

## Liberation

For many people in France, 1944 was the harshest year yet of the Occupation. As the war shifted in the Allies' favor, German treatment of the French people steadily worsened. Supply lines that had fed Paris for four years were cut. Parisians ate less than at any time before. Electricity dwindled, available only a few hours of the day. Emotions ran high as neighbors denounced one another and resistants exacted revenge upon suspected collaborators. At the same time, Allied bombs targeting war-making factories fell over the city's northern, working-class suburbs, killing almost 2,000 people.<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Channel, a former writer for the *New York Times*, remarked in March, "the Paris air is more highly charged with menace than at any time since the French Revolution. Invasion, civil war, siege, famine, prison – whatever form the future may take – Parisians are minutely expecting the deadliest phase of the war."<sup>2</sup> Most, whatever their feelings about Vichy, were anti-German and eagerly awaited the roar of American and French tanks. Many who mingled in resistant circles and lost friends to Nazi deportations and concentration camps also welcomed and cheered the militants gathering to chase the Germans from the city.

Others, however, hesitated. Gazing over the Parisian landscape from the protected cloisters of their stately homes, these wealthier French feared that the mobs of youthful toughs and communists roaming the streets aimed for more than a German defeat but to take over Paris in the ensuing chaos.<sup>3</sup> They hoped that the Americans would arrive in time to save them from another French Revolution.

On August 26, 1944, liberation finally came. Charles de Gaulle's triumphant promenade down the Champs-Élysées with General Philippe

Leclerc's Second Armored Division sealed his authority as the heart of Resistant France and head of the new provisional government. Spontaneous celebrations erupted all over the city as the war-weary denizens of Paris greeted their liberators streaming in from the west. But these heady days did not last. The French people faced critical shortages as German soldiers retreated and Allied efforts remained focused on a final confrontation building in the east. They also faced the mammoth task of reconciling the past and rebuilding a nation devastated by occupation and war. American GIs who entered the city after August grew frustrated with high prices and French indifference, and they fell back on well-worn stereotypes of French weakness, apathy, and duplicity to express their aggravation.

US officials had alienated many French with schemes to deal with Vichy Chief of State Marshal Philippe Pétain and Admiral François Darlan<sup>4</sup> and the hope that General Henri Giraud would somehow outmaneuver Charles de Gaulle to become the leader of Fighting France. These missteps cast a pall over US–French negotiations on the two major issues of 1944 – military plans for an Allied invasion of Western Europe and arrangements for the civil administration of France after Liberation. Both issues were shot through with growing concerns about communism; both also carried with them major implications for the future of Franco-American relations.

Watching the drama unfold from his station in Paris, William Koren, an intelligence analyst for the OSS, feared that the antagonism evident in encounters between the French and the Americans could damage Franco-American relations. In October, Koren, a Rhodes Scholar and doctoral student in French history before the war, wrote to Dr. William Langer, under whom he had studied at Princeton and who now headed the OSS's Research and Analysis (R&A) Branch in Washington, DC. Koren complained that American officers in France held a jaundiced view of their French allies, believing “1. The French squawk but haven't really suffered. 2. The French are not in the war effort. 3. The French are bent on revolution. 4. The French don't really like us.”<sup>5</sup> Koren attributed these US impressions to a number of factors such as American ignorance of French conditions and history, the distant past as well as more recent years under German occupation. But he also argued that some of America's French partners had played a crucial role in perpetuating these impressions. US military officers, he claimed, were subjected to “a veritable barrage of propaganda over Rightist dinner tables concerning a plot for an armed uprising which is prevented only by the presence of

Americans in Paris.”<sup>6</sup> These same French groups – conservative, privileged, and often linked to collaboration – suffered most under purges after Liberation. They were also, Koren contended, “those in the easiest position for transmitting their alarm to American officers.”<sup>7</sup>

Many in the Roosevelt administration shared the views that Koren ascribed to American military officials. Historians routinely attribute this impression to Franklin Roosevelt’s personal antipathy for de Gaulle and his sense that France had crumbled from decades of decay associated with a confused multiparty system and imperial overreach. Some scholars rightly point to deep-seated anti-Gaullist sentiments in the State Department, while others suggest that de Gaulle’s difficult personality and behavior were at least partially responsible for Franco-American tensions. But what of Koren’s claim that French informants whispering in the attentive ears of American officials were also responsible for this prevailing image of France?

Koren’s report suggests four important issues that challenge the usual story. First, he argued that French associates from specific political circles with calculated agendas exercised influence over American officials. Second, this influence was not limited to a few familiar French observers but was exercised by a myriad of French contacts on a much larger scale. Nor was this pressure confined to the State Department and White House; there was also notable exchange between French sources and US intelligence circles. Third, Koren demonstrated that American perception of a communist threat in France was already shaping Franco-American relations well before the end of the war. And finally, he dismissed the prevailing image of France as inaccurate and biased, suggesting the possibility, at least, of an alternative. Indeed, just as French sources bolstered the image of France predominant within White House, State Department, and military intelligence circles, other contacts shaped OSS analysis of the situation in France. Both sides actively contested the other’s perception based upon the information and images transmitted to them by their French informants.

#### LES AMÉRICAINS

Koren had a point. Military and State Department officials *were* barraged with rumors of communist plots prevented only by American intervention in France. And many, if not most, of these stories originated with the faction General Charles Luguët, a member of the Free French delegation in Washington, DC, had called “les Américains” – a set of French

informants from right-leaning political, industrial, and military circles with clear agendas for liberated France. A few claimed that France had not really suffered under German occupation, and many offered arguments to suggest that communist elements of the Resistance viewed defeat of the Germans as only secondary to furthering their own postwar aims. Some went so far as to suggest that communist activity might compromise American supply and lines of communication.

By far the most common claim, however, was that France was on the verge of a communist revolution. Almost entirely anti-Gaullist in their orientation, these sources attempted to link de Gaulle and his Algiers Committee to the communist menace to demonstrate his unsuitability to govern France. They also disparaged the Resistance inside France as communist-dominated and ineffective. Only American intervention in French affairs, usually in connection with their own political pretensions, could stave off civil war and protect postwar stability in Europe. At the same time, they denounced PCF members as unpatriotic and anti-Anglo-American and argued that de Gaulle's criticism of American policy was due to his own pathological anti-Americanism and pro-Soviet tendencies. These charges, fostered by these contacts and reinforced by other reporting, became part of a basic formula employed to influence US policy.

In their American interlocutors these sources found a receptive audience. But more importantly, their claims echoed in the attitudes and beliefs held by conservative US officials, many of whom already distrusted de Gaulle – the product of a difficult, disputatious relationship since 1940 stemming in part from the gaping disparity between his vision of an independent, restored France and their belief that France was weak and in decline. American officers also naturally identified with their French military counterparts. One Office of War Information (OWI) officer complained that US military officials were largely ignorant of French affairs and that they were “more comfortable with the Vichysoise [*sic*] crowd, the Nazified Frenchmen, than those who for their convictions of liberalism either had to leave France or were put in prison, etc.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, officers with no specialized expertise often staffed Army and Navy intelligence units.<sup>9</sup> This made it much more likely that their analysis would reflect the ideology and policy prerogatives of their services.

For their part, State Department officials and diplomats emulated the courts of prewar Europe, and they privileged panache, good breeding, and the intimacy of male camaraderie.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the war, many of these diplomats remained close to their German counterparts and deeply opposed to the Soviet regime and communist ideology. Journalist Edgar

Ansel Mowrer, who eventually resigned from OWI to protest the US's Vichy policy, once described American diplomats as members of a conservative international elite for whom it was natural to trust their "own kind" abroad. Thus, they believed "Frenchmen who tell them that whereas in America democracy means Henry Ford and Rockefeller Center, Palm Beach parties and church-going, in France it means just the forty-hour work week, atheism and revolution."<sup>11</sup> Deeply suspicious of revolutionary tendencies in France, they saw France in emotional and gendered terms, as feminized, both as a victim in need of assistance and, at the same time, as an unstable "pétroleuse" threatening to burn down the prewar edifice upon which their fortunes and reputations rested. They also resisted analysis from more liberal, pro-Gaullist observers, the "radical boys" in newer wartime agencies, including the OSS.<sup>12</sup> The gates of the gentlemen's club, to be meaningful, had to be strictly patrolled.

State Department and military officials were in regular contact with a number of groups who shared their anti-Gaullist, anti-communist perspective. This included elements inside Pétain's regime, despite the break in official relations after November 1942. US Ambassador to Portugal Henry Norweb, for example, met in January 1944 with the Vichy air attaché to Spain, then convalescing in Lisbon. Lieutenant Colonel André de Gorostarzu was a rising star in Pétain's entourage and member of his military cabinet charged with delicate negotiations with Franco's regime in Spain. De Gorostarzu was also associated with "La Cagoule," a far-right fascist and anti-communist movement responsible for several violent attacks and bombings in interwar France.<sup>13</sup> Members of La Cagoule – "the hood" – often came from the rarefied reaches of society – senior military officers, wealthy businessmen, and descendants of the aristocracy – and swore their allegiance to "the greater glory" of France in secret ceremonies. They were also well represented among informants of US diplomats and intelligence. From his sickbed in Lisbon, de Gorostarzu told Norweb that de Gaulle had courted the Soviets and entered an alliance with the PCF to consolidate his position. French workers already had communist tendencies, he said, and "he and his friends" feared that any Gaullist government would "pander to the Red-leaning of the French proletariat."<sup>14</sup> The message to the Americans from Vichy was clear: Arming the Resistance or supporting de Gaulle would lead to an unstable, communist France.

Administration officials also met regularly with former members of pre-war French governments, now out of office and often very bitter about their misfortune. Alexis Léger, Horace Crocicchia, Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, and Camille Jean Fernand Laurent were among the many who repeated the

same basic charges against de Gaulle and the PCF and appealed for American intervention in French affairs.<sup>15</sup> These exchanges represented thinly veiled attempts to attack political rivals and maneuver into positions of authority. Léger, a former high official in the French foreign ministry who enjoyed routine access to State Department officials and Roosevelt, repeatedly warned against recognition of de Gaulle on the grounds that he was a Soviet sympathizer with authoritarian tendencies. To this, he added the charge that de Gaulle harbored deep and abiding anti-Americanism. In one conversation with H. Freeman “Doc” Matthews, a former first secretary at Vichy, now the State Department’s chief of European affairs and himself a bitter critic of de Gaulle, Léger further argued that de Gaulle’s advocacy of democracy was a farce, and that the United States “would be guilty of a breach of faith with the French people if [it] allowed [him] to enter France . . . as a provisional leader.”<sup>16</sup> These were remarkable claims from a man who had expressed no enmity toward the general until several years after moving to the United States in 1940. As de Gaulle’s biographer Jean Lacouture describes it, Léger’s transition to “active hostility” toward Free France coincided with de Gaulle’s appointment of René Massigli, Léger’s sworn enemy, as the head of foreign affairs.<sup>17</sup> Whatever his reasons, Léger had Roosevelt’s ear.

Other disgruntled officials soon joined the chorus repeating the basic formula. The former Governor of French Guinea Horace Crocicchia, who was upset about his removal from office for his Vichy ties, claimed that if de Gaulle continued in power after the Liberation, “inevitably he would be dominated by the Communist Party, which will press for French entry into the Moscow Commonwealth of Soviet Republics.”<sup>18</sup> In a startling dismissal of two key aspects of French nationhood – sovereignty and free elections – he also called for American intervention *before* elections could be held because of the possibility that they might seat a communist regime.<sup>19</sup>

In mid-February, Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, a notorious vegetable oil manufacturer with close connections to La Cagoule and Giraud, sought out Admiral William Glassford, the US representative in Dakar, to pass a secret letter to Roosevelt. Lemaigre-Dubreuil, an energetic man with dark eyes, a square Gallic jaw, and a receding hairline, was rumored to have provided “valuable services” to the Franco regime during the Spanish Civil War; he was also deeply involved in the intrigue surrounding Allied landings in North Africa.<sup>20</sup> Known for his hostility to de Gaulle, he enjoyed routine access to American envoy Robert Murphy and Secretary of State Cordell Hull during negotiations with Giraud.<sup>21</sup> Lemaigre-Dubreuil warned that the communists, well-organized and determined, were the only group in

position to seize power, and he denied de Gaulle's ability to unify France. Instead, he advocated a new "apolitical" Committee of National Safety to be established in Spain or Portugal, to assume authority from Pétain and act as the provisional government. In a remarkable expression of self-promotion, he suggested that "this organization should be as adept as to details as was the landings of the Allies in North Africa,"<sup>22</sup> an event that he loudly and often credited himself with facilitating. After Liberation, a Spanish informant passed information to the US military attaché in Madrid detailing Lemaigre-Dubreuil's continued efforts in Spain to fight de Gaulle "by all means, supported by the Americans."<sup>23</sup> Despite these efforts, Lemaigre-Dubreuil eventually fell out of favor. An intriguing character and natural conspirator who could change his stripes when opportunity beckoned, Lemaigre-Dubreuil died violently in 1955, the victim of an assassin's spray of gunfire in Casablanca.

Matthews also spoke with Camille Jean Fernand Laurent, another former member of the French Chamber of Deputies living in America and an erstwhile informant of US military intelligence. Fernand Laurent had been a prewar business associate of Lemaigre-Dubreuil. Like Lemaigre-Dubreuil, he rejected de Gaulle's leadership of Free France. Fernand Laurent, Matthews reported, was bitter at the CFLN for having deprived him of his parliamentary status, which he attributed to his refusal to be subservient to de Gaulle. He echoed earlier charges about the CFLN's worthiness as an ally; he also reminded his American colleague that he was a loyal friend who had supported American policy. In a nod to American tradition, he noted that the National Assembly and the apparatus of a democratic government "by the people and for the people" still existed in France; they (and he among them) still had the capacity to appoint a provisional government. If, however, the Allies installed de Gaulle's regime in the wake of their armies, he claimed, elections would be a sham and civil war more likely.<sup>24</sup>

Certain French military elements also remained in frequent communication with US officials. General Henri Giraud had been the administration's choice to lead Free France. The mustachioed Giraud, who had famously escaped German captivity, cut a dashing figure and appealed to US officials who detested the imperious de Gaulle. But by early 1944, he was locked in the last throes of a bitter struggle over political leadership of the CFLN. Despite ill-fated attempts to unify the Free French, Giraud had maintained his own intelligence organization. Some of its efforts were directed away from anti-German resistance, and it increasingly worked to delegitimize Giraud's rivals.

In one clear attempt to use intelligence to undermine de Gaulle, a representative of French General Staff and Giraudist groups in France delivered the “Dossier Mornay” to the State Department and US Army intelligence in late 1943; by January 1944, it reached the desks of two of de Gaulle’s most ardent detractors and skeptics of French grandeur, Franklin Roosevelt and Admiral William Leahy, the former ambassador to Vichy, now Roosevelt’s powerful chief of staff. Leahy was a striking figure with a stern demeanor and the visage of a “snapping turtle.” According to Charles “Chip” Bohlen, a department expert in Soviet and French affairs, Leahy spoke very little but “very much to the point in salty, pithy expressions.”<sup>25</sup> These informants again employed the basic formula to discredit de Gaulle, the CFLN, and the PCF; in another obvious power play, they recommended that an independent secret service under Giraud be established to coordinate with the Allied chiefs of staff for invasion planning.<sup>26</sup> Subsequent reports from these elements reiterated the same charges, amplifying fears of civil war and feeding images of France prostrate, awaiting salvation from the United States.

While Giraud ultimately failed to overcome de Gaulle, the dossier did have an impact. Roosevelt seemed intrigued by the report, and he asked Leahy to look into it. Leahy, a staunch conservative and anti-communist who maintained affection for Pétain, had already thwarted a planned conference with de Gaulle in 1943. Heavily invested in earlier schemes to deal with Darlan, Leahy detested the upstart Frenchman. State Department Europeanists routinely fed him reports about de Gaulle’s alleged sympathy for communists, to which he often added the gloss of “military necessity” in support of their policy recommendations.<sup>27</sup> Leahy saw no way to act on the dossier at present but suggested that it might still have some use. War Department officials had begun to pressure the administration for some recognition of the CFLN to ease the Allied landing expected in late spring. Leahy, like Roosevelt, remained unconvinced, and he suggested that they might use the dossier to bolster their arguments against proposals to recognize de Gaulle’s committee as the de facto government of France.<sup>28</sup>

Many of these allegations were buttressed by intelligence reports passed from the Polish government-in-exile to US representatives in London. Early in the war, the Poles had created covert networks to gather Polish elements and help them escape France for England. However, these units soon evolved into a sophisticated espionage network directed against German activities in France. While Polish officials managed intelligence operations in other nations, French agents staffed Polish networks



in France.<sup>29</sup> Anti-communist and anti-German, they reportedly worked closely with Giraud's staff in North Africa and with American intelligence in Lisbon.<sup>30</sup> Their reports also employed the basic formula to deny de Gaulle's legitimacy through charges of collusion with the PCF, to disparage the Resistance and its true aims, and to warn of growing anti-Americanism and communist influence in French affairs. Time and again, they reported that "an atmosphere of pre-revolutionary tension" prevailed in France, and that French communists were already openly planning to provoke a social revolution during liberation and establish close union with the Soviets.<sup>31</sup> Secretary of State Cordell Hull, for one, wrote that he found the reports "extremely interesting" and requested copies be sent to his representatives in Algiers.<sup>32</sup>

Prominent French émigrés in the United States also sought to shape American policy. While these contacts did not necessarily represent the majority view of the French colony in the United States, they were well-placed and noisy proponents of their perspective on French affairs. That spring, Paul Vignaux, a philosophy professor (for a time at Notre Dame) and member of the Catholic Labor Movement reiterated the basic formula to agents with the US Army's Military Intelligence Division (MID).<sup>33</sup> Vignaux, a prolific informant of American intelligence, was close to Alexis Léger. He did not have right-wing sympathies but instead represented a strain of anti-communist leftism that was hostile to de Gaulle.<sup>34</sup> And in late May, the MID reported the views of another influential member of the French colony, Michel Pobers, editor of the anti-Gaullist (and pro-Giraud) newspaper *Pour la victoire*, a weekly created and directed by Geneviève Tabouis, a close confidant of Eleanor Roosevelt and a frequent visitor to the US embassy in Paris before the war.<sup>35</sup> Determined to avoid a Gaullist government in France, Pobers levied charges identical to those whispered by other French sources to their American intimates.<sup>36</sup>

These groups – military, industrial, political, and émigré – also took advantage of their connections with US military attachés to influence American views of the French. Many of these contacts took place through US missions in Madrid and Lisbon – notorious centers of reaction and fascist intrigue – and in Paris. On April 14, 1944, for example, the US military attaché in Madrid, Colonel Frederick Sharp, reported intelligence from Paris Police officials alarmed by communist terrorism and the growing influence of the PCF. There were, these sources claimed, hundreds of thousands of PCF militants ready to rise up during Liberation, against which the police would be powerless, a foreboding situation reminiscent of the Paris Commune.<sup>37</sup>

One former military attaché, eighty-year-old retired General T. Bentley Mott, contributed to this atmosphere of crisis. Mott, who had married a French woman and whose best man had been World War I hero Marshal Ferdinand Foch, spent nearly two decades in France after the turn of the century as an attaché. He now claimed that he had recently toured Unoccupied France.<sup>38</sup> Afterward, he remained in Paris for six months, where he tried to ascertain what Frenchmen thought about Giraud, de Gaulle, and the CFLN. Of his sources, he said: "I know intimately people in every walk of life – very old friends who trust me as one of themselves."<sup>39</sup> Mott's informants again echoed other contacts who denied de Gaulle's legitimacy through expressed fear of a communist France wrought by purges, reprisals, and civil war. And like many of the administration's French sources, Mott implied that his informants wanted American protection because they were "broken" and unable to manage events themselves. In another remarkable claim, he declared that nine-tenths of the French public would support American control over French affairs. Mott indicated that he had discussed these points with Colonel Robert Solberg, the military attaché in Lisbon, who expressed full agreement. Neither of them, Mott wrote, "thought on March 4th that the subject we were discussing was going to become so critical on April 4th,"<sup>40</sup> the day de Gaulle assumed commander-in-chief powers previously exercised by Giraud and invited communists Fernand Grenier and François Billoux to join the CFLN.

Mott's memo enjoyed wide circulation among senior US officials. Yet it soon became apparent that Mott had not been forthcoming about his French sources. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall discovered that Mott had stayed at the Bristol Hotel while in Paris. German military and Gestapo officers largely occupied the hotel during that time, and Mott's sources turned out to be "old French Army friends, career civil servants, and important businessmen who were producing war material for the Germans."<sup>41</sup> Mott, somewhat chastened when confronted with the issue, nevertheless reiterated his belief that there were between 60,000 and 100,000 communists running loose in France, just waiting to make trouble.<sup>42</sup>

Mott's colleague Colonel Solberg also deserved further scrutiny. The son of a Polish general of the Czar's army, Solberg had himself been a Czarist cavalry officer in the First World War. After the Russian Revolution, he escaped to the United States. In December 1940, he joined US Army intelligence and later Donovan's precursor to the OSS, the Coordinator of Information. He was deeply involved in the Lemaigre-Dubreuil intrigues in North Africa but was dismissed from the OSS by

Donovan in June 1942 after an unauthorized trip to North Africa. He returned to Army Intelligence and served out the rest of the war as a military attaché in Lisbon and, after the war, in Brussels, a position from which he continued to warn of communist revolution.<sup>43</sup> In spite of these circumstances, Mott's claims were long-lived. Two days after Marshall's letter to the president, the MID issued a report relaying Mott's earlier claims, with no mention of Marshall's disqualifying memo.<sup>44</sup>

Given this climate, it is not surprising that relations between the Algiers Committee and the United States hardly improved, even as the invasion drew near. In mid-March, Roosevelt provided Eisenhower his directives for the upcoming landings. While he allowed him to deal with the CFLN, Roosevelt instructed Eisenhower to do nothing that constituted recognition of the committee.<sup>45</sup> May and June were dominated by further disputes over recognition and currency arrangements after the invasion. Roosevelt refused to formally invite de Gaulle to Washington, DC, because he was not a head of state, but leader of a committee, and he forbade united nations radio from broadcasting the term "provisional government" after the CFLN adopted the title on June 3. French representatives continued to demand clarification of the US government's relationship with the now *Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française* (GPRF) and to denounce Allied plans to issue currency after the invasion, a direct contravention of French sovereignty. Still the administration refused to adjust its policy, despite the efficacy of the Resistance after the landings. De Gaulle finally visited the US in July, but he came away with little more than Roosevelt's promise to consider "de facto" recognition, a bromide that meant very little. In France, however, Eisenhower recognized de Gaulle's importance and the necessity for French administration of liberated areas. With this in mind, he turned over the liberation of Paris in August to de Gaulle and General Philippe Leclerc's Second Armored Division.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, throughout that spring and summer conservative Europeanists in the State Department, military intelligence, and their French partners kept up the drumbeat.

In the weeks after Liberation, many in the State Department came to realize what Eisenhower and OSS analysts already knew, that there was no alternative to de Gaulle. Even those who embodied his most serious opposition – including Matthews and Hull – began to soften their position and pressure Roosevelt to recognize the GPRF. Their French sources also noted shifting winds and refocused their efforts from delegitimizing de Gaulle, who now seemed inevitable, to an area in which they had enjoyed substantial success – awakening the United States to the red menace threatening France and Europe.

In September, State Department representatives in Paris reported conversations with prewar French friends, who now indicated acceptance of the GPRF, but widespread concern about communist influence and post-war intentions. Rather than admitting the error of previous claims of Gaullist fellow-traveling and an imminent communist coup, these French sources asserted that this had been prevented only by the invasion and swift arrival of American and French troops.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, French informants continued to warn about communist activity and appeal for American intervention. One French military official in Spain told the US Naval attaché that there were tens of thousands of Spanish “reds” along the border with France and recommended sending US troops to prevent the emergence of a “completely Communistic France.”<sup>48</sup>

As opinion on de Gaulle and the GPRF evolved, Hull finally wrote to Roosevelt recommending recognition, stating that many of their fears about de Gaulle had been allayed. Still Roosevelt refused. Lord Halifax, the British ambassador to the United States, blamed concerns about communism and de Gaulle’s strength – the same issues put forward by French sources in their contacts with US intelligence. “Admiral Leahy had so constantly predicted to the president that the liberation of France would give signal for civil war,” he said, “that Mr. Roosevelt, until recently, did not believe that de Gaulle could firmly establish his authority in France.”<sup>49</sup> These predictions were unrealized, but Roosevelt was not done drawing conclusions about events in France.<sup>50</sup> By mid-October, however, international developments intervened. Eisenhower wrote the joint chiefs that it was in their military interest to have a strong French government that could prevent disturbances in rear areas, especially with another hard winter approaching. Whatever they thought of de Gaulle, he argued, there was no one stronger. He further advised that if de Gaulle fell, chaos would ensue and spread to the rest of Western Europe, leaving one superpower – the Soviet Union – dominant over the continent.<sup>51</sup> Acceding to pragmatism, Roosevelt finally relented and recognized the GPRF on October 23, 1944. Despite this reevaluation of policy, the American perception of France as weak and fertile ground for communist intrigue remained unchanged.

This image of France persisted, in part, because entrenched views among American officials continued to be massaged by their French associates. The administration’s refusal to entertain assessments that challenged these views also contributed to their inflexibility in the face of evidence that contradicted the accepted line. One episode in mid-November 1944 illustrates the trend. By then, France was liberated, de

Gaule was in power, and the PCF maintained a prominent position within the government. Echoing this reality, in October, Selden Chapin at the embassy in Paris submitted a report describing a commemorative ceremony honoring resistance martyrs at the Père Lachaise cemetery, hosted by the PCF. The memo, and the source – “a reliable observer who attended the ceremony” – painted a positive picture of the event as disciplined and patriotic. Other observers further noted that the communists would not now risk their position by hasty action, and that, to the contrary, they would work to demonstrate their honest desire to cooperate in France’s restoration and avoid any impression that they were operating in the interests of the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> Senior State Department official Raymond E. Murphy was incredulous. He quickly dismissed any suggestion that the French situation was not dire or that the PCF had less than revolutionary aims. In November, he wrote the department’s French experts and demanded that they suppress the memo.

Murphy, a natural conspirator and ardent anti-communist, was a specialist in international communism who reportedly ran a secretive office within the European division dedicated to rooting out worldwide communist subversion. He had already worked closely with the FBI on the domestic communist threat.<sup>53</sup> Murphy’s letter was a direct challenge to anyone who was too sanguine about French communism. In a cover note to a harsh rebuttal of Chapin’s memo, and despite US representative to the CFLN Jefferson Caffery’s similarly optimistic assessment of French political conditions, Murphy surprisingly discounted the use of personal interviews as being “non-productive.” Though Chapin only mentioned the presence of Marcel Cachin, the editor of communist newspaper *l’Humanité*, at the event, Murphy seized on the possibility that US officials might talk to a communist; artful schemers like Cachin, he grumbled, “always present a picture at variance with the facts.”<sup>54</sup> Rather than engage PCF sources, Murphy now advocated for close readings of communist tracts and papers. He pointed out that a like-minded expert in the Paris embassy, Norris Chipman, had recently employed this type of analysis and that since then, “the data from Paris presents a different picture.”<sup>55</sup> Subsequent reporting seemed to reflect renewed emphasis on textual analysis of communist papers as the true source of communist intentions; again, it repeated the same formula to discredit the PCF.

Analysis emanating from the White House, State Department, and military intelligence and based, in part at least, on information provided by French contacts, thus acted as critical support of the administration’s policy rather than the other way around. Here, the risk of politicization of

intelligence was acute. State Department and White House officials, in particular, sought to justify their French policy. At the same time, their French sources sought to defend their pretensions to be members of the same team as their American counterparts. Moreover, Murphy's treatment of a rather benign alternative explanation of communist behavior further highlighted the tendency to reinforce conventional wisdom and suppress other conclusions.<sup>56</sup> While there were occasional caveats placed upon the qualifications and intentions of a particular source and acknowledgment of their grievances, State Department and military intelligence too often did not link these issues to the evidence and claims presented by their sources.

On December 2, journalist Walter Lippmann, newly returned from France, wrote that he wished he could report that "the tragic muddle" of official US relations with France had been clarified by recognition of the GPRF. This had not been possible, he argued, because "the staff of the embassy in Paris is the same staff that so completely misjudged the French Resistance when Admiral Leahy was at Vichy, and when Mr. Murphy was at Algiers."<sup>57</sup> While Lippmann did not question their desire to see the GPRF succeed, he argued that their records precluded them from contact with important elements in post-Liberation France.<sup>58</sup> Gravely wounded by US policy choices and flirtation with discredited French groups, Franco-American relations ended the year as they had started – anxious, uncertain, and decidedly chilly.

#### LES NATIONAUX

Koren's memo suggested that the entrenched view of a weak France, bred by contact with a certain French milieu, was neither the only one nor an accurate one. In fact, there was another image bubbling up from exchange between other French sources and OSS intelligence analysts. These contacts – *les nationaux* – contested the predominant view, especially the suggestion that France had no stake in the war, that it was bent on revolution, and that it was churning with anti-American sentiment. In doing so, they also challenged the very premises upon which American policy rested. While other French sources painted a rather unambiguous view of de Gaulle's association with French communists, these informants suggested that the situation was less clear-cut. Most argued that de Gaulle was the only possible leader of liberated France and that any criticism of American policy was grounded in the reality of the French situation, not in deep-seated hostility to the United States. These informants also underscored American misapprehension of the

communist threat; to them, PCF militants were patriots who sought expulsion of the German invader, reform of a corrupt system, and their rightful place in French politics. In turn, these sources offered a more hopeful image of France as a strong and reliable ally.

The OSS's heterogeneity and its challenge to the State Department's monopoly on foreign information meant that its analysts routinely clashed with the department's Europeanists. Many in official Washington, DC, viewed OSS R&A as a "cadre of academic radicals incapable of producing objective intelligence estimates in the context of an intensely politicized war," and they were routinely accused of harbouring sympathy for socialist parties and trade unions.<sup>59</sup> However, as Barry Katz points out, there were actually three intellectual communities that worked together under the banner of OSS analysis: mid-career scholars with a conservative outlook but deep hatred of fascism, a cohort of graduate students and newly minted PhDs who routinely challenged established avenues of inquiry, and a "community of the uprooted" – "refugee scholars of a theoretical disposition, leftist orientation, and massive erudition."<sup>60</sup> Despite military and State Department protestations to the contrary, the reality was that R&A spanned a broad political spectrum, but they represented a broader liberal tradition that eschewed vulgar anti-communism and appreciated the desire for change among the war-weary French in France and among their colonized subjects in France's empire.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, documentary evidence and post facto testimonies confirm that OSS analysts successfully submerged their ideological diversity within a set of overriding principles and goals. Without a powerful patron and facing hostility from rival agencies, they knew they would influence policy only if US leaders had confidence in the impartiality and quality of their products.<sup>62</sup>

Many of the OSS's connections came from among those groups dismissed by the administration, namely Resistance circles in Algiers and metropolitan France. In some cases, their sources' political and personal motivations are difficult to distinguish, because these were not recognizable, well-placed informants. But their lack of prominence suggested that they reflected prevailing sentiment in France in ways that French pretenders to power could not, even if they had a stake in American support for de Gaulle and the Resistance. In fact, these informants had a much closer understanding (both in proximity and in reality) of de Gaulle's authority and PCF intentions than the administration's other more influential contacts. Moreover, their associates in the OSS – many of them experts in French culture and history – carried with them their own enduring ties to France and a rigorous academic appreciation of French conditions.

These academic credentials often served them well. H. Stuart Hughes, a Brown University historian and expert in European intellectual history before the war, reported to Washington, DC, that many of the important French political and Resistance leaders in North Africa were university professors and that they had found it “very helpful to get in touch with them in our capacity as scholars.”<sup>63</sup> French academics helped the OSS to navigate Resistance politics. From this vantage point, OSS analysts understood that de Gaulle, “supported by a coalition of leftists and intellectuals, was the political force with which the Americans would have to deal.”<sup>64</sup> Subsequent trips into southern France also confirmed the importance of the Resistance and their belief that communists posed no threat to stability and order.<sup>65</sup>

From the outset, OSS analysts noted that de Gaulle’s detractors and the critics of the CFLN tended to come from a particular French milieu. One report in January indicated that those who disputed de Gaulle’s pretensions to represent French authority or lamented the “pro-Russian tendencies of [his] political maneuvering” tended to be certain high officials now out of office but hoping to be called back after the war.<sup>66</sup> OSS analysts further noted that the most pessimistic assessments of France’s future and the belief that revolution was imminent came from industrial leaders frightened by the prospect of communist influence on their workers. Seeing through these schemes, the report authors maintained that ostracism of de Gaulle by elements who had contacts with Vichy or a role in North Africa in 1942 “appears at present as excessive and dangerous.”<sup>67</sup>

Other reporting denied suggestions that France was lurching toward extremes or that it was not actively in the war. The OSS office in Bern, a clandestine center of resistance activity due to its proximity to the French border, described France in early 1944 in positive emotional terms. It was “a completely different France from that of the years after the armistice. It is a France united in its resistance to the force of occupation. It is a France that has got a hold of itself, a France that appreciates the gravity of coming events, a France that is morally ready to play its role.”<sup>68</sup> The French people, they argued, desire neither a military dictatorship nor a dictatorship of the proletariat. The report concluded with an appeal to France’s allies to recognize this spirit of France and to help it recover from the trials of the prewar and wartime years. While the immediate period after Liberation could witness some violence among the dispossessed, there would be no bloody revolution in the sense feared by American officials but instead a movement to help the state best the trusts that had contributed to French decadence and defeat.<sup>69</sup>



Subsequent OSS analysis questioned the bases behind anti-communist whisper campaigns, the same rumors that PCF leaders protested in letters to the CFLN. One analyst noted the PCF's vehement denial that they hoped to discredit American officials in North Africa or that they planned to organize a movement hostile to the American army at the time of Liberation. Communist leaders were, the analyst continued, "strictly practical men . . . [with] a desire to get the business in hand over with as quickly and efficiently as possible"; in other words, to free France from the Germans, to punish traitors, and ensure the French people have a government of their own choice.<sup>70</sup> The analyst further noted the communists' moderate line of foreign policy, and their positive statements about the United States and appreciation of the important role the United States would play in postwar France. While communists used "revolution" as a political slogan to appeal to disaffected groups who sought deep reforms in postwar France, there was no evidence, he argued, of communist plans to seize power in France. The real danger of revolution would come only if the Allies tried to prevent the French from reaching a democratic solution to their problems.<sup>71</sup>

In early March, while fantastic rumors about a communist uprising swirled in other governmental circles, OSS Bern reported information received from a representative of Northern Zone Resistance on the communist role in the underground. This source noted that the PCF had transformed as new faces replaced old and more patriots joined its ranks to fight the Germans. Communists were not a group apart hoping to further their own ends but an integral part of the Resistance that recognized the authority of de Gaulle and the CFLN. They showed no capacity or desire to transform the Resistance into a revolutionary party. "It is entirely wrong to suppose," he argued, "that in arming the French Resistance you are arming a revolution."<sup>72</sup> The source's OSS contact confirmed his claim about communist methods; it may be surprising to American observers, the American analyst wrote, but there was no evidence of PCF efforts to establish separate Resistance organizations.<sup>73</sup>

Another Resistance leader reiterated that internal politics had been submerged by the reality of the dangers they faced. He denied charges that France was moving toward extremes. He also reminded his interlocutor that the desire for reform of French society emanated not solely from communists but from many other popular elements longing for a more just and responsible system. The French people would oppose dictatorship under any guise, but that it was also inconceivable to return to the status quo before the war.<sup>74</sup> The same source echoed widespread distrust

of prewar political and military leaders – the same circles that enjoyed profound influence among the American governing elite – and positive views of de Gaulle. He maintained the Resistance's devotion to the United States, but he did not whitewash current sources of tension in Franco-American relations including reluctance to arm the Resistance, American bombings over France, and the French belief that any Anglo-Saxon interference in French civil affairs originated with the United States. This informant insisted that it was necessary to immediately install a strong French power that could mete out justice and prevent a spiral into civil war. Above all, he said, "it is essential that no foreign administration of the AMGOT type be established in France as it would be taken as a symbol of national humiliation."<sup>75</sup> This was, of course, in direct contrast with the administration's other contacts who denied de Gaulle's popularity and actively sought American intervention in French affairs.

In April 1944, OSS Chief William Donovan forwarded Roosevelt a memo from one of his representatives in Spain who had just met with an important Resistance leader, code-named "Delphi." Delphi also reported increasing disillusionment with the United States and growing admiration for the Russians, then seen as bearing the brunt of the war in Europe. However, he said that this would change once a second front was opened in France.<sup>76</sup> Aware of American contact with prewar politicians and reactionary French, he argued that these exchanges had caused American hesitation toward de Gaulle and damaged Franco-American relations. The French, Delphi argued, overwhelmingly wanted de Gaulle and not a return to the previous regime.<sup>77</sup>

When Charles de Gaulle invited two communist leaders to join the CFLN as ministers of air and state on April 4, certain circles took this as evidence of collusion between Gaullists and communists. OSS analysts in Algiers, however, scrutinized de Gaulle's statements and came to another conclusion entirely. His comments on March 18 and on April 4 demonstrated, they argued, "the chief results of the news that General Eisenhower would have complete liberty of action to make political arrangements in France appear to have been a stiffening of French nationalism, and a greater unity among Frenchmen loyal to de Gaulle and the committee."<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, their information suggested that American policy had achieved the opposite of the desired effect. News of the noncommittal policy, they said, was at least partially responsible for the participation of communist representatives in the government for the first time in French history.<sup>79</sup> On March 18, de Gaulle merely indicated his desire that the committee represent all groups, but it was

only after announcement of Eisenhower's authority that two PCF deputies joined the CFLN.<sup>80</sup>

Other resistance elements in the metropole met with OSS representatives later that spring. On May 1, the head of the OSS Bern (and, many years later, director of Central Intelligence) Allen Dulles, reported that recent arrivals into Switzerland from France detailed great suffering among the maquis at the hands of the Germans and Vichy militia, including liquidating individuals and entire centers of resistance, giving lie to any suggestion that the French people remained outside of the war. It was no wonder that they felt abandoned by the Allies, Dulles said, especially since material support for the Resistance seemed inadequate.<sup>81</sup> In this context, bewilderment over US hesitation in arming the Resistance was hardly a sign of anti-Americanism but rather an indication of the harsh realities that American policies engendered inside France.

On June 1, 1944, just days before the Allied invasion of France, an OSS Airgram detailed Franco-American tensions, then at their lowest state since the creation of the CFLN. In a remarkable departure from military and State Department analysis, which usually blamed Gaullist and communist anti-Americanism for any difficulties, OSS analysts again underscored potential blowback from current policy. Moderate French, they argued, had begun to question the good faith of the United States. This was, the authors asserted, a new development informed by old issues – the US and British refusal to recognize the Algiers Committee, continued bombing of French cities, and the lack of agreement about civil administration of France after Liberation – and aggravated by new ones, including the lack of American interest in the British invitation to de Gaulle to discuss Franco-Allied relations in London and failure to reach an agreement on exchange rates after the invasion. Emboldened by American hesitancy, colons – the French population in Algeria – had also stepped up efforts to discredit the government and its reform program for Muslims in North Africa. At the same time, pervasive suspicion of American dealings with Lemaigre-Dubreuil and the Orléanist pretender to the defunct French throne, the Comte de Paris (which many took to show US support for rightists), and rumors of secret meetings with General Giraud only fed fears of an American conspiracy. “It must be recognized,” the analysts concluded, “that one consequence of current American policy toward French affairs has been a steady loss of goodwill of ‘solid’ French whose primary desire in international affairs is to be pro-American.”<sup>82</sup>

Other analysts further underscored the errors of American policy and their consequences for Franco-American relations. That summer, OSS

Lieutenant Colonel Roger Griswold wrote that German and Vichy propaganda claiming that the Resistance was made up entirely of fanatical communists and criminals who want to deny all private property and individual liberty was causing undue apprehension. He further opined that perhaps this was why more arms had not been delivered to Resistance groups. If one believed certain military circles in France, he continued, a “savage campaign of liquidation” would be unchained after Liberation and that great excesses would be committed by the elements of the fanatical left.<sup>83</sup> Griswold himself believed that this possibility was small; it was more likely, he wrote, “that the minority which has borne the brunt of persecution, has manned most of the Resistance, and, perhaps, sacrificed the most in order to liberate France, believes that it deserves to have the largest voice in the new government of its country.”<sup>84</sup> In contrast to most State Department observers who were appalled by the prospect of purges and reprisals in France, Griswold expressed sympathy for the desire to punish traitors. The death penalty for treason, he wrote, “will, quite justifiably, be exacted in a great many cases,” and he warned these events were likely to be distorted by an American press catering to an audience craving headlines.<sup>85</sup>

Griswold further highlighted the damaging effects of American misapprehension of the situation in France. Popular condemnation of the French Revolution in the United States was likely rooted in high school readings of *A Tale of Two Cities*, which, he argued, had served to “discredit French social manifestations for well nigh a century in the eyes of Anglo-Saxons, and has left in many a subconscious readiness to accept derogatory reports of French internecine savagery.”<sup>86</sup> He concluded that “irreparable injury to Franco-American relations can be done now by false, one-sided, or sensational reports of violence and bloody revolution in Liberated France,” not only in implanting stubborn false impressions in American minds but also in intensifying bitter feelings among the French. The United States should recognize France as a full and willing partner in any postwar framework and avoid any intervention in French internal affairs; failure to do so, he wrote, might lead a humiliated France to turn to xenophobia after the war.<sup>87</sup>

OSS reports, like internal French memos, suggested a pragmatic relationship between Gaullists and Communists, rather than a secret alliance. In late June, another OSS Airgram from Algiers reported that the opening of a land front in France had crystallized differences between communists and the more conservative “official” Resistance. While de Gaulle and his cabinet members in the GPRF preferred concerted military operations to

expel the Germans, communists preferred a popular uprising, which other Resistance leaders claimed they would use to consolidate their political position. Yet the Airgram also revealed that communist Resistance elements, especially the *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans* (FTP), continued to follow the orders of the *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (FFI) command, where military and conservative elements predominated. It further argued that indications (some of which originated with sources admittedly hostile to the PCF) that communists were beginning to oppose official policy were “still too fragmentary to be conclusive.”<sup>88</sup> Communists in the GPRF continued to cooperate loyally with their colleagues even if their differences over methods remained unresolved.<sup>89</sup>

At the end of June, Harvard professor Ramon Guthrie reported his impressions to Donovan and Roosevelt. Decorated for military service in France during the First World War, Guthrie was also a French-trained expert on Marcel Proust and a member of expatriate literary circles in interwar Paris.<sup>90</sup> Now an OSS officer in North Africa, he took direct aim at the administration's French policy. He reported that his sources in Algiers and the metropole agreed that Roosevelt should personally clarify his policy and assert America's desire for France to retake her place among the great powers, a position at odds with the president's belief that France was finished as a global force. Guthrie boldly added that the US should admit mistakes in handling French issues. And again, he reported his sources' belief that American dalliance with rightist elements had only increased de Gaulle's prestige as a symbol of “revolutionary faith.”<sup>91</sup> His informants also believed that American reluctance to arm Resistance groups and failure to recognize de Gaulle were due to the fear “they might become powerful enough to set up a government too democratic for our liking in postwar France.”<sup>92</sup>

Most of all, Guthrie and his sources directly contested the administration's assessment of French history and recent developments. The Resistance was not composed of criminals hoping to exploit wartime chaos; *the Resistance was France*. Revolution in the French context was not necessarily a bad thing; there were “legitimate revolutionary aspirations” in a nation still divided between the Blacks (Bourbons) and the Reds (Jacobins),<sup>93</sup> ambitions that Guthrie believed the US should make clear it had no intention to thwart.<sup>94</sup> His French contacts believed that the policy of the United States thus far had been to support the “Blacks” against the “Reds,” and that the US had been “consistently . . . less intent on crushing Fascism than on combating European democracy and returning France to the control of the ‘200 families’ . . . responsible

for the downfall of France.”<sup>95</sup> Guthrie also pointed out that communism had been a “firmly established political doctrine in France for over a century.” It is not a foreign “ism,” he said, “and it is not promulgated by foreign agitators.”<sup>96</sup> He was careful to distinguish between PCF leaders who were more prone to doctrinaire theories and expressions of hard-core Marxism, and rank and file members who were less motivated by ideology and held fast to revolutionary (and democratic) virtues “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” Noncommunist members of the Resistance inside France confirmed that communists were generally adhering to the various resistance organizations, rather than keeping separate, as other reports had suggested. These sources told Guthrie that they did not believe that France would ever “go communist,” although they assumed that the PCF would rightfully constitute a large minority in postwar France. The United States, Guthrie concluded, should avoid interfering in French domestic affairs, allow the French to participate in their own liberation and reconstruction, and encourage the formation of a democratic government “that the overwhelming majority of the French people seem to desire.”<sup>97</sup>

After Liberation, William Koren’s memo further highlighted the continued ignorance of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) officers in Paris about the actual situation in France. To start, he argued that they circulated in very restricted social circles and parts of Paris that were “grossly atypical of the city and France as a whole.”<sup>98</sup> He contended that many had drawn the wrong impression that the French were hopelessly divided from cursory readings of party newspapers; they were also wrong, he said, in criticizing FFI groups in Paris for being idle, forgetting SHAEF refusals to arm them. Moreover, American officials, feigning alarm over the jockeying between different Resistance factions in Algiers and London and between old Vichyites, again failed to remember the cutthroat rivalry among wartime agencies in the United States. He also pointed out that the idea that the French were swinging toward a bloody revolution rested with US military officers, who as a group were “not much for social change.”<sup>99</sup> For them, the word “revolution” conjured images of the Paris Commune, but to most French it was a good thing, a “vote-getting word.”<sup>100</sup>

By late October, OSS reporting also reflected a changing mood after Liberation characterized by growing anxiety over communist postwar intentions and division between governing factions. Allen Dulles’ sources inside the hexagon maintained that France was not communist, and that the PCF was really a minority group struggling to maintain its influence. He also reported that French political leaders were far from meekly accepting

communist dictates; “the red is fading out of the old political parties,” he said, “and the Socialists are now just a respectable left-center group, and the Radicals have become practically conservative.”<sup>101</sup> However, Dulles’ associates tread a fine line that foreshadowed later French efforts to win American aid and support. On one hand, they reassured their American colleagues that de Gaulle was master of the situation, but they also warned against underestimating the communist danger. While de Gaulle’s adversaries had argued that American recognition of the CFLN would invite a “socialistic dictatorship,” Dulles’ informants now suggested that hesitation toward his provisional government might well do the same. “If not strengthened,” Dulles warned, “the Provisional Government . . . may not be able to meet the determined threat of the communist minority, and elections held by a partially discredited unrecognized government might well lead to a communist victory.”<sup>102</sup>

While their counterparts in the State Department challenged reports that seemed to suggest that communism was not the menace they believed it to be, OSS analysts contested the vision of France presented by contacts who had clear political aspirations like many of those who found an attentive ear in State Department and White House circles. These were hardly similar approaches. In Raymond Murphy’s case, he dismissed the observations of a source offering a view contrary to his reading of the situation and responded by insisting on a move away from personal interaction toward a hard reading of communist tracts by analysts in the US embassy. By contrast, OSS experts specifically challenged the credibility of sources themselves because of their obvious personal grievances, political ambitions, and connections to the past that undermined their claims. They did not deny circulation to the information reported but offered critical analysis of the composition and motivations of these sources; occasionally, they recommended against entertaining their schemes.

OSS analysts clearly understood that administration sources were attempting to use contact with US intelligence to lobby for their interests and shape American policy, often through fear-mongering and self-promotion. On October 31, 1944, Donovan sent the president a copy of a memo from Colonel Jean Fabry, a former French minister of war who had voted full powers to Pétain in 1940, in which he waved the red flag of revolution and seemed to appeal for American intervention in France. OSS analyst (and prominent Harvard historian of France) Crane Brinton responded to the memo in an attachment sent to Roosevelt. Brinton bluntly dismissed Fabry’s memo as “nothing new” and “entirely an attempt at ‘international lobbying’ by ‘ex-Giraudists.’”<sup>103</sup> He continued:

These people still, no doubt, continue to try to influence the American government, but I believe OSS ought not to allow itself to become a channel of communication between this group – or any French pressure group – and the American government. A document of this sort has a certain value as indicating the state of mind of the author and his group. But we have other ways of obtaining this sort of information, ways less compromising to us than the formal acceptance for transmission to Washington of what amounts to a request that the American government should intervene in French domestic politics.<sup>104</sup>

Brinton further denied Fabry's contention that the PCF was a strong revolutionary party "ready at the slightest chance to seize power by violence," and he reminded Donovan and Roosevelt that the fear of the PCF was still of "nightmarish strength" among most of the propertied classes including businessmen, what was left of the aristocracy, the higher clergy, and the rentier classes.<sup>105</sup> The real problem, he said, was to find out how legitimate this fear was. Moreover, he pointed out that the PCF was not the only political party in France; the Socialists were probably stronger than the PCF and a real rival for leftist votes. Millions of Frenchmen, Brinton said, want above all "order, security, peace; most of them want these ends achieved by a strong government, which can make economic and social reforms according to (roughly) the Scandinavian pattern rather than the Russian pattern."<sup>106</sup> Most French are, he concluded, certainly as eager as Fabry to avoid a bloody civil war.<sup>107</sup>

The OSS assessment of the situation in France thus differed dramatically from the administration's analysis. Because many of its sources were not high-level functionaries with clear political agendas, the risk of politicization was not as grave. Where the risk did exist, OSS analysts often noted when political agendas seemed to drive the evidence presented by these sources. Many OSS liberals espoused leftist views and sympathized with the Resistance elements they encountered in France and North Africa. OSS analysts were not entirely objective or immune to the same forces that colored the views of other administration officials; however, the effects of mind-set rigidity are often mitigated by depth of experience.<sup>108</sup> In this way, many OSS analysts had a profound advantage over their counterparts, for Crane Brinton, William Koren, Ramon Guthrie, and others like them had decades of contact and experience in France. Conversely, Roosevelt's own understanding of French affairs was limited, and many of his conservative advisors' views had been conditioned by their common membership in elite circles, narrow engagement with specific elements of French society, and a well-developed disdain for anything communist. These were the days before the aim of "policy neutral"



analysis was paramount, and OSS analysts often criticized the administration's shortsighted policies.<sup>109</sup> In doing so, they offered clear dissent from the conventional view, and they led the way in fostering another lofty and time-honored goal in intelligence circles, speaking the truth to power.

#### THE COMMITTEE AND THE COMMUNISTS

While administration officials and their French contacts stoked the image of France as weak and simmering with revolution, and OSS analysts and their sources argued the contrary, CFLN and PCF leaders confronted a more complex situation. In fact, their internal memoranda belie any claims of anti-Americanism, apathy, or real collusion between the two factions beyond a desire to unify the Resistance and expel the Germans. Gaullists, while recognizing the necessity to work with all French factions, remained wary of communist postwar intentions and closely monitored their activity. They did not foresee communist revolution after liberation, and they noted that present communist plans seemed to align with de Gaulle's call for national insurrection.<sup>110</sup> Gaullist officials envisioned a situation in which the PCF, rather than fomenting civil war through an uprising, would gain from their adherence to unity and criticism of CFLN policy to bolster electoral strength and to position themselves as the most powerful political party in postwar France. The PCF, alarmed by anti-communist rhetoric circulating in collaborationist circles and within more conservative elements of the CFLN, dedicated much of its energy toward Resistance unity and defending itself against charges of anti-Americanism and fomenting civil war. Any Gaullist-Communist alliance represented the common aim to expel the Nazis and extirpate Vichy. Their rivalry was not part of a civilizational battle with an existential threat; it was part of a political struggle among Resistance factions jockeying for influence. It was a question of authority, a concern that extended beyond the metropole into the empire, with implications for France's status and place in the postwar world.

Gaullist officials, for example, feared that communist agitation in North Africa undermined France's position with its traditional allies. Anglo-American recognition of the CFLN as the provisional government of France, one correspondent argued, "depends too much on the recognized authority of this committee by our allies for this authority to be placed in question, especially in North Africa."<sup>111</sup> Others feared that communist activity might alienate certain loyal segments of Muslim

populations who considered France “a dog pound of communism,” and drive them into the arms of the Allies.<sup>112</sup> Some suggested that native leaders of protectorate nations might use the communists’ bitter criticisms of the CFLN against them. “This is not about fighting ideology,” one report said, but about preserving France’s colonies “from a perhaps mortal danger.”<sup>113</sup> Several pointed out that reactionary colons were also using the threat of communism to damage the government (and its reform agenda); if the CFLN failed to dominate the PCF in Algiers, they claimed, then it could not be expected to act effectively against it in France in the event of an insurrection.<sup>114</sup> To CFLN officials, communist criticism was hardly constructive, another rhetorical weapon handed to the committee’s detractors.

CFLN officials also feared that communist agitation among the colonized would stir up anti-French sentiment and give sustenance to burgeoning independence movements. Many acknowledged that communist activity among colonized peoples could be well-intentioned, but it was dangerous. “Consciously or not,” Léon Muscatelli, the Prefect in Algiers argued, “believing they play their own game, they are also playing that of nationalist Muslims who are more concerned with demands for autonomy than communist ideology.”<sup>115</sup> In early February, General Charles Mast, the resident general in Tunisia, reported that communist speakers there had extolled the virtues of the Soviet method of incorporating 40 million Muslims into the USSR. He warned that while the Tunisian Communist Party (PCT) seemed to support some vague link between Tunisian and French people, their program looked quite a bit like the nationalist Neo-Destour platform a decade before the war.<sup>116</sup>

Other reports acknowledged the communists’ belief that their activity served French interests by drawing native populations away from nationalist parties. The problem was not communist propaganda itself, one analyst noted, but the fact that nationalists might eventually adopt the same methods used by communists to interest the masses.<sup>117</sup> Whatever the PCF’s intentions, another report noted, it was certain that communist agitation among the colonized made the government’s duties much more difficult.<sup>118</sup> While communist militants bravely fought the Nazis in France, one report said, in places like Tunisia they threatened to undermine the delicate political balance.<sup>119</sup> In November, Mast noted that the local party in Tunisia had adopted a much more aggressive tone, recommending direct action against the government. He suggested that this was likely due to PCF instructions and tied to developments in the metropole.<sup>120</sup> Ten days later, GPRF representatives in Algeria recommended

that officials in Paris draw PCF leaders' attention to "exaggerations" in local communist propaganda and suggest that they keep tighter rein on the Algerian Communist Party (PCA).<sup>121</sup>

While North Africa remained the focus of GPRF concerns about communism among the colonized, there were a few indications by late 1944 of communism's growing influence in Indochina. Until then, much of the government's focus was on reestablishing French control of the area through participation in the Pacific War and on blunting the propaganda of a disparate group of nationalist parties clamoring for independence. On July 24, 1944, General Zinovi Pechkoff, the GPRF delegate in China, wrote to the Commission on Foreign Affairs noting a recent report on revolutionary Annamite groups. It had suggested that the communists in Indochina seemed to be the most moderate and skillful; it was this group, he believed, that would become the most formidable opponent of the colonial regime.<sup>122</sup> Here, as in North Africa, communism appeared as political opposition rather than a revolutionary ideology. "Although it is inspired in its grand lines by Moscow propaganda," the author wrote, "communism in Indochina must not be considered as a doctrine but above all as a party of opposition to a government regime which groups all of the discontent."<sup>123</sup> Their focus on social questions had earned them widespread support among all native classes.<sup>124</sup> By December, there were further indications of an attempted connection between the metropole and communists in Indochina. GPRF intelligence services reported that they had intercepted a message from French communists in Indochina to the PCF, asking the party to interest itself in Indochinese political issues and to establish methods for transmitting party directives and effecting close liaison.<sup>125</sup> While communist agitation among the colonized was not yet a major concern for American officials, French anxiety over this potential challenge to their authority foreshadowed future efforts to use anti-communism to gain American support for the retention of France's empire.

While the committee was clearly concerned that communist agitation would diminish its authority, internal CFLN memos also showed that the PCF was actually on the defensive and went to great lengths to counter anti-communist currents within the CFLN and among France's Anglo-Saxon allies. Time and again, PCF correspondents reiterated their commitment to expulsion of the invader, and they denied working to carve out a special role in the resistance or having a policy apart from the committee. They maintained their loyalty to de Gaulle and determination to wage a national insurrection inseparable from national liberation.

They were, they claimed, “like all groups, with responsibilities and rights” they hoped to exercise. Anti-communism, they argued, only undermined the union of the French people.<sup>126</sup>

Letters from the PCF to the CFLN reiterated these arguments but also addressed rumors spread by elements hostile to communism. In February, communist leaders roundly and openly rejected charges that they were preparing for civil war, and they denied attempts to discredit France’s Anglo-American allies or plans to battle American soldiers during the invasion. They argued that their preparations for the national insurrection were part of a plan of action; after all, had de Gaulle not condemned “attentisme” as a crime?<sup>127</sup> They also denied charges (contained in a CFLN letter then circulating in London) that they hoped to make de Gaulle into a Kerensky and reserve the “October Revolution” for themselves. “No one in France,” the letter argued, “dreams of opposing any government to the CFLN which the French anticipate as the provisional government of the French republic and which is an expression of all of the French energies participating in the fight for Liberation.”<sup>128</sup> They further explained that their outreach to communist parties in North Africa was an attempt to counter the pernicious influence of German agents and to develop better understanding between New France and native populations.<sup>129</sup> Aware of CFLN surveillance, PCF leaders suggested that the committee “would be better informed in addressing themselves directly . . . to the communist parties in North Africa than in sending in provocateurs who report the worst lies and nonsense.”<sup>130</sup> After having publicly denied rumors of disloyalty and plans for an uprising, PCF leaders surely appreciated that any change in position would have fatally damaged the party’s credibility and appeal to French voters.

Beyond domestic and colonial concerns, GPRF officials also displayed a shrewd understanding of the geopolitical situation unfolding in 1944 and a forward-looking agenda to assert French interests in a polarizing world. Internal memos hardly showed a desire to cozy up to the Soviets,<sup>131</sup> except as required to assert French interests in the face of the apparent Anglo-American desire to “treat old allies as quasi-defeated and old enemies as quasi-allies.”<sup>132</sup> In fact, GPRF reports warned that the Soviets were playing the Resistance against the government.<sup>133</sup> They demonstrated their growing appreciation that relations between the Big Three were deteriorating and that their allies had not yet grasped the implications of this development. In contrast to the lethargy and uncertainty inherent in Anglo-Saxon policy, one report noted the Soviet Union’s dynamism and its rapidly increasing preponderance upon the

European continent. "The face and destiny of postwar Europe may," it said, "... be determined well before the end of hostilities."<sup>134</sup> The authors further noted the weakness of French means to have their voice heard but argued that they must do all possible to express France's interests. Far from suggesting that France throw in its lot entirely with the Soviet Union, the same report reflected an early push toward a western bloc to balance Soviet strength on the continent.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, de Gaulle's visit to the Soviet Union that December showcased difficulties with the Soviets. In addition to tense exchanges over the future of Poland, there was a stark reminder that France stood on the precipice. After showing a fictional war film in which the Russians emerge victorious and revolution breaks out in Berlin, Josef Stalin turned to de Gaulle with a sly smile and remarked that this image "must not be pleasing to General de Gaulle." With pursed lips, de Gaulle retorted, "in any case, it hasn't happened yet."<sup>136</sup>

Finally, the obvious disparity between the administration's French sources and Gaullist and communist officials demonstrates that French national identity was tied up with competing views on the obviously increasing dependence on the Americans. Gaullist and PCF officials were troubled by the continued influence of "les américains" and others tainted by collaboration and defeatism. Communist leaders wondered aloud if US officials were dreaming of "being able to use leftover parliamentarians who have no honor or courage, a pile of sous-Chautemps who carry before history the responsibility for capitulation in the face of the enemy."<sup>137</sup> General Luguët wrote in January that the general atmosphere in the US was characterized by "harmful actions on French and American milieus by persons occupying or just occupying posts," a reference to some military men close to Giraud and Pétain and former politicians known for their attachment to Vichy.<sup>138</sup> He noted the lack of moral unity among the French colony, which only weakened the nationalist position and strengthened the other side. US officials, he said, continued to see the CFLN as internally divided into opposing elements that were dangerous for order, and as representing only the French outside of France. To Luguët, it was therefore important to demonstrate "the force represented by France in Europe and in the world"; an accord with the Soviet Union offered one opportunity.<sup>139</sup> American obsession with communism in France had thus led the French to consider use of force to display strength, and it had driven their ally toward, rather than away from, the Soviet Union.

At the same time, GPRF representatives vied to shape intelligence on France and counter the narrative of French weakness and communist revolution cultivated by "les américains" and administration officials.

Days after Liberation, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover informed the State Department and military intelligence that French representative to the United States Henri Hoppenot had forbidden CFLN representatives from having any contact with several of the administration's French sources, including Alexis Léger, Geneviève Tabouis, and Camille Chautemps, a former prime minister and Vichy's vice premier.<sup>140</sup> Tried and convicted in absentia in for collaboration after the war, Chautemps had chosen to stay in the United States after a visit in 1940 and became another émigré source for US intelligence. It thus seemed that continued American contacts with reactionary circles reinforced the GPRF's belief that they must challenge the prevailing narrative with displays of French power and influence. In 1944, the French desire to project strength was not only about substituting prestige for power and restoring grandeur,<sup>141</sup> it was also about outmaneuvering "les américains" and demonstrating the legitimacy of "les nationaux" as the voice of New France.

As the year drew to a close, Hoppenot wrote that the pervasive influence of certain French factions coupled with a set of views then entrenched in the Roosevelt administration had led to "a total ignorance of the state of mind in France, of the absence of any national basis for the authority of General Giraud, and an obstinate misunderstanding of the dynamism emanating from the Fighting French movement and its connections to the French Resistance."<sup>142</sup> Despite these constraints, relations had improved because US policy had succumbed to "realities stronger than itself."<sup>143</sup> As Koren had before, Hoppenot suggested that the actual situation in France differed dramatically from the image put forward by administration officials and their French counterparts.

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In the end, there was something to Koren's criticism of American policy and the sources upon which it seemed based. He raised the issue because the views he ascribed to American officials in Paris were typical and he believed they might affect US policy on France.<sup>144</sup> It is notable that these sources came from specific circles with political agendas, that they had access to important American officials, and that their views at least bolstered US policy and reinforced a particular vision of a defeated, emotional France in need of American tutelage. Moreover, the claims of these sources dovetailed in remarkable ways with the criticisms of the French that Koren had highlighted.

The persistence of this image – fed by French informants and their American contacts – did affect Franco-American relations. In an ironic

twist, it was both a blow to French unity and its catalyst. The failure to recognize de Gaulle meant that pressure groups of all sorts continued to jockey for power even when the focus should have been on practical questions of support for the invasion and the civil administration of France. Ultimately, however, American hostility only galvanized de Gaulle's support and led to lingering bitterness between France and the United States. OSS analysts recognized this, and so did those military leaders concerned with operational details, including Eisenhower. Alarming reports about communist influence in the underground and their post-Liberation intentions also fueled American hesitation in arming the French Resistance, another blow to Allied unity and French partisans. These sources thus reinforced prevailing American views at the same time that they introduced and perpetuated Cold War stereotypes of a communist threat more than a year before the end of the Second World War.

The importance of Koren's memo, though, extends well beyond his critique of American attitudes and policy. The tenor of his memo, and his own arguments against the major complaints, suggested that this image of France was not the only one. Indeed, other French sources in contact with OSS analytical circles contested American policy and the image of a weak and defeated France. It also demonstrated that there were real choices and options here; this was not about anonymous sources and analysts who toiled in the shadows and never broke through. We now know that their views and criticisms made it to Donovan and the highest reaches of American authority – Secretary of State Hull, Admiral Leahy, and President Roosevelt. Through their exchange with OSS analysts, these sources provided an important challenge and counter-narrative to prevailing views.

As Henri Hoppenot suggested, this image of France – battered but steady, tending toward moderation, ready to assume global responsibility, a worthy and valuable ally – more clearly reflected the situation and circumstances inside France; internal French memos bear this out, and subsequent events proved it true. The vast majority of French people accepted de Gaulle as their leader in 1944. SHAEF officials estimated that Resistance action resulted in “an average delay of two days on all German units attempting to move to the battle,” while the OSS concluded that the tactical intelligence provided by the underground had been of “enormous importance” to the success of American operations.<sup>145</sup> Just weeks after D-Day, Eisenhower himself lauded Resistance contributions to allied advances and rewarded their efforts with a dramatic increase in supply drops to the maquis throughout France.<sup>146</sup> The communists did not

attempt to seize power at Liberation. Nevertheless, the pattern of Franco-American engagement was set for the foreseeable future; driven by fear of communism, US officials continued to interfere in French affairs while their French counterparts adeptly maneuvered to protect their own interests.