

June 6, 1963

**Thomas L. Hughes, Bureau of Intelligence and
Research, to the Secretary of State, Research
Memorandum, 'Franco-German Military Nuclear
Cooperation,' REU-43**

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Summary:

In this report, INR noted that the French had walked back statements by Charles de Gaulle in January 1963 that he would not object to the development of a West German nuclear capability. This report also includes notes on why the French opposed an MLF, claiming Washington might be "whetting the German appetite" for a national nuclear capability.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Research Memorandum
REU-43, June 6, 1963

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH : S/S
FROM : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *Thomas L. Hughes*
SUBJECT : Franco-German Military Nuclear Cooperation

Widespread interest has been stimulated by recent reports of possible Franco-German cooperation in military and nuclear fields. In this paper we have reviewed the evidence of cooperation and present tentative conclusions drawn from it.

ABSTRACT

There is no proof or clear evidence of German collaboration or of agreement for future collaboration with France on the production or development of atomic weapons. However, relevant information is scanty and much of it is drawn from allusive remarks by French and German officials, whose meaning is ambiguous or which contradict one another.

It has been reported that French representatives have sought German financial participation in the French gaseous diffusion plant at Pierrelatte. Such participation would assist the French in their expensive program for the enrichment of source uranium in the isotope U-235. The Germans could be interested in cooperation with the French in order to provide a source of supply of enriched uranium for their nuclear power program. Such reports were denied by the head of one of the French groups alleged to have sought German participation and by French Embassy officials in Washington. However, the allegation was supported by German officials of the Ministry of Scientific Research who told our Embassy that the sums expected by the French are beyond German budgetary capabilities.

High level German officials have flatly told our Government that Germany has no intention of furthering French progress in the military nuclear field or in associated weapons systems. This position was stated by German Defense Minister von Hassel during his visit to Washington in February, 1963. In April, 1963, the Chief of the Policy Planning Staff of the German Foreign Ministry told Department officers that Germany sees its defense only in terms of the Atlantic Alliance and will never undertake any "flirtation" with France in the field of nuclear defense. This position does not necessarily remove the possibility of a German interest in Pierrelatte to increase supplies of fuel for nuclear power plants for civil uses.

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The Evidence

On April 5, 1963, the US Mission to the European Communities at Brussels was told by Dr. Flink, the Manager of the Deutsches Atomforum, a German counterpart of the U.S. Atomic Industrial Forum, that certain French representatives had sought German financial participation in the French gaseous diffusion plant at Pierrelatte. He said that the French initiative had been taken in December 1962 during a visit to the German Atomforum by an 18-man group from the French Atomforum. He added that the subject had also been discussed by representatives of Electricite de France with German representatives of the Rhine-Westphalia Electricity Works (RWE), presumably during recent talks on the possible joint power reactor project in the vicinity of Strasbourg. In commenting on this report, officials of the German Ministry of Scientific Research advised Embassy Bonn that a) the discussions were held at French initiative and b) the sums expected by the French were beyond German budgetary capabilities.

Any knowledge of a French approach to Germany has been denied by the French official heading one of the groups visiting Germany. In a discussion, reported by Embassy Paris on May 10, 1963, between a U.S. AEC scientific representative in Paris and Jean Lambertson, past president of the French Atomforum and head of the 18-man group which visited the Deutsches Atomforum in December 1962, the U.S. AEC representative was told that Lambertson knew of no request for German assistance or participation in Pierrelatte. Lambertson expressed surprise that one should believe that the French would ask participation of Germany in this program. He said the subject never came up in his presence during the French visit in Germany. He said that, as we well knew, German participation in Pierrelatte was solicited six or seven years ago when the construction of the French gaseous diffusion plant was first under active consideration but that the Germans declined to participate at that time and the question of their participation has not come up again.

Comment: A German financial and perhaps a technical contribution to the French plant would undoubtedly speed the availability of weapons grade uranium for the French nuclear weapons program. The Germans would benefit by helping to develop at Pierrelatte a secondary source of supply for nuclear fuel; that is, the Germans would then have an alternative to the U.S. supply on which they now depend exclusively for enriched uranium for use in German nuclear power plants, a dependence which the Germans find burdensome due to U.S. legislative and procedural requirements.

Another report alleging French-German cooperation appeared in an April 20, 1963, message from Embassy Rome. The Embassy said it had received a report from the office of the Italian Prime Minister citing "an unspecified source" to the effect that a West German firm is producing, in

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conjunction with a French firm, Lithium-6 which "is known as a basic material used in the manufacture of hydrogen bombs". The German firm was said to have been allowed to use, for this purpose, experience gained by the French in their nuclear research center at Saclay. The Italian report also said that "the West German trust AEG is collaborating with the French company Tomson-Hauston (sic, probably Thompson-Houston), which produces electronic equipment for nuclear reactors and plays a prominent role in the production of atomic bombs which are exploded in the Sahara." The Italian report added that "according to news in the press" French and German ministers have agreed to work on plans for further collaboration between Paris and Bonn.

Comment: The lithium-6 isotope is essential to the production of thermonuclear weapons. Non-military interest in it is limited essentially to laboratory use in the nuclear field. There is considerable non-military consumption of various lithium compounds, however. Civilian users of these compounds would prefer, where available, the cheaper depleted lithium hydroxide from which much of the lithium-6 isotope has already been removed. Lithium ore is processed into lithium hydroxide mainly in the U.S., Canada, the UK and Germany. France has only a small capacity for the processing of ore. Natural lithium hydroxide -- the normal first processing of lithium ore and which may have been the activity which the Italian source intended to indicate was being performed in West Germany -- is rich in the lithium-6 isotope of weapons interest. West German facilities would be capable of supplying France with all the natural lithium hydroxide it may need. Should a German firm be producing the lithium-6 isotope for France, however, a logical assumption would be that the material is intended for use in the French weapons program.

French and German Defense Ministers Discuss Cooperation

There were reports in 1961 that Strauss and Messner had discussed German-French cooperation in the nuclear field in the course of their talks on cooperation in military matters. NATO Secretary General Stikker told a Departmental officer in February, 1962, that Strauss had confirmed to Stikker that there had been discussion of possible Franco-German nuclear cooperation during his talks with Messner. No information has been obtained on the nature of the 'nuclear cooperation' discussed or on what, if any, agreement was reached.

Embassy Investigations through 1962 Produce no Evidence

Other reports from our Paris and Bonn embassies during 1962 and 1963 also asserted that there was no evidence up to January 1963 of German-French collaboration in the atomic military field.

Embassy Paris reported on June 15, 1962, that there have been no "recent indications of possible Franco-German nuclear weapons cooperation." The Embassy added that a series of soundings with French officials in various parts of the French Government uncovered no evidence of such cooperation with the Germans. The Embassy pointed out that Germany and France were, of course, contributing to multilateral projects on the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

On July 25, 1962, Embassy Bonn reported that they had held an exchange of views with the British Embassy and had concluded that "at present there does not exist a deliberate intention in Germany to embark on a nuclear weapons program, either alone or with France." On December 10, 1962, Embassy Bonn stated that "developments have reinforced our view that no cooperation in the nuclear (weapons) field is actively under consideration."

On January 3, 1963, Embassy Paris was informed by the British Embassy that the UK Scientific Attache in Bonn had visited the German Nuclear Research Center at Karlsruhe and had found no evidence of Franco-German cooperation.

Finally, Embassy Paris reported on May 10, 1963, that the Embassy had made discreet inquiries of French governmental and industrial sources which failed to confirm reports of a French desire to bring in German industry and financing for the Pierrelatte plant.

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French Government Position

When queried by Embassy Bonn on the Pierrelatte proposal to the Germans, a French official in Bonn, who is concerned with scientific cooperation and who has been in Germany since 1945, told our Embassy that, while cooperation with Germany in many fields is being explored, France is "still conscious of the past" and that joint R and D with Germany in the atomic weapons field is not consonant with French national policy.

Comment: Even if what this French official has said were the policy of his government, the French Government might well request German financial assistance for the Pierrelatte plant and still consider that France was not in any way assisting Germany in the atomic weapons field; the French could say that German benefit was limited to enrich uranium from Pierrelatte for peaceful uses.

At his January 14, 1963, press conference, General de Gaulle made statements which were taken to mean that he would not object to a German initiative to acquire an independent nuclear weapons capability. Immediately thereafter the French Foreign Office issued a clarifying statement which said, "General de Gaulle has confidence that the Germans will respect their obligations (under the WEU Treaty)".

The French Foreign Minister told the British Foreign Minister in a conversation in Paris on April, 1963, that France would not favor any arrangement which would assist the Germans in obtaining a national nuclear capability. In discussing the MLF with Couve de Murville on April 8 or 9, Lord Home made the point that the concept of the NATO nuclear force was mainly a political attempt to avoid a German interest in having a national atomic capability. Couve, as reported by the British Embassy, said one should not forget that the Germans have an "incipient" appetite for atomic armaments, and he consequently doubted whether this arrangement would satisfy them. In fact, he feared we might even be whetting the German appetite. Couve expressed the strong belief that, whatever we do, we must not end up giving in to the Germans.

During a conversation at the Department of State on April 10, 1963, between J. Robert Schaetzel, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Atlantic Affairs, and M. Pierre Pelen, Counselor of the French Embassy at Washington, Mr. Schaetzel asked if Pelen knew anything about the French having approached the Germans for a \$250 million contribution toward the costs of the Pierrelatte gaseous diffusion plant. Pelen denied knowledge of this and asked where the report originated. Mr. Schaetzel replied that a source connected with the German equivalent of our Atomic Industrial Forum had provided us with the information. Pelen alleged that the French definitely did not want technical German participation in the Pierrelatte project and probably would not even accept a financial contribution. M. Francois de Laage de Meux, Attache at the French Embassy, who was present, noted that in the past there had been some unsuccessful efforts to create a European gaseous diffusion plant. As for the future he was sure that if any international cooperation were to take place it would be on a European basis, not just between Germany and France alone.

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German Government Position

German officials have stressed to US representatives on recent occasions that the FRG has no intention of assisting the French in their nuclear weapons program.

During a meeting in Bonn on February 14, 1963, Mr. Gilpatric, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, received a note from German State Secretary Volkman Hopf of the German Ministry of Defense which said that Germany does not expect to receive a request from France to assist the French in the nuclear field, but, if asked, Germany would not assist.

German Defense Minister von Hassel told Mr. Gilpatric at the Pentagon on February 25, 1963, that the FRG does not intend to further French progress in the nuclear field through the German-French agreements.

On March 13, 1963, the West German press agency DPA reported that a spokesman for the German Defense Ministry had stated that Germany has neither the intention nor the possibilities of building up atomic armaments of its own. The German spokesman was quoted as saying that the German Government adheres to the WEU renunciation by Germany of the production of atomic, biological and chemical weapons. He added that "Germany is not cooperating with France or any other country in the sphere of atomic armaments."

On April 25, 1963, the Chief of the Policy Planning Staff of the German Foreign Ministry, Mr. Mueller-Roschach, told a group of officers at the Department that in his opinion de Gaulle would never ask Germany for assistance in developing the French force de frappe. In answer to a question as to what the German response would be should the French government request the German government for assistance in the field of nuclear development, Mr. Mueller-Roschach replied that the German position is clear -- Germany sees its defense in terms of the Atlantic Alliance only; Germany cannot expose itself to the risks of tying itself to any national program; Germany therefore will never undertake any "flirtation" with France in the field of nuclear defense.

Comment: It is possible that the FRG could decide to put funds into the Pierrelatte facility and argue that they were not making as direct a contribution to the French weapons program as was the U.S. in supplying enriched uranium fuel for the French submarine development program. The Germans could contend that assistance to the French is not military but civil cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Conclusion

There is no evidence to date that the Germans are presently collaborating with the French in the atomic military field or that they have agreed to do so. They have, of course, been cooperating in uses of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. A request from the French for financial assistance to the Pierrelatte plant could be justified on both sides as being a form of continued cooperation in the peaceful uses field. The French could say

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that the Germans were receiving enriched uranium for nuclear power plants, and the FRG could maintain that its assistance to the French was limited to increasing the available supplies of uranium for nuclear power.

German official statements to us suggest that the FRG recognizes the present political liabilities of cooperating with the French in the field of development of nuclear weapons. This does not remove the possibility that the Germans might participate in Pierrelatte or other gaseous diffusion plants to increase supplies of enriched uranium for civilian applications.

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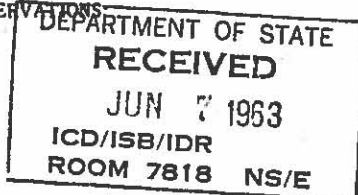
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