

Ike's Rebuff Of de Gaulle In '58 Bared

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A bit of history was put on the public record yesterday but it will probably serve less the cause of enlightenment than further to exacerbate French-American relations.

The State Department released to a Senate subcommittee the text of a 1958 letter from President Eisenhower that in effect rejected President de Gaulle's call for an American-French British directorate to take joint decisions on global problems.

Neither the de Gaulle letter nor the Eisenhower response had been printed in full, but their substance long ago became well known. The de Gaulle letter remains classified in both Paris and Washington.

Along with the Eisenhower text, the State Department sent Sen. Henry M. Jackson's national security subcommittee a summary of events of that period in French-American relations.

The subcommittee, in the course of recent hearing on the North Atlantic Alliance, had requested the text.

As State explained it, de Gaulle told Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in Paris on July 5, 1958, just after the General had returned to power, that France "intended to become a nuclear power." The French nuclear program had begun under the Fourth Republic, in fact.

De Gaulle "emphasized," said State, "that nuclear weapons could be located in France only under French control and disposition, could be used in accordance with NATO plans provided France had the same plans, and that this required an arrangement at the summit for French participation in planning for world security and armament. He said that the political functioning of NATO would be facilitated by

close cooperation at the summit between France, the United Kingdom and the United States."

De Gaulle on Sept. 17 wrote President Eisenhower "to indicate that NATO in its present form no longer met the needs of French security" and noted that France had world-wide responsibilities. The State Department said de Gaulle "therefore called for a tripartite organization on the level of world policy and strategy" to take joint decisions on political and strategic issues "notably with regard to the employment of nuclear weapons."

The General "thought it would also be possible to foresee and organize, among the three governments, eventual theaters of operation and subordinate theaters."

David Schoenbrun in his recent book, "The Three Lives of Charles de Gaulle," said the General's letter included the

statement that he could no longer justify delegating Free World defense decisions to the United States, adding: "It would be more realistic at this time to create a tripartite organization to take joint decisions on global problems."

State's memorandum does not mention Germany, but Schoenbrun states what was well known: the Dulles view that France was a continental power like Germany and not a world power like the United States and Britain. This concept de Gaulle then rejected and today still rejects, as indicated by the current NATO problem he has created in his search for a world-wide French great power role independent of the United States.

The Eisenhower reply on Oct. 20 reflected the Dulles view. The President replied that "our present procedures for organizing the defense of the Free World clearly require the willing cooperation of many other nations, both within and outside NATO. We cannot afford to adopt any system which would give to our other allies, or other Free World countries, the impression that basic decisions affecting their own vital interests are being made without their participation."

In short, the President rejected the de Gaulle directorate scheme without directly saying so. He also said he saw "very serious problems, both within and outside NATO, in any effort to amend" the NATO treaty "so as to extend coverage beyond the areas presently covered."

State's memorandum adds that Washington subsequently initiated tripartite discussion, both political and military, on African and Far East problems but that after a few sessions the French showed no further interest in this substitute procedure.

De Gaulle again raised the issue with the President when they met on June 10, 1960, and was again rebuffed, the State memorandum showed, in an Aug. 31 Eisenhower letter. President Kennedy raised the problem when he met de Gaulle on June 2, 1961, but the State Department said the French never designated a military representative to join in Kennedy-proposed studies of strategic commitments.