

December 2, 1944
Account of General de Gaulle's Meeting with
Marshal Stalin Saturday, 2 December at 21:00 at
the Kremlin

Citation:

"Account of General de Gaulle's Meeting with Marshal Stalin Saturday, 2 December at 21:00 at the Kremlin", December 2, 1944, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Documents Diplomatiques Francais, 1944. vol. 2 (3 septembre - 31 decembre), pp. 351-53.
Translated by Scott Smith. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/123307>

Summary:

Stalin and de Gaulle discuss General de Gaulle's recent trip to Baku, the need to establish a strong France and Russia in the new European order, and Germany's future western border with France. The leaders discuss a 20-year treaty of alliance between the two nations.

Original Language:

French

Contents:

Translation - English

ACCOUNT OF GENERAL DE GAULLE'S MEETING WITH MARSHAL STALIN

Saturday, December 2 at 21:00 at the Kremlin

C.R.

Very Secret

General de Gaulle was received by Marshal Stalin at the Kremlin December 2 at 21:00.

Attending the meeting: Mr. Molotov, Mr. Bogomolov, Mr. Roger Garreau and the interpreter Podzerov.

The Marshal shakes his visitor's hand and immediately invites him to be seated opposite him at a table with a green tablecloth, where paper and pencils had been prepared.

He asks if he had a good trip and, upon an affirmative response from General de Gaulle, begins to draw geometric shapes with red pencil on a sheet of paper, waiting for de Gaulle to continue the conversation.

The General expresses his pleasure at being invited to be the guest of the Soviet government, thanking them for the warm welcome he received from Ambassador Bogomolov.

The Marshal asks the General several questions about his stay in Baku and about the impressions he has after his visit to Stalingrad. The General speaks highly of the reconstruction work which has already been completed in that glorious city; the Marshal asks him in what material state France finds itself after its liberation and whether the resumption of its means of production is proceeding in a satisfying manner. The General describes the serious difficulties the government is attempting to overcome, especially those concerning transportation and raw materials. Some considerable progress has already been made: although more than 4000 bridges and railways have been destroyed, communications have already been reestablished from one end of the country to the other, coal extraction has doubled in two months, etc. But above all the provisional government is preoccupied with equipping the new army, which is burning to take a strong role in the continuation of the war. He presses the American authorities to speed up their provision of indispensable materials, but has unfortunately not been satisfied.

The Marshal pointed out that it would better not to rely too heavily on the assistance of others, but rather to make every effort oneself to get national production under way once again.

General de Gaulle states that that is definitely the goal of his government.

Moving on to the overall situation of France in Europe and in the world, he states that the reestablishment of a strong France, along with a powerful Russia, provides the continent with the greatest guarantee of security. He thanks the Soviet government for having taken the initiative to suggest that France be admitted as an equal and permanent member of the consultative commission for European affairs. The Marshal believes that this would happen and that France should retake the position which it deserves.

General de Gaulle says that, in effect, the defeat of 1940 was an accident and also a consequence of the fact that, constantly exposed to German aggression, France didn't succeed during the negotiations leading up to the Treaty of Versailles, to convince the Allies of the necessity of guaranteeing the security of its borders in a definitive way. The proposals presented by Mr. Clemenceau to the Supreme Council on the subject of the Rhine frontier were, unfortunately, rejected and the guarantees that we had been provided in compensation were illusory. Russia was absent and we

missed its concurrence: Russia would have better understood the needs of France, its position vis-a-vis the German menace being the same as ours. It was absolutely necessary to avoid recommitting such a profound error in the regulation of the peace of tomorrow.

The Marshal asks if General de Gaulle has already developed a concrete plan, to which de Gaulle responds that the geographic and historic boundary of France is the Rhine and that that border is the only one that can ensure his country's security.

The Marshal responds: "It is in effect good that France should extend to the Rhine. It is difficult to object to that." Then, after several seconds of reflection, he adds: "Never can any natural frontier, no matter how strong it may be, can give an absolute guarantee of security if it is not protected by a solid nation and a strong army. One must not allow oneself to doze behind an illusion of security such as was the Maginot Line. There are those here who want to take our borders to the Carpathians because that mountain chain constitutes a natural protection for Russia. But security should also be guaranteed by alliances and accords between friendly nations. The history of the two wars has shown that neither France, nor Russia, nor any other two countries together are strong enough to stay on top of Germany. To attain this goal, the concurrence of other powers would be necessary. Thus it is only as a result of a solid entente between the Soviet Union, France, Great Britain, and America that total victory could possibly be obtained and a lasting peace established. The Soviet Union and France could not handle the question of the Rhine frontier alone. Has General de Gaulle already discussed this issue with London and Washington?"

General de Gaulle responds that he shares completely the Marshal's point of view, that agreement between the four great powers is in effect indispensable and that that agreement would be greatly facilitated by the participation of France in the works of the consultative commission for European affairs. Expanding on the reestablishment of the Rhine as the French frontier, de Gaulle hoped that the Soviet Union, because of the similarity of its position to the French position and since it is exposed to the same immediate dangers, would understand the legitimacy of our demand and would support it in the near future alongside the other allied powers.

As the topic of the future of the western border of Germany has been the only topic of discussion thus far, the General continues, he would be happy to hear the views and plans of the Soviet government in regard to Germany's eastern border.

The Marshal responds that the old Polish territories in west Prussia, in Pomerania and in Silesia, should be legitimately restored to Poland. "In sum, the frontier of the Oder?" asks General de Gaulle. "Even the Oder is too far," responds the Marshal. The Oder and the Neisse. And also some changes in the Czechoslovak border, which would like reestablish the borders of 1938.

General de Gaulle states that the outline of these borders inspires the same geographic and historic considerations as well as the same military necessities as those upon which the French base their reclamation of the French border at the Rhine.

The Marshal comes back to the peace and security guarantee that offers the promise of a solid entente between the major allies who are the principal players in the war. The Soviet Union and Great Britain have already, under this plan, concluded a 20-year treaty of alliance.^[1] It would be beneficial for the Soviet Union and France to consider an similar accord to provide against the common danger of any new German aggression.

General de Gaulle responds that that is very much the desire of his government. Our two countries, being immediate neighbors of Germany, are most interested in joining forces for the common defense. The pact of 1935, having been concluded with the same goal, could serve as a base for negotiating a new accord better adapted to the present conditions.

Marshal Stalin and Mr. Molotov together point out that the pact of 1935 was never put into effect and that the Soviet Union, having learned from this painful experience, does not intend to conclude another accord on paper which is not guaranteed by a sincere and solid will to respect it in letter and spirit. General de Gaulle pointed out that he is not Pierre Laval and that he wishes to conclude a pact with the Soviet Union, to ensure its full application, and to establish a solid entente between France

and Russia.

Marshal Stalin and Mr. Molotov noted this assurance with satisfaction. The envisioned agreement will be integrated in a good understanding and tight collaboration among the Allies and among all of the United Nations.

General de Gaulle asked to take his leave at 23:00.

[\[1\]](#) Regarding the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance, enacted May 26, 1942.