The simplest method of explaining to the Cabinet the situation arising out of my talks with President de Gaulle at the week-end is to ask Ministers to read the two attached telegrams to President Kennedy: the first a factual account of the meetings, the second making proposals on how to deal with the situation.

2. Although the British Press and, with the exception of Le Figaro, the French Press have taken a friendly and constructive line, the talks, although very friendly, were in effect not very fruitful. I therefore attach considerable importance to Ministers showing great reticence on this subject. Moreover, it would be premature to despair since President de Gaulle, like other great men, never yields to argument but occasionally to facts. An argument which appears to be repelled at the moment might sink in later.

Admiralty House, S. W. 1.

27th November 1961.
Addressed to Washington telegram No. 8711 of November 27.
Repeated for information (Personal for Ambassadors) to:
Paris Moscow Bonn
U.K.Del. N.A.T.O. (Personal for Sir P. Mason) [Immediate to all].

My immediately preceding telegram.

Following is factual account of the conversation between the Prime Minister and myself and General de Gaulle about Berlin.

While President de Gaulle was staying at Birch Grove there were three periods of talks of which two were mainly concerned with Berlin. I was present at the second of these.

President de Gaulle explained that France was concerned above all, and perhaps even more than her British and American Allies, to ensure that Germany was tied in to the West. France looked on Berlin as one part of this problem, and not in itself of capital importance. Chancellor Adenauer might now be ready to contemplate negotiations with the Russians about Berlin, although President de Gaulle wished to see Dr. Adenauer first before he could be sure of this; but it was doubtful whether the maximum concessions to which the Germans would agree would be enough to satisfy the Russians. (In fact once negotiations with the Russians began the Allied position would inevitably be eroded.) In the circumstances he saw no advantage in embarking on negotiations at the present time. Even if the Federal German Government of the day accepted the concessions which would be asked of them, the German people would be left with a sense of betrayal. Whatever the United States and the United Kingdom might do France, although not proposing to fight a war with the Russians on her own, would not be a party to such an arrangement. The Germans would then in the future feel that at least they had one friend left in the West.
3. On the substance of a possible negotiating position, I indicated that a possible formula might cover:

(i) dealings with East Germany;
(ii) frontiers;
(iii) links between Berlin and the Federal Republic;
(iv) nuclear weapons.

President de Gaulle first questioned the whole basis of such an arrangement which he said involved unnecessary concessions to the Russians. He agreed that the division of Germany and the Oder-Neisse frontier were facts which could not be altered at least for the time being and about which an agreement could perhaps one day be reached with the Russians. But these facts were all more or less favourable to the Russians and there was no need to accept them unless at the same time the Russians would accept the situation in Berlin as it had existed since the War; this was a fact favourable to the West. However, to raise all these questions would mean embarking on a very wide negotiation and it was inconceivable to embark on a wide negotiation in the present situation when the Russians were building their wall in Berlin, threatening to sign a peace treaty with East Germany, menacing Finland and generally behaving in aggressive way. It was quite arguable that the West might offer the Russians a wide negotiation on condition that they first changed this aggressive attitude but the West should at the same time make clear that if the Russians refused, they would not negotiate at all. In the French view the Russians had made no concessions of substance to the Western point of view in recent months and the time to negotiate had therefore not yet come.

4. We asked President de Gaulle how one could be sure what the Soviet attitude was if one was not prepared to discuss the matter with them. He replied that he would not object to further soundings of the Soviet position being carried out by British or American officials in order to verify the basis on which negotiations could begin. He accepted that such soundings would now soon get into substance. He would not be prepared for French representatives to take part in such exploratory exchanges nor
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would be agree publicly that these could gradually take on the character of a negotiation. He added that this procedure should not be too inconvenient for the Americans and ourselves since we were already negotiating with the Russians about nuclear tests and disarmament without French participation.

5. In reply to a question President de Gaulle agreed that the Russians could always squeeze West Berlin but he added that life in Berlin was always hazardous and was becoming more so. He did not accept the view that an agreement with the Russians would give renewed confidence to the West Berliners. He had no objection to the introduction of United Nations agencies into Berlin but the United Nations would not really affect the realities.

6. In view of the general French attitude we did not have a very detailed discussion about the possible elements in an arrangement. However, President de Gaulle did make the following points:

(a) the D.B.R. should not be recognised in any way.

(b) although the occupying Powers were on record as stating that Berlin was not a part of the Federal Republic, nevertheless it had in fact been regarded as such. For example, Dr. Adenauer was greeted in Berlin as Chancellor and Herr Brandt was leader of the German Socialist Party.

(c) the idea of an agreement about nuclear weapons for Germany was a gratuitous present to the Russians. It was United States policy not to supply nuclear arms to other countries. But although France had no present intention of sharing nuclear knowledge with the Germans the French could not say that this would always be the case. The Russian menace was too great and
Foreign Office telegram No. 6711 to Washington

the Rhine was too close to the Elbe for France to give any such binding assurance.

7. As regards the immediate future, President de Gaulle wished to hear Dr. Adenauer's views. Meanwhile while he did not specifically object to the proposed programme of meetings in Paris next month of officials and then Foreign Ministers of the four Western Governments, he made it plain that the French representatives would not be able to make any positive contribution to the meetings and that he himself was still strongly opposed to negotiating with the Russians at this stage.

[Copies sent to Prime Minister's Office]
From Foreign Office to Washington

Cypher/OTP

No. 8712
November 27, 1961
D. 6.45 p.m. November 27, 1961
IMMEDIATE

TOP SECRET

Addressed to Washington telegram No. 8712 of November 27,
Repeated for information Personal for Ambassador to: Bonn,
Moscow, Paris
and U.K. Del N.A.T.O. (Personal for Sir P. Mason)

Personal for Ambassador.

My telegram No. 8710: Berlin.

Following is message to President from Prime Minister.

My comments on my conversations with General de Gaulle on
Berlin are as follows:-

1. On Berlin the French have not moved at all. Their position
is that at present they see no basis on which a satisfactory
negotiation could be conducted; in other words the minimum Soviet
demands are greater than the maximum Western concessions. De Gaulle
does not object to further explorations by the British and American
Ambassadors in Moscow formally "to verify the basis on which a
negotiation might be possible", and has no objection to the explora-
tions being taken well into questions of substance. The French
Ambassador, however, would not be allowed to join in this. De Gaulle's
object is in fact to keep his fingers clean. This is bad
and makes it indispensable for us to try and make sure that
the German Government fully share the responsibility for our explorations;
otherwise there will be the beginning of a myth about an Anglo-
American sell-out.

2. The French did not give the impression that Adenauer's letter
sent via Castens had been as encouraging about negotiations as you
had expected. They implied that Adenauer had not confirmed to them the
position he had taken in Washington, especially as regards the vital
paragraph 1 of your message of November 23 where you said that
Adenauer "is clearly in favour of negotiation" and "agrees with the
plan for an effort to concert an agreed position at a meeting of
Western Foreign Ministers in December in Paris, in preparation for
talks with the Soviets early in the New Year, probably at the Foreign
Ministers level".

With regard
3. With regard to substance, the French feel, not without some truth in my opinion, that what the Germans seem now ready to accept omits some of the essential components which would give us a successful deal with the Russians, the two main points being: (a) the degree of de facto recognition of the D.D.R. and (b) the Oder-Neisse line. They argue from this that negotiations would be useless.

4. The meeting between de Gaulle and Adenauer is due for Thursday, November 30, but it may be postponed if Adenauer's health does not allow the journey. De Gaulle will certainly not urge Adenauer to stick to what he agreed with you. He will try, either directly or indirectly, to achieve a German retreat. So the Germans may go backwards. Even if they do not I doubt if de Gaulle will willingly move from his position.

5. What then do we do? There are only two ways of playing it. One is to carry on with the procedure we have in mind, that is:-

(a) A meeting of officials of the four Western Governments in Paris very soon. At this probably the French representative will reserve his position.

(b) A meeting of the four Western Foreign Ministers in Paris about December 10. De Gaulle will probably continue with a negative line. But it might, however, be possible to agree at these two meetings on the outlines of what should be the Western negotiating position, if and when it was subsequently agreed that such negotiations should take place.

(c) Putting the position as it then stands to the N.A.T.O. meeting on December 13-15. The other N.A.T.O. Powers will be in favour of negotiation and will bring considerable pressure on the French and even the Germans. The N.A.T.O. Powers should not go into the detail of the negotiating position but they will want to be given some general indication of what it will be. It is conceivable, though unlikely, that in the face of all this pressure, de Gaulle might change his mind.

6. The other plan would be to follow something like your original idea which we discussed in our telephone conversation and have a meeting in Paris of you, de Gaulle and myself which Adenauer would be asked to attend at some stage. At this we could confront Adenauer.
with de Gaulle and try to persuade de Gaulle to accept our point of view. But I do not think we shall succeed for de Gaulle's policy is based not on the immediate needs of the present situation but on a picture of the future of Franco-German relations. But at least having Adenauer confronted with de Gaulle will force the former to take a definite line and prevent him softening it down as he can do in bilateral talks. And if de Gaulle is still obstinate we shall then be in a position to consider whether or not to go ahead without him.

7. It may be that a combination of these two plans is the right way. That is to say, first to let pressure build up in N.A.T.O. and then if that does not succeed in moving de Gaulle to have a top level meeting of the four Western Heads of Government afterwards.

8. The objections to the first plan are that public opinion in the world will build up if nothing definite emerges from the meetings in Paris of the four Western Foreign Ministers and of N.A.T.O. There would be great impatience as to why negotiations are not agreed upon and the division of the allies will become clear. We might possibly hold this position if, when we saw that we were getting nowhere in Paris, we could at once announce the second plan for an early meeting of Western Heads of Government. On the other hand the holding of the four Power Heads of Government meeting would indicate a crisis and obvious disagreement and play into the Russians' hands. We are in a jam either way. But on the whole it might be better to start by playing things from the bottom up - i.e. through the meetings already planned in Paris of Western officials and Foreign Ministers and then N.A.T.O. It might emerge from this process that we could go ahead without the French but without having to force them into open disagreement.

9. I ought to add that we here do not feel and I think Rusk will agree, that a negotiation will prove successful on the rather restrictive basis now outlined in your message to me of November 23 and in Kohler's briefing to the Ambassadorial Group on November 24. It will only be possible if either at the beginning or at the end of the negotiations we are prepared to go rather further on both Oder-Neisse and a formula covering practical dealings with the D.D.R.

10. I ought also to tell you a new and rather significant point. While the Germans are precluded by the Brussels Treaty from manufacturing nuclear weapons and while you are precluded by the

Macmshon Act
Macmohan Act from giving them to them and anyway have no intention of doing so, de Gaulle made it quite clear that he could not bind himself never to give nuclear weapons to the Germans. It will, therefore, be necessary, if this is a vital point of any agreement, for the Germans to make a unilateral declaration that they will not accept nuclear weapons from anyone (except, of course, under the agreed key of the cupboard procedure).

11. I should be very grateful to know how you feel we should now proceed.

[Copies sent to Prime Minister's Office].

TOP SECRET