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Message from gen. de Gaulle (France)

- to N.S. Khrushchev (USSR)

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LETTER DATED 1 AUGUST 1958 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On the instructions of my Government I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the texts of the letters which General de Gaulle, President of the Council of Ministers of the French Republic, has addressed to Mr. N.S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, on 22, 26 and 31 July 1958.

I should be grateful if you would have these texts circulated as United Nations documents to all States Members of the United Nations.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed)

G. GEORGES-PICOT
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of France to the United Nations

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL DE GAULLE, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, ADDRESSED TO MR. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV, CHAIRMAN OF
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

Sir,

I have studied with the greatest care, in both substance and form, the letter which you addressed to me on 19 July proposing that I should take part in an immediate meeting of heads of Governments on the subject of the Middle East.

As you know, the French Government has always considered it desirable that the Powers should undertake a serious discussion of the problems which divide them and which constitute a potential threat to peace. Hence it is favourably disposed at this time towards the principle of a meeting on the Middle East.

Nevertheless I must tell you frankly, Sir, that some of the reasons which you invoke and some of the terms which you employ do not appear to me to be those most conducive to the success of your proposal.

It is my feeling that a "summit meeting" held against the background of a world plunged in anxiety and fear can be successful only if it is conducted in an atmosphere of objectivity and serenity.

Yet I am constrained to observe that many passages in your letter are not such as to promote the necessary easing of tension and spirit of understanding among those who might participate.

Why, for example, compare the presence of United States forces in Lebanon and United Kingdom forces in Jordan, requested by the Governments of those States following the events which took place in Iraq, to the aggression committed not so long ago by Hitler against Poland? (Hitler, unfortunately, was not alone.) Can it honestly be said that such a comparison is realistic?

Why tell me that France has "tried to undertake a military demonstration on the shores of Lebanon" when France is not participating in the United States-United Kingdom enterprise and the mission of the French forces is simply to assist French nationals if need be?

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Why assert that "the sad and unfortunate experience which France has acquired in Algeria and during the unprovoked attack of British, French and Israel forces on Egypt has left deep traces in the heart of every Frenchman"? Algeria is exclusively the concern of France and the Suez Canal undertaking was clearly provoked.

For my own part, I shall refrain from emphasizing in turn the traces which certain undertakings have left in the soul of the Russian people.

Having stated the foregoing, Sir, I wish to confirm to you my intention to take part in the direct contacts which you favour between the heads of the Governments of the principal Powers to discuss the Middle East, provided that they can be organized in an atmosphere of "reason and calm", as you yourself have written.

The United Nations is currently seized of the problem. I think that for the moment it would be best to allow it to continue its discussions. If these produce no result, the idea of a "summit" meeting could then, in my opinion, be pursued. In that event the French Government would be ready to discuss immediately the most appropriate composition, date and place of the proposed meeting.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Charles de GAULLE

Paris, 22 July 1958

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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL DE GAULLE, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, ADDRESSED TO MR. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV,
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

Sir,

In your letter of 19 July you proposed that I should take part in a meeting to be held immediately by the heads of the Governments of the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom, India and France on the subject of the Middle East. You suggested Geneva as the place at which our meeting might be held. I replied to you on 22 July that the idea of such a meeting was in conformity with the views of France and that the French Government would readily agree to discuss immediately with the States concerned the composition, date and place of such a meeting as soon as the United Nations Security Council should have completed the discussions in which it was then engaged and in order that the meeting could take place in the necessary atmosphere of objectivity and serenity.

The Council has in the meantime completed its study of the Lebanese question without arriving at any positive result. I am therefore disposed to proceed without delay to the preparation of a "summit meeting" and to take part in it with the heads of Governments.

Your letter of 23 July, however, puts before me a proposal which is entirely different from that made by you on 19 July. Thinking, apparently, that the urgency of questions relating to the Middle East has abated, you now propose, not a "summit meeting", but a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council. Such a meeting could, of course, be attended by the heads of Governments. In any case, however, the representatives of the eleven States members of the Council as well as those of India and the Arab States concerned would be invited to attend. I must point out that in that event it would, in my opinion, be necessary also to invite other States of the Middle East, at the very least Turkey, Iran and Israel, which are also directly concerned. There can be no doubt that if discussions were undertaken in such circumstances the Council would soon be obliged to increase still further the number of participants and the scope of the discussions. This "special meeting" of the Security Council would then bear no resemblance to the summit meeting which we anticipated and which I agreed, in principle, to attend.

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For my part, I think it preferable that we should pursue our initial purpose, namely, a meeting of the heads of the Governments of the principal Powers concerned. I also feel that it would be better to hold such a meeting in Europe. I readily agree to Geneva or, if not Geneva, any other city on our continent.

In any case, and even if the Security Council should gather in the near future for the special meeting which you propose, I think that the interests of the world and the extent of our responsibilities will lead us, sooner or later, to hold a meeting of heads of Governments in an atmosphere of "reason and calm", as you so rightly urged at the beginning.

The French Government therefore considers it has the obligation, for its own part, to prepare for such a meeting with great care. For this reason it proposes to begin discussing the question of the Middle East with other States - European States in particular - which have an interest in the matter and whose views it cannot fail to take into account when establishing its own position on the substance of the problem.

You will understand fully, Sir the significance of the consultations which the French Government is about to undertake, for Russia, like France, knows that the fate of the Middle East directly affects that of all Europe.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Charles de GAULLE

Paris, 26 July 1958

MESSAGE FROM GENERAL DE GAULLE, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, ADDRESSED TO MR. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV, CHAIRMAN OF
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

Sir,

Your letter of 29 July stresses once again the importance and urgency which you attach to a meeting of the heads of the Governments of the USSR, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and India to study the problems of the Middle East. You feel that this meeting should take place in Europe. You state that its object should be "to secure the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Lebanon and Jordan and to prevent any widening of the area of military conflict".

As far as the principle of a meeting of heads of Governments is concerned, I confirm that the French Government agrees, provided that such a meeting take place in the necessary atmosphere of objectivity and serenity. If the other Governments are agreed that such a meeting should take place and if they can ensure that it will be held in such an atmosphere, I will be ready to proceed to any city in Europe at any date which the participants consider suitable. I myself should like to propose that such a meeting might be held at Geneva on 18 August next.

With regard to the purpose of the meeting, I think that it should not be limited to the problems raised by the presence of United States troops in Lebanon and United Kingdom troops in Jordan, which is only the consequence of a general situation, or to the possible widening of the area of military conflict, since no such conflict is in progress. In my view, the meeting should deal frankly and fully with the whole subject of the Middle East and the continual state of crisis which prevents that area of the world from living and developing in normal conditions.

Following the consultations which it is holding with certain States, France will make specific proposals, as appropriate, on these subjects.

Pending a decision by the Governments concerned with regard to the plan for a summit meeting, the French Government has no objection to a new meeting of

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the Security Council as suggested by the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. Such a meeting, however, in view of the composition of the Council, the number of States which would have to be invited to take part in it, the nature of its agenda and the character of its discussions, would obviously not be the same thing as a meeting of heads of Governments.

In any case, I feel that we should now pursue through normal diplomatic channels such discussions as may yet be necessary before agreement can be reached with regard to the principle, the place, the date and the purpose of the meeting which you yourself originally proposed.

I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Charles de GAULLE

Paris, 31 July 1958
