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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Paris, May 29, 1961

PARTICIPANTS: M. Maurice Schumann, MRP Deputy, President of
Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly

Mr. Theodore Sorensen, The White House
Wells Stabler, American Embassy

Mr. Sorensen called on M. Schumann in his office at the National Assembly. He said that in connection with President Kennedy's visit to Paris he would be grateful to have M. Schumann's views on the problems which are currently uppermost in terms of US - French relations.

M. Schumann discussed the following matters:

1. President's Meeting with Khrushchev

M. Schumann said that there was a feeling of some uneasiness in France over the President's forthcoming meeting with Khrushchev. There was an uneasiness that the United States might go ahead and negotiate with the Soviets outside the framework of essential Western unity. There was also some disappointment that the Paris visit had now become only a "milestone" on the way to Vienna. Schumann said that when he had recently seen de Gaulle (May 16 or 17), de Gaulle had shown him President Kennedy's letter of May 6 regarding the proposed meeting with Khrushchev and also his (de Gaulle's) reply. De Gaulle had not been enthusiastic about the Vienna meeting but at the same time there had been no trace of concern or disapproval on his part. The concern and uneasiness to which M. Schumann had alluded was a general public feeling. He hoped that something would be done to allay that feeling, since it could cast somewhat of a shadow over the visit. He suggested that the President place particular emphasis on "Western unity" in one of his first utterances in Paris, possibly the arrival statement. He thought that this emphasis could be used to good avail by various French commentators, including himself, to remove any lingering doubts about US views on Western unity in connection with the Vienna talks.

2. NATO and Nuclear Matters

M. Schumann reviewed at some length de Gaulle's attitude on

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-2-

NATO and nuclear questions. Some people believed that de Gaulle wanted the United States to leave Europe, but this was absolutely not so. De Gaulle wanted the United States to remain in Europe. However, he took the view that since the United States no longer had exclusivity in nuclear power, strategic direction of the Alliance should now become a collective responsibility. It was also necessary to expand the area where the spirit of the Alliance would be applicable. At the same time he recognized that the United States had a right to expect Europe to do more in terms of political unity, particularly in the defense field, and in terms of improving its forces. It was de Gaulle's view that the development by France of a nuclear capacity would contribute to the strengthening of Europe since in fact the French nuclear force would be Europe's weapon. France was determined to have a nuclear capacity and de Gaulle would let nothing interfere with the present course which had actually had its beginning under the Fourth Republic. M. Schumann said that the United States must do something with respect to sharing nuclear secrets with France. France had made "substantial progress" in the atomic field and thus had complied with that aspect of the MacMahon Law. He believed that the United States unnecessarily used the argument that if France was given nuclear secrets, eventually Germany would have to receive the same treatment. Germany was barred under the Paris Treaty from manufacturing atomic weapons and Adenauer had accepted the thesis of a French nuclear capacity. Consequently, this argument appeared to be used to support a decision not to share our secrets with France.

De Gaulle believed, as he had stated in his 1958 memorandum, that the US - UK and France should coordinate their positions and should reach agreement with regard to strategic matters. The risks attendant on nuclear warfare as well as the possession by France of a nuclear capacity entitled her to share in strategic decisions. If the United States would assist France in obtaining this capacity and would extend to her the same confidence as we extend to the UK, many of the problems presently relating to coordinated defense would fall into place. M. Schumann believed that France would offer no difficulty to an eventual association of Germany with the strategic directorate of the Alliance.

M. Schumann emphasized that General de Gaulle was not the sort of person who would make the request that we share our nuclear secrets. If we wished to make progress on this thorny issue, we should have to take the initiative ourselves.

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-3-

3. Berlin

M. Schumann said de Gaulle was much concerned about Berlin and the US position. De Gaulle was absolutely firm on Berlin and M. Schumann thought that de Gaulle's unyielding attitude on this question had been largely responsible for Khrushchev's eventual decision to scuttle the Summit Conference. De Gaulle had made clear to Khrushchev that there could be no detente without settlement of the German question, and that there could be no settlement of the Germany question without an arrangement of Berlin which was satisfactory to the West. If the West abandoned its position in Berlin, West Germany would lose confidence in NATO and this in turn would bring the Soviets to the Rhine. This the West did not wish and consequently, the West must do everything to protect its position in Berlin. De Gaulle would be most anxious to discuss the Berlin question fully with the President, particularly in light of the forthcoming Vienna meeting.

4. Algerian Insurrection

M. Schumann briefly discussed allegations concerning CIA involvement in the Algerian insurrection. He thought that the President's message to de Gaulle had been very good and had been appreciated. Obviously de Gaulle had refused the subsequent offer of assistance, but M. Schumann did not believe there had been any resentment or bitterness over this offer. M. Schumann recalled that the Foreign Minister had made a statement before the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Assembly and had identified the rumors regarding CIA involvement as coming from Soviet sources. The incident was closed.

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