

**First in War, Then in Peace:
Eisenhower and de Gaulle**

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He was, the biographer tells us, “born in a small rented frame house, not much more than a shack, beside the railroad tracks in Denison, Texas.” He was the third son; there would be three more, six boys in all. His parents were “Mennonites, fundamentalists in their religion, and pacifists.” The year was 1890, the day October 14.

Some five weeks later, on November 22, in the city of Lille, in northeastern France near the Belgian border, another boy was born. He was also a third child. Eventually there would be five. His parents lived in Paris, but “following tradition,” a biographer writes, “his mother went to her mother’s home . . . to give birth . . . far from the hedonism of the *belle époque* in the capital.”

Some fifty years later, their countries, France and the United States of America, and the world at large, came to know these men. In 1940 and 1941 each was a general in the army of his nation, one of a handful of men who led the war that defeated Nazi Germany, restored democracy to Western Europe, and preserved it for the English-speaking peoples.

After that war each man, as a civilian, led his country. In 1959, almost twenty years after the critical events of 1940, when these men, now age 68, met again in Paris, one was president of the United States, the other president of France. As generals, then as presidents, they were first in war, then in peace.

The first man, of course, is Dwight D. Eisenhower, the second Charles de Gaulle.

The Second World War brought them together. Charles de Gaulle declared his leadership of Free France in 1940, after his country capitulated to Germany. In 1942 Dwight Eisenhower assumed command of allied forces fighting Germany in North Africa, and the next year he took command of all of allied forces in Western Europe.

De Gaulle and Eisenhower met in 1943, in Algiers in North Africa, before each secured the unrivaled position that he would reach before the allied victory in 1945. One of the last times they were together was at a summit meeting in Paris in 1960. As they prepared to face a furious Nikita Khrushchev, de Gaulle said to Eisenhower, “With us it is easy. You and I are tied together by history.”

Despite their common age, no one who saw them would think they were twins. De Gaulle was tall—six feet three inches—with a small head and ungainly arms. He was also austere, and throughout his life gave the impression he was born to rule. His arrogance irritated many people, military and civilian, including President Franklin Roosevelt, who feared a de Gaulle dictatorship, but he won the respect of many others, including Eisenhower.

Eisenhower was known as Ike from his first day at West Point. He was everyman, or seemed to be, although he was a man of determination, apparently even temperament, and able to get things done. Ike’s biographers portray his leadership as a result of discipline and self-control, learned and exercised at some cost to his health. He believed in learning from men who knew more, and

said so. Five feet, ten-and-a-half inches tall, he was built and moved like the athlete he was as a young man, but he did not grandstand. He had a certain humility, and was seen as a common man.

One has the feeling that de Gaulle knew everything from the beginning, or thought he did. Fortunately for France, what he knew, and the person he was, served the needs of his country. He was seen as an exceptional man and seems to have been essentially the same person as an army officer and political leader as he was as a child.

It is not unusual for a military man to become the leader of his country, to reach the top in two arenas, in France or the United States or elsewhere. But the lives of Eisenhower and de Gaulle, which began at the same time, followed parallel, then intersecting paths for more than seventy-five years. They allow us to see how men serve different countries in different ways. Neither man would or could have led the other's country. France needed a strong man, a republican monarch. The United States respects uncommon men who appear to be in some sense very ordinary.

I. Origins

Eisenhower grew up in rural America, far from the nation's centers of power and wealth. His hard-working family was without wealth or position, but strong religious faith.

When Dwight was about 18 months old, the family moved from Texas to Abilene, Kansas, a town of 3,500 people, where he would live until he was almost 21. His mother and father had met at a small United Brethren college in Kansas. His father initially ran a general store, which failed, then worked for many years as an engineer or mechanic at a creamery in Abilene.

The Eisenhower brothers, who were educated in the public schools, were vigorous and competitive. Dwight's ambition in those days was excellence in sports, especially football. He graduated from high school in 1909 in a class of 25 girls and nine boys.

Although a somewhat indifferent student, Dwight loved history, especially, he said many years later, "conquerors, battles, and dramatic events . . . warriors and monarchs." He did not see himself in history, but read it as end in itself. One high school classmate predicted that the adult Eisenhower would be a professor at Yale.

Young Eisenhower worked many jobs while in school, including picking apples and harvesting wheat. After high school he worked for two years at the creamery where his father was employed. After unsuccessfully trying for the Naval Academy, he won an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

De Gaulle's family was "from old traditional France, with noble and bourgeois connections, provincial roots, and a deep-seated Catholicism." His father taught philosophy and literature at a Jesuit school. The adult de Gaulle called his younger self "a little Lille boy in Paris" and wrote later that he was "a man of the north." In fact, he grew up in Paris, the capital and center of French culture, in what one biographer describes as "a mixture of history, patriotism, religion, and the moral and family sentiments which are inseparable from them." He attended Catholic schools in Paris and Belgium.

Growing up in an "affectionate, equable atmosphere" at home, Charles was in physical appearance awkward and ill at ease, but self-confident, with dreams of grandeur. In childhood games, and barely in his teens, he assumed he would someday command the French army.

De Gaulle's parents were royalists. They did not accept the Republic, even though they saw no chance of Restoration. The important thing was serving the nation in existing institutions, one of the soundest of which was the army of the Republic

At age 14 Charles decided he wanted to sit for examinations at Saint-Cyr, the French Military Academy, and improved his grades so he could do so. At 15 he saw himself as a general, as a man of destiny. "That mysticism," John Eisenhower points out, "ran completely counter to the disposition" of his father, whom he characterizes as "the practical Ike."

II. Army

DE GAULLE

De Gaulle passed the academy examinations in 1909, at age 18. He served the customary year as an enlisted man in an infantry unit in northern France, then two years at Saint-Cyr. He worked hard at his studies when he saw a purpose, but he also stood out by his independence of mind. Graduating in 1912, he chose the infantry over the more glamorous cavalry.

De Gaulle was 23 when the World War broke out in 1914. He had what some would call "a fine war." He was wounded three times as a company commander, left for dead on the field of Verdun, was rescued by the Germans, healed, and imprisoned. He escaped three times, was captured again, and spent 32 months in captivity.

In the twenty years after the armistice in 1918, de Gaulle rose from captain to lieutenant colonel and, in one historian's words, achieved "the unofficial status of theorist, writer, and soldier with ideas." He served in Poland, the Rhineland, and Lebanon. He taught at Saint-Cyr and studied at the War College. He married and fathered three children.

His first commanding officer was Col. Philippe Pétain, later the hero of the battle of Verdun. Pétain, who achieved the rank of marshal, dominated the army in the years between the world

wars and took an interest in de Gaulle's career. He encouraged de Gaulle's assignment to two central planning offices, one of them, in de Gaulle's words, at the disposal of the premier "for preparing the state and the nation for war."

De Gaulle believed the army should put its resources into modern attack weapons, tanks, and aircraft, rather than defense. And the national defense should include economic mobilization. Germany adopted de Gaulle's ideas; France did not.

De Gaulle saw war as an extension of politics, and believed that the future of France depended on republican, not authoritarian, government. So during the years between the wars this restless colonel, who could not vote or belong to a political party, sought allies and wrote books. He drafted legislation, but encountered opposition on both the Right and the Left. One ray of hope was a sympathetic hearing by Paul Reynaud, de Gaulle's first major political backer, whom he met at the end of 1934.

During these years, de Gaulle says in his *Memoirs*, there were fourteen governments. He learned "the extent of our resources," he wrote, "but also the feebleness of the state." The problem was not the men, "but the political game [that] consumed them and paralyzed them." The result: "everything converged to make passivity the very principle of our national defense."

In 1937 de Gaulle was given command of a tank regiment, far from Paris. As German troops moved into Czechoslovakia and then Poland, France "played the part of the victim that awaits its turn," de Gaulle said. Reflecting on French and British appeasement of Hitler at Munich, he wrote later, "[a]gainst that I could do nothing."

EISENHOWER

When the European war started in 1939, Eisenhower had served for six years as chief aide and speechwriter for General Douglas MacArthur—in Washington, while MacArthur was chief of staff of the army, and in the Philippines, where MacArthur was building an independent Filipino military establishment.

Eisenhower entered West Point at age 20 in 1911. He sought a free government education because it was the only one he could afford. But from the time he took the oath, he recalled near the end of his life, he knew "it would be the nation I was serving, not myself."

Cadet Eisenhower had a rebellious streak. He was a prankster, a smoker, and a poker player, and he accumulated far more than his share of demerits. A football knee injury in his second year ended his hopes for an athletic career, but he coached a successful junior varsity football team. And there was some recognition of his potential: He was "born to command," one of his evaluations said. Ike was commissioned a second lieutenant at his graduation in 1915, a year after the start of the war in Europe.

Eisenhower spent several years in Texas, where he met and married Mamie Dowd. They had two sons; the older boy died at age three. Assigned to an Illinois National Guard regiment on the Mexican border, Ike became the commanding officer's right hand man and found he enjoyed the authority "behind the throne." He began to devote more time to professional study and reading.

The United States declared war on Germany in 1917. Given an independent command, Eisenhower organized Camp Colt at Gettysburg from scratch, dealing with the community and congressmen as well as the five to six thousand recruits who were trained and sent to France. For Eisenhower, the war was a great disappointment. The Army refused to send him to France and, in Michael Korda's words, "finally ordered him sharply to stop complaining and serve where he was ordered to."

After the war Eisenhower commanded a tank battalion, and along with his friend George Patton, set out to develop doctrine for tank warfare; both published articles in *Infantry Journal*. Ike studied hard at the Army's Command and General Staff School and graduated first in his class of 275 officers. He later worked with General John J. Pershing, America's war commander in Europe and retired army chief of staff. He was later assigned to the assistant secretary of war and the army chief of staff to plan for war mobilization and the role of air and naval forces worldwide. This work, Ike wrote later, "opened up to me an almost new world."

In the years between the wars, both Eisenhower and de Gaulle served in the field, but both also worked in their country's central planning offices and were known to the highest officers in the army. While Eisenhower worked in a stable government and nation, however, de Gaulle tried to move his unsettled but overconfident government to a more aggressive strategy and capability. De Gaulle had a political agenda. In the 150 years after the Revolution of 1789, France had swung back and forth between republican and autocratic government. But France was also, despite many invasions, the oldest unitary state in Europe. De Gaulle saw France and the state as something beyond the current constitution—a land, a people, and an entity whose honor and very existence had to be defended against attack over and over again.

III. War

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, and the Second World War was underway. After Poland's defeat, and six months of inaction—the so-called Phony War, Germany quickly took over Denmark and Norway, and drove into the Netherlands and Belgium and then, in May 1940, France.

De Gaulle was promoted to the temporary rank of brigadier general and given command of an armored division in Northern France. As he surveyed the area, and encountered "miserable processions of refugees" and "soldiers in rout," he wrote later, "I felt myself borne up by a limitless fury." The war, he said, "must go on. . . . If I live, I will fight, wherever I must, as long

as I must, until the enemy is defeated and the national stain washed clean. All I have managed to do since [then] was resolved upon that day.” De Gaulle’s soldiers made a vigorous counterattack, but the division was “ill-equipped, understrength, and lacking logistical support,” and its efforts were in vain.

The Germans chased the British army and many French soldiers across the Channel to England. As the “dispirited French army” prepared to defend France north of Paris, Paul Reynaud, now prime minister, appointed de Gaulle undersecretary of state for defense and asked him to provide liaison to Great Britain and its new prime minister, Winston Churchill. De Gaulle found himself almost the only man in the government opposed to making peace with Germany.

LONDON AND ALGIERS

When Reynaud resigned and the 84-year-old Marshal Petain agreed to form a new government, De Gaulle decided to leave France and Churchill agreed to help him. De Gaulle flew to London, feeling, he wrote later, “like a man on the shore of an ocean, proposing to swim across.” The Petain government on the same day asked Germany for an armistice.

The French cabinet and many others believed that Britain would also surrender. But Churchill pledged to continue the fight. Later that day de Gaulle broadcast a radio message from London to the people of France.

“Whatever happens,” de Gaulle told his countrymen, “the flame of French resistance must not and will not be extinguished.” He pledged to continue the war against Germany. He urged French officers and soldiers, and armament workers and engineers, to make contact with him.

The surrender to Germany was “not only a disastrous military armistice, but enslavement of the state,” de Gaulle said. The French parliament voted virtually absolute powers to Petain as chief of state. His puppet government administered the country from the town of Vichy.

On the day of his broadcast to France, de Gaulle said later, he stopped being a soldier: he no longer obeyed orders. His biographer, Jonathan Fenby, points out that de Gaulle “had no mandate from anybody He had never been elected to any post, and had held a junior government position for just twelve days.” Yet he claimed to speak in the name of France and continued to do so until he was installed and recognized as head of the French government four years later.

At the end of June 1940 the British cabinet recognized de Gaulle as “leader of the Free French.” Officers of the French army and navy, however, notably those in North Africa, regarded de Gaulle as a traitor and Vichy as the seat of the legitimate government.

De Gaulle and Churchill disagreed and fought off and on, but their relationship endured. De Gaulle might be, in Korda's words, "Pigheaded, obstinate, infuriating, and obsessed with France's grandeur (and his own) but he . . . proved to be a loyal ally [to Britain] through many difficult and even terrible moments."

Eisenhower was, like de Gaulle, a lieutenant colonel when the war began in Europe. He served as commander or chief of staff in several infantry units after he returned from Manila. When the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, General George Marshall, the Army chief of staff, ordered Eisenhower to the War Department in Washington. He was soon promoted to brigadier general and sent to London to facilitate cooperation among the Allies.

That summer (it was now 1942) Eisenhower was made commanding general of the U.S. European theater of operations and promoted to Lieutenant General. He worked closely with the military, naval, and air force chiefs of Britain and the U.S. He conferred with King George and Britain's war cabinet, and for fifteen months met with Churchill twice a week for lunch or dinner.

"From the very first moment," Korda writes, Eisenhower "charmed the British, and put them at their ease. They might bewail his lack of strategic brilliance . . . but nobody . . . underrated his unique ability to command a coalition . . . [E]ven his critics praised his fairness, his energy, his patience, his common sense, his authority, and above all his matchless ability to deal with even the most difficult of prima donnas"—including Churchill and de Gaulle.

Eisenhower commanded the invasion of North Africa in November 1942, an exclusively Anglo-American operation in hopes that French troops there would support the Allies when they arrived on the beaches. De Gaulle was not told of the invasion until it took place. In the following year a provisional French administrative committee was established in Algiers with de Gaulle as co-president; neither the U.S. nor Britain recognized the organization as a government.

De Gaulle and Eisenhower, now a four-star general, met face to face in Algiers in June 1943. De Gaulle arrived late, as he often did, and spoke first: "I am here in my capacity as President of the French Government," he said. Eisenhower told him, acting on orders from Roosevelt and Churchill, that General Henri Giraud must remain commander of the army of Free France. De Gaulle was outraged at this interference with French sovereignty and walked out of the meeting. Ike ignored de Gaulle's presumption and did not report it to his superiors.

De Gaulle took it upon himself to make the administrative committee in Algiers a virtual government with representatives of the political parties, including communists, and administrators for areas as they would be liberated. As the Allies began to win battles, and Frenchmen came to believe that Germany—and Italy—could lose the war, de Gaulle won the popular struggle for leadership of what was now called Fighting France.

Over the next six months, even with frequent disagreements, Eisenhower and de Gaulle came to appreciate each other. Despite Washington's distrust of de Gaulle, Ike "was now convinced that de Gaulle was the one man who could rally all Frenchmen fighting Hitler."

Eisenhower called on de Gaulle before leaving North Africa to command the Normandy invasion. De Gaulle, writing much later, quotes Eisenhower as saying that his initial, unfavorable judgment of de Gaulle was wrong, and asking for de Gaulle's help. De Gaulle's reply, as he remembered it, was: "Splendid. You are a man! For you know how to say, 'I was wrong.'"

NORMANDY AND VICTORY

De Gaulle was flown to London and told the date of the Normandy invasion only the day before. He objected strongly to Eisenhower's D-day broadcast to the French people; it put the Allies in charge of the country as Germany retreated, and made no mention of de Gaulle or his government-in-waiting. Later that day de Gaulle made his own broadcast; he urged cooperation with the Allied army, but subtly asserted French control of the country.

Eight days later De Gaulle took a French warship to France and attended a pre-arranged rally in the town of Bayeux. Eisenhower was visiting Normandy the next day when he first learned of de Gaulle's trip. Ike was furious, but the enthusiastic, emotional welcome de Gaulle received was a sign of his strong support.

The Allied policy in France was to work with whatever groups would cooperate in fighting the Germans. Yet at de Gaulle's request Eisenhower changed the plan calling for his forces to bypass Paris on their way to Germany. He diverted one French division to Paris and one American division so it could march through Paris on its way to battlefields to the east. French soldiers and de Gaulle entered Paris on August 25, and the German commander surrendered.

Two days later Eisenhower made a formal call on de Gaulle and "by doing so extended *de facto* recognition of de Gaulle" as provisional president of the Republic. Ike made other changes in the use of troops in France to accommodate de Gaulle's wishes, and let the French take credit for many Allied successes.

In the early years of the war, one biographer points out, Eisenhower had perfected "the art of leading while leaving no trace." He was "getting to be good at politics as well as war."

In Korda's words, "Ike was largely responsible for the swift, smooth transition de Gaulle made from controversial exile to the unquestioned leadership of France," and de Gaulle recognized this. Without Eisenhower's decisions, it is doubtful that de Gaulle could have said when he took over in August 1944, "I was France, the State, the Government . . . that moreover was why, finally, everyone obeyed me."

The tenacious Germans did not give up easily, and there was much hard fighting before Germany agreed to an unconditional surrender the following May.

De Gaulle's remarkable achievement is that as the Germans retreated, France was not occupied by other foreign armies, there was no revolution or communist takeover, and the nation emerged from war and four years of enemy occupation with French leaders. De Gaulle came out of the war as the savior of France.

Eisenhower led history's largest armed force and freed Western Europe and the Mediterranean from tyranny. His efforts extended far beyond the American chain of command to building and sustaining support for his mission among foreign institutions and leaders, including de Gaulle. Both generals engaged in the acquisition of political power outside conventional boundaries.

IV. Peace

PRIME MINISTER

De Gaulle headed a provisional government in France from 1944 until January 1946, when he abruptly resigned. His country, he wrote, was a nation "ruined, decimated, torn apart." It had to overcome the vicious divisions of collaboration and resistance to the German occupation, rebuild itself economically, and organize a legitimate political structure. But drafting and adopting a new constitution were subject to all the old enmities. De Gaulle's beliefs and capabilities were no match for the mundane realities of French politics.

He favored a direct link between voters and a chief executive. He did not want to be the chief of a parliamentary majority, and he did not believe in dictatorship. But France was a parliamentary nation, in which parties could easily assert their differences, and its politicians were reluctant to give power to a chief executive. Some feared Gaulle: The communists accused him of seeking a "plebiscitary dictatorship." Former premier Leon Blum compared him to a royal pretender to the throne.

The next year de Gaulle called for a rally of the French people—not a party, but a movement. Although he headed the movement, and his followers were known as Gaullists, he moved to the village of Colombey and after the early 1950s was not active in public life. He rejected the rank of marshal, the nation's highest military rank, remained a two-star general, and wrote his memoirs. But he believed he would be called to serve again and kept in touch with events and sympathetic politicians.

AMERICA LIKES IKE

For the United States, the war was an undisputed victory, supported by a united people. Its government was stable, guided by a constitution adopted two years before the French Revolution.

General Eisenhower was almost 55 years old at the end of the war. After two years as chief of staff, he was tired and wanted to retire from the army. He became president of Columbia University in 1948. At the end of 1950 he accepted President Truman's nomination to command the armed forces of NATO, the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Eisenhowers moved to Paris.

Eisenhower never thought of himself as a politician, despite his years working at the highest levels of government. He did not vote. He often expressed a disdain for politics and politicians, and had no use for partisanship. Like de Gaulle, he spoke only of duty to country.

Partly because he stood outside party politics, both Republicans and Democrats courted Eisenhower to run for president. Making the strongest effort was a group of internationalist, anti-isolationist, Republicans on the East Coast. They appealed to Ike before he went to NATO, sent emissaries to see him after he got there, staged a huge, roaring rally at Madison Square Garden in New York, then took a film of the movie-star-studded event to show him.

After he saw the film in Paris, Eisenhower reportedly broke into tears. He sent word to his Republican backers that he would run. The next day he wrote to an old friend in Abilene. "I can't tell you," he said, "what an emotional upset it is for one to realize suddenly that he himself may be the symbol of that longing and hope." He came to believe he could achieve for his country what no one else could—security and peace.

In June 1952 Eisenhower resigned his NATO post and returned to the U.S. to campaign. He proved to be a likeable and effective campaigner. The campaign slogan was "I like Ike." Before crowds he often threw up his arms in the shape of a V, a gesture that the public de Gaulle also used. Eisenhower offered an alternative to the party that had run the country for twenty years and the often-nasty politics of the Truman years. He easily defeated Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois, in 1952 and again in 1956.

Despite the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the United States settled down to prosperity and peace. Eisenhower did nothing to overthrow New Deal policies of his Democratic predecessors, and he reduced government spending, especially for defense. He negotiated an armistice in Korea and rejected repeated calls for military action elsewhere—against the Soviet Union and its satellites, and in the Far East. Fears of communists in our government dissipated after a few years.

The titles of two books about Eisenhower tell us a good deal about the nature of his leadership. The first is *The Hidden Hand Presidency*. The second is *Ike's Bluff: President Eisenhower's Secret Battle to Save the World*. As supreme commander and as president, Eisenhower was able to use his own best judgment while satisfying his superiors in the war and keeping the support of allies in war and peace. But he and his actions frequently were not, as we say these days, transparent.

Ike was firm in his views but focused on results. In doing so, one reviewer of *Ike's Bluff* says, "Eisenhower, deliberately if mysteriously, did much to diminish his own image. Imagine a more recent president saying, 'That's just too complicated for a dumb bunny like me' and not catching hell for it. Then imagine a man who quit smoking by ordering himself to do so. Eisenhower's combination of courage, petulance and cunning are hard qualities to reconcile."

"A combination of courage, petulance, and cunning"—Eisenhower and de Gaulle were not so different after all. Both were to some extent men of mystery, but with Ike we didn't know it.

DE GAULLE RETURNS

Despite ever-changing governments, France eventually prospered in the years after war. It joined with its neighbors to create new institutions of economic cooperation, including the Common Market. It was a founder of NATO. Its biggest challenge, however, was trying to hold on to its colonies in Indochina and Africa against the forces of revolution and independence. These colonial wars took a heavy toll in French lives, pride, and treasure, and undermined the army's confidence in the government.

Algeria was legally part of France, with one million French settlers and nine million indigenous Muslims. A long, savage guerrilla war came to a head in demonstrations and violence in the spring of 1958. European Algerians and the French army seized power in Algiers. In Paris there were fears of paratroop landings and civil war. Over the preceding months, one French government had resigned, then another, unable to bring the turmoil to an end.

General de Gaulle, now 67 years old, had been out of government for twelve years. But there were increasingly strident calls for him to take over. He appeared reluctant to get involved. But he believed that the only escape from an army takeover, and a civil war after that "would be through a figure of national authority, and that authority could only be mine."

De Gaulle waited until he could set conditions for a return to power in accordance with the constitution. Finally, two weeks after the coup in Algiers, he said, "I am ready to assume the powers of the Republic." The president asked him to form a government; the National Assembly granted him emergency powers for six months and authority to draft a new constitution. That fall voters approved a new constitution with strong presidential powers. A body something like the

American electoral college chose de Gaulle president for a seven-year term, and he took office in January 1959.

De Gaulle's larger goals were to strengthen the nation's leadership and to restore the autonomy of France and its position as a great power. To this end France developed an independent nuclear deterrent and withdrew from NATO's military structure. It resisted further European integration.

To strengthen the country's leadership, de Gaulle sponsored a constitutional amendment that provided for popular election of the president. The amendment was approved and de Gaulle, ran in a national election for the first—and only—time and won. He was 75 years old.

De Gaulle learned to use televised press conferences and speeches to great effect. Looking behind the public man, and at his entire career, Fenby says that de Gaulle was a bluffer and a gambler. "But, behind his arrogant intransigence," Fenby writes, he could be calculating in achieving his ends. Like most successful betters, "he was often considerably less headstrong than he appeared, taking care not to burn his bridges prematurely and not to expose himself unduly."

A controversial figure when he was alive, de Gaulle is now widely credited with saving France twice. His greatest achievement may be that, after 57 years, the constitution he framed is still in force, and the strong presidential office has been used to advantage by friends and foes, socialists and conservatives.

THEY MEET AGAIN

After de Gaulle became president, President and Mrs. Eisenhower made a state visit to Paris in 1959. In the spring of 1960 de Gaulle visited Ike at the president's retreat at Camp David, with a side trip to Gettysburg and a visit to the young Eisenhower grandchildren—to whom de Gaulle spoke English.

The two presidents met in Paris again in May at a four-power summit conference on disarmament. The conference convened two weeks after the Soviets had shot down an American spy plane—the U-2—over its territory and captured the pilot. At the first session, an enraged Khrushchev harangued the Americans and demanded an apology. Eisenhower evenly explained that the U.S. had ended the overflights, but did conduct espionage to guard against surprise attack. The summit conference collapsed, and so did Ike's great hope for an accommodation with the Soviet Union. After the Soviets walked out, de Gaulle went around the table to take Eisenhower by the arm, telling him, "Whatever happens, *we are with you.*" Eisenhower left office the following January, in 1961, and retired to Gettysburg.

De Gaulle led his country for eight more years, but not without challenges. Agitation by university students in the spring of 1968 brought a general strike and fear of a takeover by radicals or the army. After a secret promise of army support, de Gaulle addressed the nation on

television, and the crisis was over, a triumph of his leadership. A year later, however, voters rejected a constitutional amendment that was, in effect, a referendum on whether de Gaulle should continue in office. He resigned the next day. He had been president for almost eleven years.

Eisenhower died in March 1969 at the age of 78. De Gaulle flew to Washington for the funeral. John Eisenhower describes his last glimpse of de Gaulle: “[D]ignitaries from around the world attended the funeral. But among that glittering array, Charles de Gaulle stood out. Though still president of France, he appeared officially in his brigadier general’s uniform. I stood by while he came up and leaned over to speak to my mother. . . . *‘Vous savez,’* he said, *‘que le general etait pres de mon coeur.’*” (“You know that the General was close to my heart.”)

De Gaulle resigned as president of France the following month, and died the next year, two weeks before his 80th birthday.

Two nations, two men; first in war, then in peace.

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