

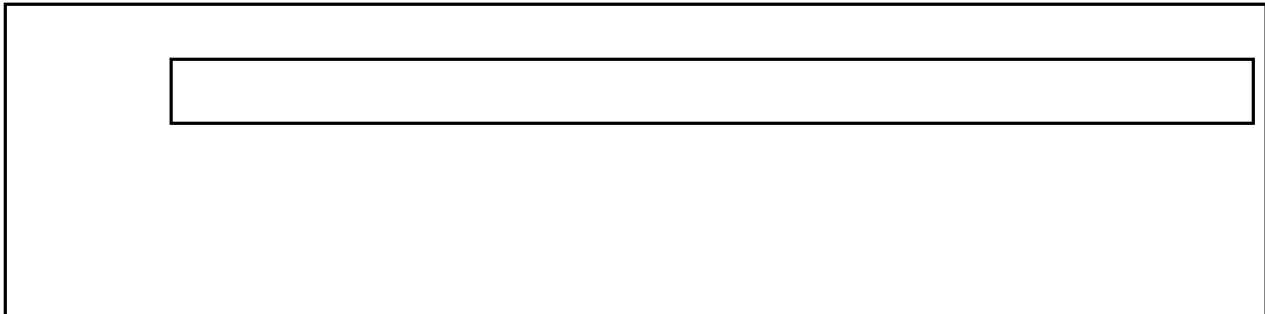
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22 September 1955

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: If De Gaulle Does Not Run

1. The key question on the French political scene three months before the 5 December presidential election is whether De Gaulle will seek another seven-year term. The answer to that question is still locked within the mind of De Gaulle if, indeed, he has decided. We have examined De Gaulle's public statements including those in his 9 September press conference and find them tenuous indicators at best. The opinions of other observers of the French scene are divided and heavily qualified. On balance, we believe he will seek re-election although he may not stay in office the full term.



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2. If, as seems likely, De Gaulle runs, he is almost certainly assured of an easy first ballot victory. The late entry of a major candidate of the left, or the center-right or both would have only the effect of reducing the margin of his win. Without such last minute entries, only a sizable abstention rate would be likely to detract from a really massive victory.

3. This memorandum deals with what we consider to be the less than even chance that De Gaulle will not run. Because many prospective candidates will hold off on their own decisions until De Gaulle announces his, much of what follows is highly speculative. Our overall conclusion, however, is that an electoral race without De Gaulle as a direct participant could be very close and its outcome, whether won by a Gaullist or non-Gaullist, would have important implications for the conduct of French policy and hence for the US.

Election Procedures

4. To gain a place on the first ballot a candidate must file by 16 November a petition bearing the names of 100 elected French office-holders, local or national, from at least 10 of

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France's departments. The official campaign opens the following day and lasts until the Friday before election Sunday, 5 December. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes on the first ballot, a runoff election will be held on 19 December.

5. This procedure is designed to give the newly elected president the status that derives from having the freely expressed support of a majority of citizens, but it does leave open some room for maneuver by the political parties. Only the two candidates who receive the highest number of votes on the first ballot and remain in the race participate in the runoff. This assures that one candidate will eventually win an absolute majority of those voting. However, it allows for electoral arrangements in which, for instance, a candidate who came in second on the first ballot might withdraw in favor of a candidate who came in third, if the latter was thought more likely to draw the second ballot support of those who had favored other losing candidates. Several examples of how this might work are suggested later on in this memorandum.

Some Possible Candidates

6. Among the uncertainties that will arise if De Gaulle does not run, there are two things that can be said with

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considerable confidence: (1) De Gaulle will throw his support behind a candidate who will run on the Gaullist record and promise to continue the General's policies; (2) several major candidates will enter the race.

7. If De Gaulle throws his support to another candidate, Premier Georges Pompidou is the most probable beneficiary. Pompidou would enter the election race only if De Gaulle decided not to run, and then only with the general's blessing. The Premier remains a faithful and fervid exponent of Gaullist policy, and there is reason to believe that he is being groomed as De Gaulle's eventual successor. Of late, Pompidou has traveled over a wide area of France at De Gaulle's urging, has given an increasing number of speeches in defense of government policy, and has appeared several times on national television. This stepped-up activity suggests that an effort is being made to strengthen Pompidou's national image by making him more familiar to the French electorate.

8. In the event that De Gaulle choose not to run and Pompidou is not tapped to succeed him, one of several high-ranking officials of the Gaullist Union for the New Republic could be designated as De Gaulle's candidate. Among these are

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Christian Fouchet, minister of national education, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, president of the National Assembly, and Michel Debre, De Gaulle's premier from 1959 to 1962.

9. A statement by De Gaulle that he was not a candidate for re-election would almost certainly be the signal for the frantic preparations of other, non-Gaullist candidacies. Some of these prospective candidates, of course, may run whether De Gaulle withdraws from the race or not.

10. Among the more notable figures is former Premier Antoine Pinay, who, at 73, still commands a large following in France. Regarded as a "miracle man" by the French because of his work in re-establishing the economy in the 1950's, Pinay first entered public office in 1929 as mayor of Saint-Chamond, a position which he holds today. In 1952, Pinay became premier of a right-center government significant not only for its economic progress but also for its realignment of the traditional political parties. In 1958 Pinay was named minister of financial and economic affairs in De Gaulle's first cabinet, becoming identified with a sound fiscal and economic policy. Resigning his post in 1960, Pinay in recent years has been extremely critical of Gaullist policies both in the domestic and foreign

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policy field. Despite urging by various center-right parties and committees, Pinay has not revealed his intentions. He would be more likely to enter the race if De Gaulle is not a candidate. If Pinay does not run, Maurice Faure or a leader of the Catholic-oriented Popular Republican party might serve as a candidate of the center-right. Even without formal party support, such a candidate could hope to draw the votes of the pro-Atlantic, pro-European center.

11. Gaston Defferre, who campaigned for over a year in the hope of winning the formal support of a broad spectrum of center and democratic left groups, withdrew from the race in June when the effort to form a federation collapsed. Defferre has not finally closed the door on his candidacy, however, and if De Gaulle withdrew from the race he would probably still be available for a "draft." Defferre, the Socialist mayor of Marseilles and a National Assembly deputy, received considerable exposure around the country during his active campaign.

12. Two recently announced candidates are Paul Antier, a prominent Fourth Republic leader of the Peasant party, and Francois Mitterrand, the leader of the left-wing splinter

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Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR). Antier can only hope to make a modest showing if Pinay does not run and reportedly has set a goal of helping to chip enough votes off the Gaullist total to force a second ballot. Mitterrand apparently hopes to receive the endorsement of a "little federation" comprising the Socialist party, the Radical Socialist Party and several other non-party clubs and committees. Although his UDSR is a member of the federation, it is not certain that he will receive that endorsement. If the federation chooses not to support Mitterrand, who must overcome a controversial political reputation, it could turn to the Radical Socialists for a candidate.

13. Despite its efforts both during and after the Defferre candidacy, the French Communist Party (PCF) has not been able to get the non-communist parties to formulate a common program in return for its promise of electoral support. Such a "common-program, common-candidate" agreement is still the goal of the PCF, although we doubt Defferre or any other major, non-Communist political figure would accept it. The PCF now seems more willing to back a candidate whose program it considers acceptable, even though the party has not participated

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in the actual formulation of the program. If agreement is not reached we believe the PCF will carry out its threat to put its own candidate on the ballot. The names of several party leaders have been floated, but the PCF has also kept open the possibility that it will run someone not directly connected with the party; such as an official of the Communist-dominated labor union or an agreeable individual from the left-wing of a non-communist party. In this latter contingency, Daniel Mayer, a leader of the minuscule Unified Socialist Party, is a likely prospect.

14. There are, of course, three previously announced candidates in the field: Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, a right-wing lawyer, and two members of the French Senate, Pierre Marcilhacy, a conservative, and Andre Cornu, a Radical Socialist. Of these three, only Tixier-Vignancour has conducted an active campaign. The other two may, in fact, have only entered to hold the line for some better-known individual from their part of the political spectrum. None of the three has a chance of defeating a Gaullist candidate.

Some Prospective Electoral Outcomes

If a Gaullist candidate runs against only the presently announced candidates or that group plus a PCF-backed candidate

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of the left, he has an excellent chance of being elected on the first ballot although his margin would not be as great as De Gaulle's. If, however, there is a candidate of the center-right such as Pinay in addition to the others, a runoff is quite likely. The chance of a runoff is further enhanced if there are four major first ballot candidates: the Gaullist, a center-right candidate, a center-left candidate without PCF support and a PCF-backed candidate.

16. There are some important analytical problems involved in speculation on the outcomes of any of the above hypothetical confrontations. While past practice is a fair guide to the eventual decisions of the parties, the reaction of the ultimate decision-maker--the French voter--is difficult to predict in this, the first direct election of a president since Louis Napoleon. We are uncertain, for instance, of the degree to which De Gaulle's popularity is transferable to his chosen successor. On the first ballot of the 1962 National Assembly elections, UNR candidates throughout the nation received about 30 percent of the popular vote. In an election where local issues will be less important and De Gaulle's personal intervention greater, the Gaullist candidate might get a larger proportion of the vote. On the other hand, the "government"

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(i.e., Pompidou and the cabinet) have always scored poorer in public opinion polls than has De Gaulle. Some of the more troublesome domestic issues, particularly the state of the economy and dissatisfaction with "social policies" such as the national education policy, would hurt another Gaullist more than they would De Gaulle.

17. Another important unknown is the size of the PCF vote. The PCF has consistently received 20-25 percent of the vote in National Assembly elections, but it is doubtful that a PCF candidate could do as well in a national election for the presidency. Many citizens who vote for the PCF in local elections do so as a vague protest against the system or because the PCF candidate has promised more on particularly important local issues.

18. Electoral arrangements between the PCF and other left parties, easily made on the local level as practical matters, would create significant second-thoughts when it came to an arrangement on the presidency. SFIO leader Guy Mollet argued in 1962 that PCF-SFIO collaboration was valid because the election of one more communist to the National Assembly (where there were only 10) was less of a danger to the Republic than the election of one more member of the

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Gaullist party. Mollet specified that this was not to be construed as a national policy, however, and would not apply if the PCF approached a majority.

19. Granting these unknowns, there are some hypothetical, first ballot outcomes and second ballot arrangements worth noting. (Minor candidates are discounted from these speculations.)

20. With three major names on the first ballot the two leaders would almost certainly retain their places for the second ballot. If the outcome was: Pompidou, a prominent center-right candidate such as Pinay, a PCF-backed leftist or any other ordering of those men, this would be true. The only exception, and it seems very unlikely, is: Pompidou, a PCF-backed leftist, an independent center-left candidate. With this standing, the PCF candidate might withdraw although the PCF would exact a heavy price in terms of a common program and control of the electoral machinery for so doing.

21. In the first cited result or any other which would put Pompidou and a leading center-right candidate in the runoff election, the result could be very close, although we think Pompidou would win. The center-right candidate would

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probably benefit from the formal support of most of the non-communist parties but they probably could not control all of their voters. Further, it is quite possible that, faced with a choice between Pompidou and a more Atlantic and European-minded center-rightist, the PCF would prefer Pompidou.

2. With four candidates on the first ballot and no one of them gaining a majority, the second ballot arrangements become even more complex and the role of the PCF voters could become crucial.

First Ballot Outcome

Likely Second Ballot Arrangement

Pompidou
Center-rightist
PCF-backed leftist
Independent leftist

Top two stay in; outcome as suggested in above paragraph.

Pompidou
center-rightist
Independent leftist
PCF-backed leftist

Probably top two stay in, but some chance that anti-Gaullist coalition achieved around independent leftist with center-rightist then withdrawing. Latter more likely if Pompidou close to first ballot majority.

Pompidou
PCF-backed leftist
Center-rightist
Independent leftist

Top two stay in; PCF concentrates on demonstrating its second most powerful political force in France and foregoes chance of winning.

Center-rightist
Pompidou
PCF-backed leftist
Independent leftist

Top two stay in; extremely close second ballot.

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Pompidou
Independent leftist
Center-rightist
PCF-backed leftist

Top two stay in; extremely close second ballot.

*Independent leftist
*Center-rightist
Pompidou
PCF-backed leftist

Top two stay in; center-rightist most likely to benefit from Gaullist votes.

Pompidou
PCF-backed leftist
Independent leftist
Center-rightist

PCF candidate likely to withdraw but only after exacting heavy price from third place finisher.

The Effect of the Election

23. Although Pompidou (or some other Gaullist) running on a straight platform that promised to continue the policies of De Gaulle would seem likely to win a narrow victory, a close election could have some interesting effects on French policy. It is not the purpose of this paper to estimate how the policies of some non-Gaullist president might differ in substance from those of De Gaulle, or even to speculate on substantive differences between Pompidou and De Gaulle. Rather, we would note three general effects of the close election of any successor to De Gaulle that would be likely to be felt across the whole range of French policy.

(1) Just the absence of the De Gaulle personality will limit the power of the presidency. There can be no doubt that De Gaulle has masterfully built up and used a mystique that has
*or vice versa

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served very practical political ends. His history of personal devotion to France is unchallenged even by the great majority of his political opponents. Certainly the vigor and determination with which he formulates and carries out French policy could not be duplicated by any prospective successor.

(2) A close election, particularly one that goes to the second ballot, will detract from the image of the president as the locus of the national will. In his 9 September press conference, De Gaulle reminded French voters that they will soon have to choose between his concept of government where the presidency is "the keystone, designated by the national majority, that holds and welds together the edifice of our institutions," and "the practices of the past." While we believe De Gaulle has overdrawn the prospect that French politics could revert to the parliamentary domination of the Fourth Republic, a more even balance between the powers of the presidency and the powers of parliament seem a likely result of a close election. This, in turn, would bring about a greater inter-play of opposing policies and an increased need to compromise on, although not necessarily abandon, those current policies such as the creation of a nuclear force and the defense of French national sovereignty that are opposed by a significant body of French political leaders.

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(3) Without the De Gaulle coat-tails and having been through a close (even if victorious) election, the UNR would be weakened as a political party. There already exists considerable difference of opinion within the UNR and between the UNR and its allied party, the Independent Republicans. We would expect these differences to grow after a close election and they could result in defections from the majority on some issue such as a controversial budget item sufficient to formally block the government policy. Furthermore, the UNR might well lose its majority in the 1967 National Assembly elections. De Gaulle was able to operate successfully for four years without a UNR majority in the National Assembly. A successor, however, would be without his prestige and demonstrable public support, and would be faced with a parliamentary majority that felt it had been chosen to oppose Gaullist policies. In such circumstances, there would be far more give and take between the two branches of the French government and increased attention would be focused on domestic social problems at the expense of Gaullist national prestige programs in both the political and military fields.