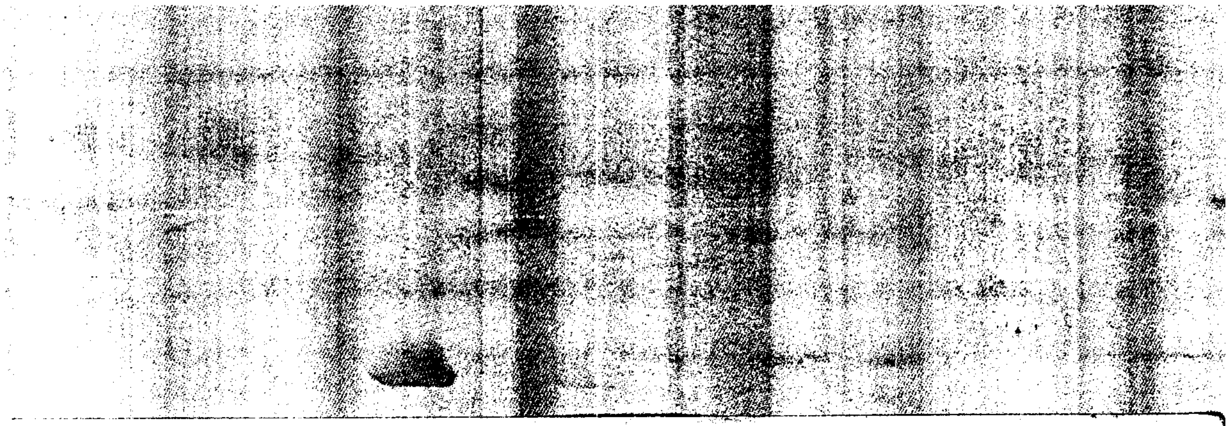
BY STEWART ALSOP



PAINTING BY NORMAN ROCKWELL

THE BOXING MESS by ex-promoter Bill Fugazy / **DOROTHY LOUDON** the new Carol Burnett

10605SHAD3SKP033SEP 63
REV ARLYN D STEWART
10605 SHADY CIR
SILVER SPRING MD



The collapse of Kennedy's grand design

By STEWART ALSOP

"If you ask me whether this was the winter of our discontent I would say no. If you would ask me whether we were quite as well this winter as we perhaps were doing in the fall, I might say no."

This oddly phrased remark by President Kennedy at a recent press conference is a vast understatement. The contrast between the winter Kennedy and the fall Kennedy is, in fact, a most remarkable contrast. Last October, after he had forced Nikita Khrushchev to blink in their famous confrontation, Kennedy was riding high—about as high as any President in recent memory. And now look at him.

Trouble with Canada, our oldest friend. Turmoil in the Middle East. The Vietnam war going badly. Unemployment high. The Kennedy tax program bogged down on Capitol Hill. Irony of ironies, the Republicans beating him over the head with Cuba, where less than six months ago Kennedy seemed to have scored the greatest triumph of his career.

And de Gaulle. Above all Charles de Gaulle. For Charles de Gaulle has kicked the liver and lights out of President Kennedy's famous Grand Design.

The "de Gaulle crisis," which is still going on, and may go on for years, is less dramatic than last October's two-week Cuban crisis. It has involved no U-2 overflights, no midnight calls to a sleeping President, no mobilization of the Strategic Air Force, no hawks, no doves—and if anyone has blinked, it has been John F. Kennedy. But although it has been less dramatic, the de Gaulle crisis could turn out in the long run to be more difficult and even, conceivably, more dangerous than the great October confrontation.

As Walter Lippmann has written, de Gaulle has "struck a blow at the foundations" of American defense and foreign policy. In fact, he has struck not one blow but several.

The Grand Design was in two parts. The politico-economic part was largely inspired by France's Jean Monnet. Its chief American sponsors were Undersecretary of State George Ball and White House security adviser McGeorge Bundy, both personal friends and passionate admirers of the brilliant Monnet. This portion of the Grand Design can be summarized in three sentences. First, the British would join the Common Market. This would lead to a "United Europe," including Britain, united politically as well as economically. The United States would in turn form with United Europe what the President in more hopeful days called a "concrete Atlantic partnership."

De Gaulle has said *non* to the British in the Common Market. He has said an equally loud *non* to the Atlantic partnership—"a colossal Atlantic community, under American leadership . . . not at all what France has wanted."

The military-strategic portion of the Grand Design was the brainchild of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and his "whiz kids" in the Pentagon. It can also be summarized in three sentences. The United States would contribute to the Atlantic partnership a "centrally controlled" atomic deterrent—meaning controlled by the United States. Meanwhile the Europeans would bring NATO's strength up to 30 divisions, to provide the "conventional option." Thus the West could resist a limited Soviet attack without resorting to the weapons which might destroy the United States as well as the Soviet Union.

De Gaulle has said *non* to the "centrally controlled deterrent." He will build his own nuclear force—his beloved *force de frappe*. And he has said *non* to the "conventional option." He has committed just two underequipped divisions to NATO. Without a serious French contribution, a 30-division NATO is not in the cards.

In short, de Gaulle has said a wintry *non* to the whole Grand Design. So where do we go from here?

This reporter has asked that question of just about all the President's chief foreign and defense advisers. The simplest way to summarize their answers would be in two words: "God knows."

That is a bit too simple, but not much too simple. The mood of Kennedy's Washington today is a puzzled, frustrated and, below the bland surface, angry mood. To understand the frustration, it is only necessary to list the successive reactions to de Gaulle's series of *nons*.

The President's first reaction was typically Kennedy: "That's what *he* thinks." The President, in short, was just plain angry. His second and wiser reaction was to give time for tempers, including his own, to cool, and to adopt an Administration line playing down the real significance of de Gaulle's "blow at the foundations." Thus George Ball is responsible for the complacent statement that talk of "disarray" in the alliance is a "journalistic" invention. The President's third reaction belies this complacency.

His third reaction was to order a root-and-branch reexamination of all the basic premises of American defense and foreign policy—an "agonizing reappraisal," although the tactless phrase invented by John Foster Dulles is studiously avoided. To this end, the chief American ambassadors in Europe (except Ambassador to France Charles Bohlen, who was ill) were called to Washington, and such elder statesmen as former Secretaries of State Dean Acheson and Christian Herter were recruited for consultation. But most of the agonizing has been done by the same men to whom Kennedy turned in the October crisis. The leading agonizers have been Secretary of State Dean Rusk; Secretary McNamara; Bundy; Ball; Walt Whitman Rostow, the State Department's chief policy planner, and Paul Nitze, Rostow's counterpart in the Pentagon.

The agonizing is still in progress as this is written. The first result of the agonizing was a simple, if depressing, conclusion. There is no way on earth to change de Gaulle's *nons* into *ouis*. Indeed, there is not even any way to argue sensibly with de Gaulle, either at first or second hand.

"De Gaulle is the most goddam undeal-able-with human being that's ever existed," says one agonized reappraiser, echoing the wartime sentiments of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. "There's no way to get *to* him."

The usual way for one chief of state to "get to" another chief of state is, of course, through the subordinates of each. In a crisis the two may communicate directly, as in the famous, still-secret exchanges between Kennedy and Khrushchev during the October crisis. There have been no similar exchanges between Kennedy and de Gaulle.

Communication between subordinates has been almost totally fruitless, simply because de Gaulle does not consult subordinates. "I'm as sure as I'm sitting here," says one Administration leader, "that Couve de Murville [French foreign minister] had no more advance notice of what de Gaulle would say than I did. That's one of the things that make him so hard to deal with—we know more about Khrushchev's plans and purposes than about de Gaulle's."

This communications vacuum has been filled, inevitably, by secondhand rumors and reports. Paris is like a sieve, and de Gaulle, when in the mood, talks with hair-raising candor. "If you are rude enough to the Americans," he is supposed to have said after his famous press conference in January, "they will soon come to you hat in hand." This purported remark reached the White House, where it cooled no tempers. "If de Gaulle thinks that," said one White House adviser, "he knows nothing about John F. Kennedy."

All sorts of other odd reports reached Washington—for example, that de Gaulle had been convinced by his advisers that the firing mechanisms of the Polaris missiles were controlled by electronic "rays" from the Pentagon, and that Kennedy's offer of Polaris submarines to France was therefore a trap.

More-serious reports were also received. There were intelligence reports on de Gaulle's conversations with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, in which de Gaulle was pictured as warning Adenauer that the United States was about to make a deal with Russia on Berlin and East Germany, preparatory to a total withdrawal from the Continent. There were parallel reports picturing de Gaulle as himself dickering for just such a deal with Khrushchev.

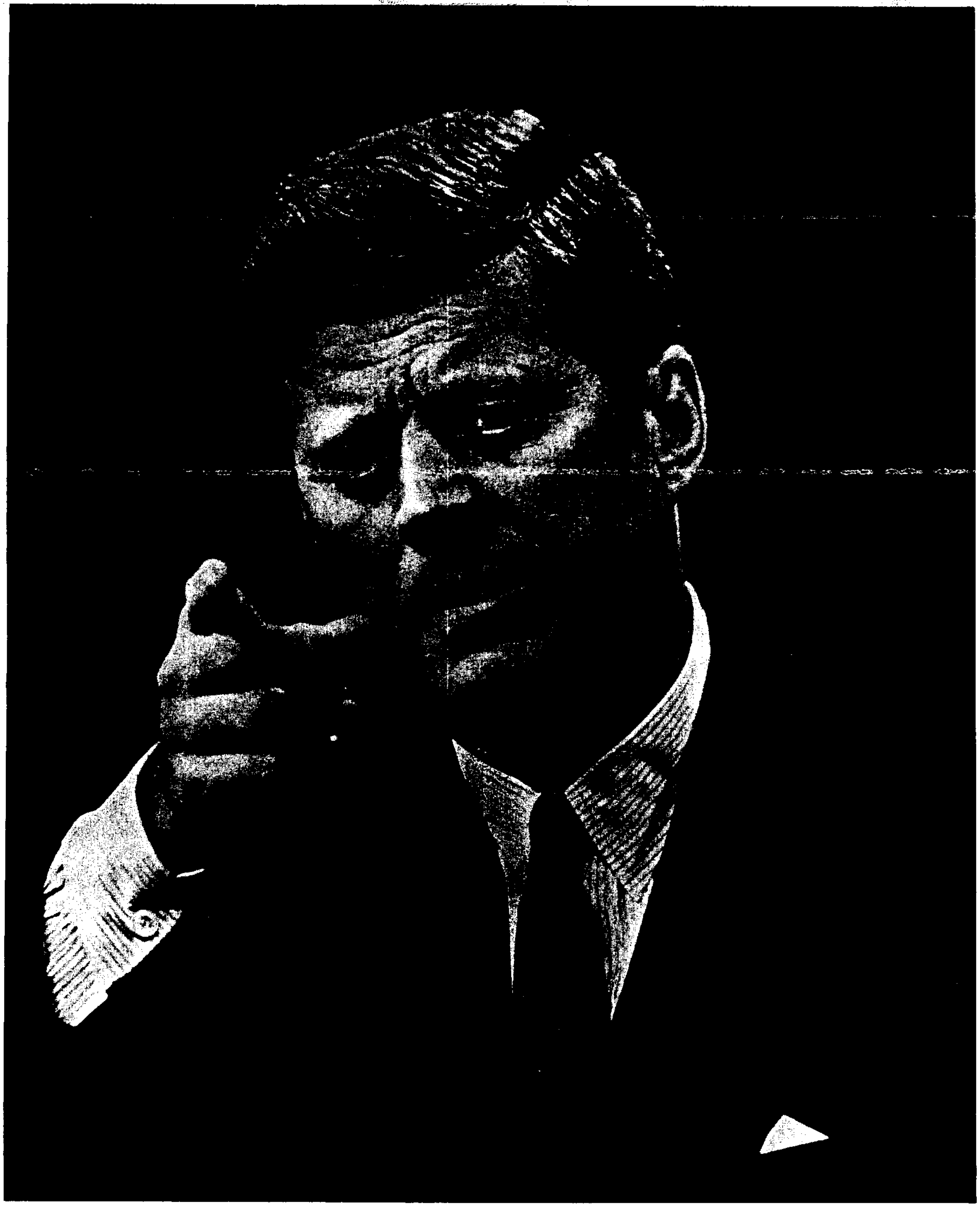
The vacuum of sensible communication between Paris and Washington has been one reason for Washington's mood of frustration. The peculiar strength of de Gaulle's position has been another. As the agonizing reappraisal continued, the strength of de Gaulle's position became more and more evident. "He wants nothing from us," says one of the agonizers, "and there's nothing we can do that will really hurt him."

All sorts of counterslaps for de Gaulle's slap in the face have been considered by the reapparaisers. For example, the Pentagon has agreed to supply de Gaulle's *force de frappe* with jet refueling planes. The agreement could be cancelled, thus cutting the range of the *force de frappe*. The French mission in Washington nervously expected the Pentagon to do just that. But the reappraisers concluded it would be a futile pinprick.

More-serious consideration was given to finding some way to rearrange the command and logistic structure of NATO to bypass France. But aside from being impractical, this would not even hurt de Gaulle's feelings. De Gaulle, as President Kennedy has remarked, "does not much admire NATO anyway."

Consideration was also given to making some sort of special exclusive economic and political deal between the United States, Great Britain and the Commonwealth—"*les Anglo-Saxons*" in de Gaulle's phrase—and threatening de Gaulle with economic reprisals. At the same time, de Gaulle's five Common Market partners, who bitterly opposed his veto of Britain, could be encouraged to threaten de Gaulle with the breakup of the Common Market.

But such measures were, in the British phrase, "just not on." With $3.75 billion in gold and dollar reserves safely tucked away in the Bank of France, de Gaulle can make a lot more economic trouble for "*les Anglo-Saxons*" than the other way around. De Gaulle is convinced that the French economic boom is far more



The President's first reaction to de Gaulle's announcement was typically Kennedy—"That's what he *thinks." But then began the "agonizing reappraisal."*

Should we pull out of Europe?

attributable to France and de Gaulle than to the Common Market. Any threat to break up the Common Market would scare his partners far more than de Gaulle.

Thus de Gaulle has the lofty power of indifference. "Words will never hurt him," said one reappraiser, "and we have no sticks and stones to break his bones." There is, to be sure, one foreign tie that de Gaulle does care about, and that is his carefully nurtured "special relationship" with Chancellor Adenauer's Germany.

That relationship was advertised to the world only a few days after de Gaulle's famous press conference, when Adenauer traveled to Paris to sign the German-French treaty of cooperation, amid much pageantry and bussing of cheeks. Nothing, not even the press conference itself, angered Kennedy more than this display of German support for de Gaulle so soon after his slap in the face for "*les Anglo-Saxons*." In early February Kennedy called German Ambassador Karl Heinrich Knappstein to the White House. The interview, according to German sources, was "terse." It was that and more.

When de Gaulle had proposed an American-British-French "directory" of NATO, Kennedy said, he had turned him down largely on the grounds that de Gaulle's proposal excluded the Germans. Was this the sort of support he could expect in return from the Germans?

Knappstein anxiously explained that the date for the treaty signing had been set weeks in advance and that there was really nothing the Germans could have done about it. This was true—that wily old bird, Adenauer, had been trapped by that wilier old bird, de Gaulle, into appearing a fellow nay-sayer. And the fact is that there is really nothing much the Germans—whether Adenauer or his successors—can do about de Gaulle.

Certain Kennedy advisers are fond of saying that "the Germans know where the real power lies—if they are forced to choose between de Gaulle and Kennedy, they will choose Kennedy." This sounds sensible. But it has a fatal flaw. The flaw lies in the "if." The last thing the Germans want is to be forced to "choose between de Gaulle and Kennedy." And how do you force them to choose?

There is one way. That is by threatening to adopt a "Fortress America" policy—a return to American isolationism, a withdrawal of the American commitment to defend Europe. It is no use making this kind of threat unless you mean to follow through on it.

De Gaulle is perfectly confident that Kennedy cannot and will not make this threat. In February, at a reception for the French National Assembly, de Gaulle remarked complacently: "There will not be a world war, I can assure you that. Under these circumstances the future of our country is assured."

Why will there "not be a world war"? Because, as de Gaulle has also said, the American nuclear deterrent is "the essential guarantee of world peace." The nuclear deterrent, mind you, not the NATO army, or the 400,000 American troops in Europe. De Gaulle agrees with President Eisenhower's dictum that anyone who would fight a nonnuclear war in Europe "ought to have his head examined." At the same time he is convinced that "there will not be a world war" as long as the American nuclear force is committed to Europe's defense. He is equally convinced that the Kennedy Administration cannot and will not withdraw the commitment. And of course he is right.

Some future American President, de Gaulle warns the Europeans, might refuse to honor the commitment, because of the "new and gigantic fact" that "the Soviets have also acquired a nuclear arsenal, and that arsenal is powerful enough to endanger the very life of America." This fact is the primary justification for de Gaulle's *force de frappe*.

Any reporter can go to the Pentagon and get a convincing briefing to prove that the *force de frappe* is just what Secretary McNamara says it is: "Dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence and lacking in credibility as a deterrent." But this misses the point. The point is that de Gaulle's nuclear force has an essentially political, not a military, purpose. It is to be "a finger on the American trigger." It is designed to give de Gaulle the power to influence the "Go-No Go" decision—whether or not to "go nuclear." Without nuclear weapons of his own, de Gaulle would lack that power.

De Gaulle, in short, has played a judo trick on the United States, judo being defined in the dictionary as a "method of offense and defense which employs the weight and strength of the opponent to his disadvantage." De Gaulle means to fashion his "European construction," based on the *force de frappe* and the Franco-German axis, led by France and thus by de Gaulle and excluding the British and Americans. And he means to do this *under the umbrella of the American nuclear deterrent.*

The more the reappraisers agonized, the more apparent it became that there is precious little the Kennedy Administration can do about de Gaulle's judo trick—short of removing its nuclear protection. And this has not even been seriously considered. It is not pleasant to be the victim of a judo trick. It is a wonder that the entire top level of the Kennedy Administration has not developed galloping ulcers.

"We're a bit like that little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike," says one Kennedy adviser. Remove the finger from the dike, and the Dutch boy drowns along with everybody else. Remove the American commitment to defend Europe, and the result is unmitigated disaster, not only to Europe but to the United States. Thus the United States, like the little Dutch boy, is immobilized. The strongest power in the Western alliance has amazingly little bargaining power in the alliance.

In this situation there is really no way on earth to put the Humpty-Dumpty of the Kennedy Grand Design back on the wall. This is the basic, if unacknowledged, conclusion which has resulted from all the agonizing. The conclusion echoes the remark of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan: "I do not believe there is a simple alternative, in the sense of a ready-made plan." What the Kennedy planners have come up with, instead of a ready-made plan, is a holding operation, designed to prevent a bad situation from becoming worse.

The two chief field captains in the holding operation are former Secretary of State Christian Herter and Special Ambassador Livingston Merchant. As the President's European trade representative, Herter will try to prevent the Common Market from turning into the narrowly exclusive continental system that de Gaulle envisages. It is a difficult task, but not impossible, for two reasons.

De Gaulle can veto mutual tariff reductions, but he cannot increase Common Market tariffs, and even his veto power ends on January 1, 1966, when the Common Market rule of unanimity gives way to a system of weighted voting. Moreover, de Gaulle's Common Market partners do not want the kind of narrow "European construction" that de Gaulle wants. So although the dream of an economic Atlantic partnership has gone glimmering, Herter may be able to prevent the adoption of a Common Market economic policy of "Europe for the Europeans—no Americans need apply." But even this is by no means certain.

The sight of the gallows

Merchant's job is in some ways more difficult than Herter's. His job is to sell France's European partners, and above all the Germans, on a "multilateral" nuclear force. The idea for such a force was born in the Eisenhower Administration, but de Gaulle's "blow at the foundations" has lent it special urgency. As one Kennedy planner says, quoting Samuel Johnson: "The sight of the gallows concentrates the mind wonderfully."

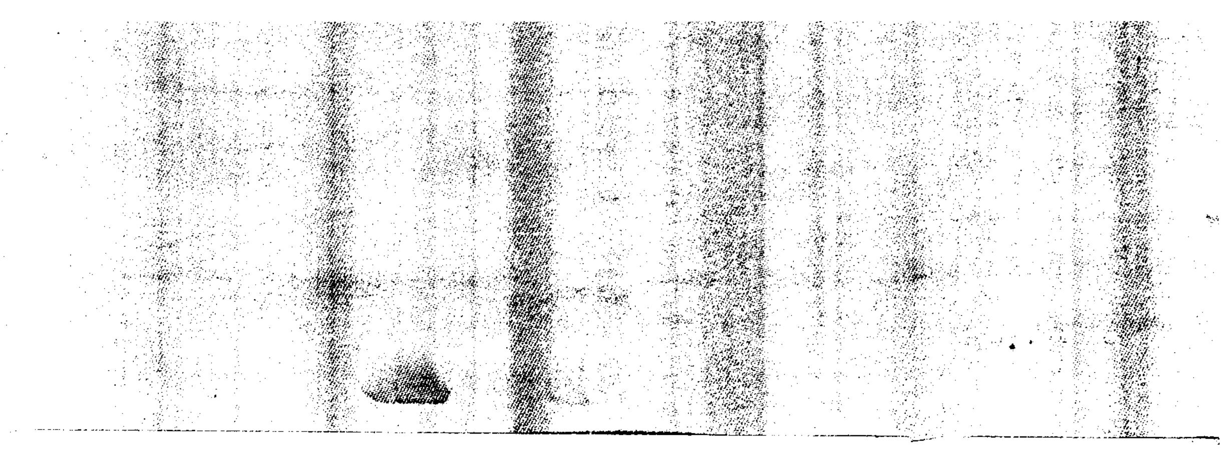
Merchant's essential purpose is to exorcise a nightmare—the gallowslike nightmare of some future German chancellor's demanding his own equivalent of de Gaulle's *force de frappe*. In Vienna in 1961 Khrushchev flatly warned Kennedy that he would regard it as a *casus belli* if the Germans were permitted their own nuclear weapons. For that matter, the thought of a German *force de frappe* is a nightmare on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Yet the reasoning that led the British and the French to develop their own nuclear system is, after all, at least as valid for the Germans.

The multilateral force is designed to offer the Germans an alternative. In its present form it is chiefly the brainchild of State Department planner Walt Rostow. The original Rostow plan called for eight Polaris atomic submarines under NATO command, with mixed international crews. But this idea turned out to be hideously expensive. Moreover, it would disclose certain closely held American atomic secrets. So the proposal Merchant took with him to Europe calls instead for a 25-ship surface fleet armed with 200 Polaris missiles.

Even this would cost the United States and the other NATO countries upward of five billion dollars, which is one reason why the Europeans have responded tepidly to Merchant's overtures. But the chief reason is that the multilateral force isn't really multilateral. Barring a revision of the McMahon Act, which would require a revolution of attitudes in the U.S. Congress, the President of the United States would still control any firing of the missiles. This is why the French sneer at the "multilateral force" as a "multilateral farce." It is why, although the Germans have expressed polite interest, Merchant's job may be even more difficult than Herter's.

For Merchant is grappling with that "new and gigantic fact" which was never fully faced until de Gaulle made it impossible to ignore. The fact that the Russians have the power to "endanger the very life of America" has caused a creeping malaise throughout Europe. The malaise can be put in the form of a question: Would the United States really risk the destruction of its major cities in order to defend Europe? President Kennedy has suggested that this question impugns the honor of the United States. But put yourself in a European's skin, and it is easy to see why it is asked. And yet, as Secretary McNamara has said, "there is no substitute" for the American nuclear force—and the Senate is profoundly unlikely to place any portion of that force under European control.

Kennedy's reappraisers include, left to



If there is any way out of this dilemma, President Kennedy and his reappraisers have not found it. Meanwhile, there is another unpleasant question which de Gaulle's series of *nons* has forced the Kennedy planners to face. If de Gaulle and the other Europeans do not believe in the "conventional option," how long are we going to keep 400,000 American troops in Europe? Is it any use, after all, to build a bridge halfway across a river?

Those 400,000 troops account for a large part of the U.S. deficit in its international balance of payments. As McNamara is fond of pointing out, the United States has twice as many men in uniform per thousand of population as Germany, which is on the Cold War's front line. The Germans, in turn, contribute more than twice as many divisions to NATO as the French and British combined. Both in public and in private Kennedy has been hinting that, if the Europeans do not think our troops are needed, he would be delighted to withdraw them.

Kennedy's planners have given serious consideration to an immediate, sharp reduction in our troop strength as a quick answer to de Gaulle. But this answer was rejected, for the time being, partly in order to deprive de Gaulle of the pleasure of saying "I told you so." After Adenauer retires, presumably in the autumn, the tentative decision not to reduce our Army in Europe will certainly be reviewed. "Sooner or later," says one Kennedy adviser, "either the Europeans come up or we go down." Another says: "The Europeans must be disabused of the notion that we're going to maintain 400,000 American soldiers in Europe no matter what. The ground defense of Europe is primarily a job for the Europeans."

Thus the Kennedy Administration's response to de Gaulle's shattering of the Grand Design comes down to this: First, an attempt to hold the line via the Herter and Merchant missions. Second, a decision to put off for some months a final decision on the central question of the American troop commitment in Europe.

These results of the agonizing reappraisal seem rather small mice for the laboring mountain to bring forth. But as one Kennedy adviser remarked: "If you've got a better policy, you name it." Another high foreign-policy official says: "We regard de Gaulle as a boulder in the stream of history. The stream will part and flow around him."

The chance for optimism

Perhaps, in the long run, this hopeful view will prove correct. For it is true that the rest of Europe is not wildly enthusiastic about the de Gaulle plan for a "Little Europe" dominated by France and Charles de Gaulle. But for the time being de Gaulle looks more like a large, well-constructed dam than a mere boulder.

Meanwhile, the sky has not fallen in. As the Kennedy advisers are fond of pointing out, de Gaulle has not changed the *existing* situation—he has only shattered the Kennedy dreams for the future. The Western alliance still exists, and the United States remains incomparably the strongest power in that alliance. It may even turn out in the end that de Gaulle has done the Kennedy Administration, and with it the United States, a favor.

De Gaulle's haughty *non* has served as a painful reminder that times have changed. And times *have* changed, since the Marshall Plan days a decade ago, when French premiers used to trot around to the American Embassy to ask Ambassador David Bruce what to do next. The Kennedy Administration, in its zeal and "vigah," has rather often acted as though times had not changed.

For one example, the Europeans were infuriated when Kennedy named Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer to succeed Gen. Lauris Norstad as commander of NATO with a bare formal minimum of consultation with the European members of NATO. For another example, there was the Polaris-for-Skybolt deal with the British at Nassau, just before the de Gaulle press conference. The deal was, on technical grounds, a very good one for the British. But because of the way it was done, in the manner of throwing a fish to a seal, it was made to seem a very bad deal. In European eyes the Americans were telling the British what weapons they could have to defend their country.

"We've got to learn to relax about the Europeans," says one Kennedy adviser. "We've got to stop fussing over them like an anxious parent. A lot of these problems are primarily European problems—including the de Gaulle problem."

But it will not be enough simply to "relax about the Europeans." The fact is that Kennedy's Washington faces a test which Washington, unlike other world capitals, has never faced before.

In the isolationist period before the Second World War, the United States, despite occasional and often clumsy interventions, was essentially an interested bystander on the world scene. In the years immediately after the war, the power of the United States was such that what we said went. Now we have suddenly discovered, galling as it must be to a Kennedy, that "what *he* says"—what Charles de Gaulle says—goes.

De Gaulle has demonstrated once and for all that what British commentator D. W. Brogan once called the "Illusion of American Omnipotence" is indeed an illusion. This in turn has led to what Brogan describes today as a "crisis in American leadership." To meet that crisis calls for as difficult, as dangerous and as delicate an exercise in the arts of diplomacy as has ever faced any American Administration.

For the United States is now in the unhappy position of a famous beauty who has outlived her loveliness. Accustomed to being wooed and flattered, she sees her once passionate admirers begin to stifle yawns in her presence, or even to forget to show up for those intimate tête-á-têtes for which they once clamored. This sort of thing comes as a shock to a former beauty, just as it comes as a shock to this country to find that it is no longer omnipotent. But such shocks can be healthy when they lead to the facing of facts.

Winston Churchill once asked a question of this reporter: "Will America stay the course?" Despite Charles de Gaulle, that is still the key question; for although the United States is not omnipotent, the power of the United States remains the keystone in freedom's arch. If John F. Kennedy has his way, the answer to Churchill's question will continue to be "yes." But it will not be an easy course to stay. THE END

right, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Secretaries McNamara and Rusk, and Under Secretary Ball. "If you've got a better policy," remarked one official, "you name it."