

Dubious Liberators: Allied Plans to Occupy France, 1942-1944

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Forty-six years ago this June, the largest invasion force in the history of mankind landed at Normandy, initiating a series of bloody confrontations with the occupying German armies that ended ten months later in Berlin. The international press dispatched wire photos of ecstatic French civilians embracing exhausted Allied soldiers. The liberation of France—and of Paris in late August—is perhaps the twentieth century's giddiest moment. But a perusal of recently declassified American documents suggests that that liberation may have occurred only after martial law and occupation became unfeasible.

The German retreat across northern France in the weeks following D-Day transformed the newly liberated country into a vast political power vacuum. Control of the civil administration of France—the day-to-day mechanics of its local and regional financial, police, educational, medical and legal institutions—would assure political control after the liberation of Paris.

Three major groups had plotted over three years to ensure that that power would be theirs. Within France, the Communist-dominated Resistance planned local insurrections to undermine and seize seats of government prior to the arrival of the Allies. From London and Algiers, Charles de Gaulle's Free French attempted to thwart Communist coup efforts, place agents within France and lead the first wave of troops to each mayor's office until a national Gaullist régime could be declared. American interests were to prevent both groups from seizing power until Allied military and political objectives could be ascertained and enacted upon.

"Civil Affairs" divisions of the Allied armies were dropped by parachute in the second wave of the assault at Normandy. These administrators—civil engineers, attorneys, investment bankers, military policemen, scientists and physicians trained in a secret military government school in the United States—raced by jeep to town halls to take control of each village moments after it was liberated. To the chagrin of both the Gaullists and the revenge-minded Communists, they usually retained Vichy local administration, but sometimes appointed their own mayors. They sealed roads, declared martial law, captured and guarded food supplies. Meanwhile, Gaullist and Communist forces were maneuvering to politically sabotage the Americans. Hours after Eisenhower's troops paraded through Bayeux, the first town liberated after D-Day, it found itself with three mayors.

Conflicting Views

French historians have tended to react ambivalently to American policy on France during the last half of World War II. They describe a dual American role as liberators and thwarted oppressors, citing first-hand knowledge of American distribution of U.S.-printed "occupation francs" and clashes between Allied and Gaullist civil affairs authorities as evidence of the Allies'

initial intentions. The French enjoyed fewer civil rights and food rations after liberation than they had under Nazi rule throughout the summer of 1944—a fact that became less understandable after the triumphant troops had rolled eastward. Franklin D. Roosevelt personifies the roots of French mistrust of the United States. The president often expressed contempt for France's quick defeat to Germany in May-June 1940. In Roosevelt's view, that defeat, coupled with the shame of the subsequent Vichy collaborationist régime, justified his belief that France should never again rise to the stature of an international power in the postwar world. Roosevelt's May 8, 1943 letter to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill appears throughout French accounts:

I am more and more of the opinion that we should consider France as a militarily-occupied nation and governed by British and American generals...We would keep 90% of the [Vichy] mayors and a large percentage of the lesser bureaucrats of the cities and departments. But the important posts would remain the responsibility of the military commander, American and British. This will last between six months and a year...Perhaps [General Charles] de Gaulle can become governor of Madagascar.

French historians across the political spectrum have long been convinced by de Gaulle's assertions that the American President hoped to impose AMGOT—Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories—on France. Military governors trained in Virginia would administer "liberated" France for as long as a year, until a pro-American French civil administration could be installed. France would be treated, in other words, no differently than Italy—Hitler's first Axis partner.

Until now, American students of Allied policy on postwar France have been forced to rely on official U.S. Army memoirs written by aging civil affairs personnel. Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith's March 14, 1944 cable to the American and British heads of Allied Civil Affairs in London is frequently cited as evidence that any idea of imposing AMGOT in France had been abandoned months before D-Day: "We must avoid AMGOT organization [in northwest Europe]—we have already been told to do this, and the latest paper from the U.S. Chiefs of Staff emphasizes this fact." These works assert that the United States Government was prepared to recognize General de Gaulle's French Provisional Government well before June 1944 and were, in fact, on excellent terms with the leader of the Free French. According to Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, U.S. policy makers viewed France as a defeated ally to be liberated instead as a collaborationist country to be defeated as early as 1943. Even if AMGOT had been applied to France, Civil Affairs historian Merritt Y. Hughes wrote in 1948, it would have assumed a milder form taking into account the country's long tradition of republican democracy.

Both official and historical British sources provide an enlightening perspective to the French AMGOT controversy. Churchill's memoirs describe a leader trapped between two equally compelling shades of *realpolitik*. Although the British leader frequently disagreed with de Gaulle on such issues as the degree of Free French involvement in Allied war efforts, he realized quickly that only the Gaullists possessed sufficient popular support and organization to form a viable pro-Allied postwar government. When the Free French staged a botched Gaullist coup d'état in Lebanon in 1941, an enraged Winston Churchill threatened to cut de Gaulle off entirely. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden patched up the Middle East crisis and continued to mediate French and British concerns in the face of growing American opposition to de Gaulle's obvious intentions to run post-liberation France. Churchill did not share Roosevelt's nearly irrational

francophobia, but was forced to appease his ally because of the latter's role as the primary supplier of troops and materiel to the war effort. By early 1944, Churchill was commiserating with General Dwight D. Eisenhower over Roosevelt's anti-Gaullist attitudes and was eventually instrumental in quietly securing Allied recognition for the first Gaullist government.

The French situation was essentially not a concern for the Soviet Government which, as an Ally, could have exerted significant influence on the status of postwar France. Stalin, however, had little interest in backing even the Communists. France was simply too far away from the Eastern Front to be of any strategic interest to him.

The truth about American intentions towards France during the closing days of the Second World War has proven extraordinarily elusive. The stakes, however, are high—an understanding of American intentions, actions and reactions culminating with the summer of 1944 is essential to understanding French popular and political resentment against the U.S. which persisted through de Gaulle's policies as president during the 1960's and which continues as anti-Americanism today. More importantly, since the United States continues to apply policies in post-invasion situations essentially identical to those used during World War II, the costs of bungled civil affairs policies come with a nuclear price tag.

The Origins of AMGOT

When the War Department began to plan ground invasions of North Africa and Europe during the winter of 1941-2, it quickly concluded that military government would be necessary to guarantee order and security in and behind lines of advancing troops. Geopolitical concerns were paramount as well: control of a nation's civil administration would allow the United States to integrate its policies and influence throughout liberated and invaded nations' political infrastructure at the local level for decades to come. Military governors would ban indigenous political activity as they established a system of civil control favorable to American interests.

Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories, a joint military-civilian division of the U.S. War Department (today's Department of Defense), was government by soldiers. Regular army troops commanded by officers recruited from academia and business were given brief, intensive crash courses to learn how to run the quotidian affairs of a country hours after invading American troops had advanced.

AMGOT was only used twice—partially in French Algeria in 1942 and to full effect in Sicily, Corsica and southern Italy in 1943. AMGOT troops seized seats of political, economic and social power at once. They rewrote pre-invasion laws, issued new currency and enforced martial law. Defeat of the enemy was the prime directive; concerns of national sovereignty were set aside in favor of those of military law and control. After military objectives had been attained, native political organizations would be considered based primarily on the quality of their relationship with the United States.

Contemporary Views of AMGOT

Precise Allied views of France are difficult to determine due to the continuing interests of the British, American and French governments in justifying their wartime actions. The issue has been further clouded by the French who, as the most avid students of Allied civil affairs, have made little effort to document their assertions. French essays which do exist are so speculative and riddled with inconsistencies that it is tempting to deny their validity entirely. The following pages are the result of an effort to determine and explain the content and development of Allied wartime policy on France during the last half of the Second World War. The central issue in this controversy concerns the struggle between the Gaullist Free French and Allied occupation forces to administer the liberated country's civil affairs.

The civil affairs controversy is inevitably intertwined with the evolution of the Roosevelt Administration's policy towards de Gaulle from active efforts to depose him as leader of the French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN) in 1942 to recognizing his leadership of the French Provisional Government (GPRF) in October of 1944, because American unwillingness to accept Gaullist rule initiated and advanced the development of AMGOT plans for France.

The confusion of the times was mirrored by constantly shifting policies. Debates over recognition of de Gaulle and French civil administration developed in a frenzy as American and British policy makers struggled to react to rapidly changing and often conflicting military and political situations. Since both countries were independently involved in civil affairs planning by 1943, clashes of style and substance were inevitable. Within each country, military and political goals were sometimes deemed irreconcilable. Opinions varied wildly at the highest levels in both areas of planning.

Research Methods

Many policy statements, personal communications and other documents relative to the development and implementation of British and American civil affairs plans for France have been declassified recently by the National Archives in Washington and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York. A great many others have never been studied but remain available. Although most of the material cited is based on American sources, this does not pose a significant problem as the U.S. handled most civil affairs planning for France after 1943. My research set out to answer the following questions:

1. Did the United States intend to impose AMGOT or a similar form of civil administration in liberated France?
2. If so, when and why were those plans abandoned?

3. What were the precise organizations comprising Allied Military Government? What were its primary activities in invaded countries?

4. When did the Roosevelt Administration begin to understand that cooperation with the Gaullists would be necessary?

5. When was the first indication of U.S. willingness to recognize de Gaulle's provisional government?

The answers to these questions provide an enlightening view of American foreign policy makers as they blundered to react to rapidly changing events. They also reveal a stunning cultural gap between French and American accounts of the same events. For instance, Allied insistence that French AMGOT was abandoned is technically correct—AMGOT personnel and functions were transferred to the Civil Affairs Division of Eisenhower's Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in January 1944. But Pierre Viénot was not far from the truth when he told Eisenhower, "Ce que vous préparez en France, ce n'est pas l'AMGOT. C'est l'AMGOT qui ne veut pas dire son nom."

British Origins of Civil Affairs Planning, Feb. 1942 - Nov. 1943

From the moment de Gaulle arrived in London in June 1940, he used his relationship with the British government to secure popular legitimacy in France (for example, by using the BBC for his weekly radio addresses) as well as internationally. In spite of the Syrian-Lebanese crisis of 1941-2, American anti-Gaullist sentiment and differences of opinion about de Gaulle's postwar role, Churchill's government consciously established and supported the general as the symbolic representation of the Free French throughout the war. On the other hand, the United States doomed its relations with de Gaulle from the start by continuing its diplomatic relationship with Vichy. U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Roosevelt opted against granting the Gaullists the same degree of "practical recognition" as the British:

We could never, however, expect to recognize de Gaulle without breaking with the legal government of Pétain, who incidentally entertained a bitter hatred toward his former subordinate. The Vichy government, and not de Gaulle, was in control of the population in unoccupied France.

Washington's ambassador, Admiral Leahy, arrived at Vichy in December 1940. Leahy, whose anti-Gaullist sentiments bordered on the bizarre, acted as Roosevelt's most trusted advisor on France. U.S. policy towards de Gaulle was characterized by suspicion that he planned a coup; Roosevelt repeatedly opposed or ignored Gaullist initiatives to Washington in the hope that he might find a more appealing Frenchman with whom to forge an alliance. Roosevelt told the American press that there was no proof whatsoever that de Gaulle enjoyed significant support in occupied France. In the interest of ensuring postwar French democracy, he said, the U.S. Army

would supervise free elections. In the meantime, though, Roosevelt ordered OSS operatives in France to find a third alternative to de Gaulle and the Communists.

Under these inauspicious circumstances, the British government began planning its civil affairs policy for France in early 1942. Britain's extensive colonialist experience and its strong desire to reassert its influence in post-Nazi Europe led planners in Whitehall to take the lead in developing civil administration for the continent. Besides, the United States had barely entered the war and was obsessed with military objectives in the Pacific against Japan. In June 1942, Churchill approved the creation of an office called Administration of Territories (Europe) (AT(E)) under the auspices of the War Cabinet.

AT(E) signed its first formal civil affairs agreement with the numerous European governments-in-exile in February 1943. This detailed pact with Norway described Allied political, economic and legal policies to be enforced immediately upon liberation. Subsequent agreements were signed between the British government and Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Denmark. The United States did not participate in these discussions.

The British Foreign Office advised Washington of AT(E)'s desire to sign a civil affairs agreement with de Gaulle in April 1943. British civil administrative experts were thrilled at the enormous potential for economic and political influence that such a deal would have guaranteed their country. Roosevelt pressured Churchill against formally working with de Gaulle; American protests were so extreme that the British nearly severed ties with de Gaulle entirely in May. However, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden convinced Churchill of the increasing importance of Gaullism and, by mid-1943, Churchill and de Gaulle's personal rapport had solidified into a wary friendship. Furthermore, de Gaulle had consolidated his control of the French Committee of National Liberation by removing his rival General Giraud in July 1943. In August, he established his willingness to usurp legal powers by jailing two directors of the Moroccan State Bank for selling gold to Germany.

The British were adamant that civil affairs plans should make clear distinctions between the treatment of countries that had been occupied and those which had collaborated with or joined the Axis. Churchill advised Eisenhower of his opinion that France should fall into the liberated category, an attitude supported by AT(E) documentation describing the French as abused and desperate for Allied liberation.

The U.S. War and State Departments attempted to dissuade the British from their rapid consolidation over Allied civil affairs to no effect. AT(E) argued that its geographical and cultural proximity to the exiled powers and its experience with the first civil affairs agreements made it the logical entity to establish Allied postwar rule. Moreover, the British reasoned, the United States had not demonstrated any interest in civil affairs. Why should the British yield their role with nothing to replace it?

In late 1943, the U.S. entered the civil administration business once and for all.

AMGOT: The American Response, May 1942 - Feb. 1944

The United States began planning its version of postwar civil administration for liberated Europe a few months after the British, but with notably less enthusiasm and financial support. The War Department opened its U.S. Army School of Military Government at Charlottesville, Virginia in May 1942 to train AMGOT officers. Its first class graduated on August 29, 1942.

AMGOT officer recruits were civilian specialists in such fields as radio communications, power utilities, civil engineering, local government, health services, the legal profession, finance, sanitation, local and military police and public safety. Wall Street bankers were trained to create new stock exchanges and currency controls for liberated nations that they had never seen. Criminal defense attorneys from small American towns would become judges in military tribunals in matters of life and death. Most of these men were older than forty-five. After a four-month training program, presided over by Brigadier General Cornelius W. Wickersham, they were considered fully-trained and were assigned the rank of captain. More than 6,000 such students had graduated from Fort Benning at the time of the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. AMGOT trained its junior commissioned officers, noncommissioned personnel and technical staff at two facilities at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. The Georgia students were not trained in such Fort Benning staples as international law, local politics or languages. Although proficiency in the language of one's assigned country was considered desirable, the Army concentrated on training these men in their fields of expertise. This attitude appears in the "Synopsis of War Department Program for Military Government": "Only a minimum of training in the special field of military government will be necessary for them since they will already be highly trained in their respective fields for the specialized functions which they will later perform."

AMGOT trainees were repeatedly told that their priorities were to further military objectives, establish law and order with a semblance of normalcy as soon as possible and to further Allied political aims until a native régime could be put into place. The typical timetable for AMGOT occupation was deemed to be between six months and one year.

The AMGOT school in Charlottesville was supplemented by thirty private universities throughout the U.S., which taught supplemental four-month courses in the history, language, geography, customs, morals and politics of the country in which each officer was expected to serve. As of December 1943, one regiment of 1,552 such "Area and Language Specialists" including 400 officers in eight or nine companies was expected to land in France.

De Gaulle expressed his concerns about the possible imposition of military government in France soon after he received reports about AMGOT's earliest secret activities in the North African campaign. AMGOT detachments from the U.S. Army had swept into desert villages, set up command posts to replace city halls and imposed martial law. On May 21, 1943, he ordered General Delestraint to create an élite paramilitary unit inside France to seize civilian control "au moment du débarquement." Delestraint left for France but was arrested by the Gestapo on June 9th.

Many AMGOT officers accepted substantial reductions in salary by leaving their civilian posts. Nonetheless, the Army had no trouble finding eager volunteers among America's professional men. Despite their age, they could make a direct personal contribution to the war effort. There was also an element of egotism—they would be trained to rebuild Europe, if not in their own images, at least with a great deal of their influence. They saw a unique chance to add military honors to civilian prestige. AMGOT offered middle-aged Americans an opportunity to enjoy an incredible adventure in an entirely new field of endeavor—governing—before being forced to retire. It was a superb mixture of idealism and self-gratification.

AMGOT in Sicily, July 1943

Allied landings in Sicily on July 10, 1943 were the first assault on continental Europe. The invasion provided AMGOT officials with a valuable chance to test the plan without danger of political repercussion, since the island was clearly Italian/Axis territory.

AMGOT as applied in Sicily was administered without allowance for contingencies. It was run by British General Sir Harold R.L.G. Alexander, commander of the Allied forces in Sicily as military governor with Major General Lord Rennell of Rodd as chief of civil affairs. The July 18th New York Times reported that AMGOT officers were retaining Fascist bureaucrats. They were purging active party members only from top national and local offices. The newspaper quoted an unnamed AMGOT official as stating: "[It is necessary to have] someone who will keep things running." Allied soldiers enlisted the aid of the local police and militia in maintaining law and order. AMGOT divisions seized food supplies, issued rations and directed medical assistance to civilians. AMGOT law experts declared freedom of religion, particularly for Roman Catholics—an unnecessary act since Mussolini had never acted to suppress the Church. Laws that "discriminate on the basis of race, creed or color" were annulled by military rather than legal order. All criminal offenders were tried before military courts presided over by British and American AMGOT judges. Troops were ordered to protect "the physical symbols of the true Italy—buildings, libraries, monuments, archives and works of art" by shooting vandals or looters on sight, even when the culprits were Allied soldiers.

The Gaullists observed the Sicilian action with great interest. In September, French Committee of National Liberation member Pierre Viénot wrote to de Gaulle, reporting that AMGOT was a policy of law and order at all cost, including retaining fascist police and bureaucrats. Allied suppressions of free speech, the press, political activity and free assembly had tended to favor Italian monarchists. De Gaulle realized at once that a French version of AMGOT would probably precede the creation of an American puppet government in Paris—a possibility that his dreams of power could not allow.

Early Gaullist anti-AMGOT Activities: Corsica, Sept. 1943

De Gaulle's CFLN made its first stand against Allied Military Government in Corsica by appointing their own French civil administrator as prefect. Free French troops arriving with the

Allies seized Corsican mairies before AMGOT officers could arrive to find the French Army already installed and conducting business. The regular American army found themselves preoccupied with transporting thousands of Italian POWs to Sardinia and were pleased to leave non-military matters to the French.

Prefect Luizet issued a communiqué to the U.S. State Department advising it that he was protecting Italian war criminals, who were in great danger of being murdered in reprisals, and that his men were busy seizing Italian-owned transportation equipment (an act forbidden by AMGOT). He emphasized "the determination of the population not to accept Allied military rule but to insist on a civil administration" and assured that he was ready to provide one. The French later asked that the Corsican experience be used as a precedent during landings in metropolitan France, but the U.S. refused despite CFLN assurances that their civil rule "would be completely loyal to the Allies." The Americans were concerned that de Gaulle's Corsican partisans had included "more Communists than expected." This coupling of Allied aloofness and Gaullist determination to seize civil administration of liberated areas in a de facto manner was a pattern that would remain substantially unchanged until the end of World War II.

Joint American-British Civil Affairs, Nov. 1943 - June 1944

AMGOT was developed parallel to the British AT(E) program but the American version had prevailed overwhelmingly in the competition over civil administration by the summer of 1943. The United States enjoyed veto power over most British initiatives during the war thanks to its military and economic superiority, as well as geographical distance from the war's direct effects. During the Allied landing in Sicily, AMGOT absorbed AT(E), although the latter's name continued to appear jointly on documents until the end of the war. British civil affairs officers exerted influence, but no longer dominated Allied civil affairs planning.

As the invasion of France grew nearer, the Allies decided to merge their confusing web of military, civilian and educational institutions involved in civil affairs planning. The U.S. War Department's Civil Affairs Division (also known as G-5) was approved by Britain as the principal policy maker for military government in occupied Europe in September 1943. Civil Affairs was supervised by a joint committee of AMGOT and AT(E) staff in London which reported directly to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), headed by Eisenhower. The British were reduced to secondary status.

CCS decided on France as its most likely launching point for the final defeat of Germany during the fall of 1943. Accordingly, the British representative to Civil Affairs, General Bovenschen, asked permission from U.S. Army officials to sign a civil affairs agreement with de Gaulle's CFLN. The resulting Dunn-Wright Agreement was signed September 21, 1943. The document reflected a compromise between British and American views of postwar France:

"Civil Affairs for France"

The primary purpose of the Allied landing in France will be the defeat of Germany. Subject only to this, it will be the object of the Allied forces to bring about the earliest possible liberation of France from her oppressors, and the creation of conditions in which a democratically constituted French authority may be able to assume the civil administration. The ultimate aim of the Allies is the free and untrammelled choice by the French people of the form of government under which they will live. Meanwhile and until this stage is reached, the largest measure of personal and political liberty compatible with military security shall be restored to the French people. As far as the over-riding interests of military operations allow, there shall be freedom of speech, of the press and of correspondence. The French flag shall be used on French public buildings...

The Dunn-Wright Agreement became the basis for all subsequent Anglo-American discussions over the civil administration of France. Its principal points included the supremacy of military over civil priorities, the inclusion of French citizens (not Gaullists) in AMGOT personnel, the progressive transfer of control from military to civilian government and an assurance that Eisenhower would "do his best to hold the scales even between all French political groups sympathetic to the Allied cause."

Eisenhower gradually obtained pro-CFLN concessions from Roosevelt, but a conflict between British and American forces within Civil Affairs became acute in early 1944 when the British sought to overhaul the AMGOT structure and include Gaullist liaison officers during discussions of invasion strategy. The Americans refused, citing leaked military plans on the landing at Corsica to which the Free French had been privy. The British threatened to notify the French unilaterally of the timing of details of D-Day.

The British convinced Eisenhower in March that it would be difficult to invade France without French assistance. He also found de Gaulle's liaison officers cooperative and helpful. In March, he issued a directive that AMGOT terminology be dropped and that France be considered liberated rather than invaded territory. Nevertheless, the basic structure and philosophy of Allied Military Government remained intact, as proven by Eisenhower's May 9, 1944 "pep talk" to his civil affairs officers:

First of all, you are soldiers. Don't forget that. . . We went into Africa just a year ago last November. In Africa we did not have an organization of this type set up. In Sicily we were better prepared; in Italy still a lot better. We will be still better prepared when we are on the Continent due to the training you have had and the work you have done. . . Because your section of the Army is called 'Civil Affairs' you must not make the mistake of thinking you are politicians...

Civil Affairs Handbooks

Civil Affairs Division officers prepared for D-Day with a blizzard of paperwork. G-5 rushed to turn out mountains of manuals, forms, reports and reference books to assist the thousands of military governors and bureaucrats who were to administer liberated Europe. The definitive reference text for Civil Affairs staff was the Civil Affairs Handbook for each European country, including France. These mammoth works were the result of frenzied research and were based

on little understanding of France or other relevant nations. The handbooks contained stereotypical depictions which the French found offensive and would have created international incidents had they been relied upon fully by Americans operating in France.

The first draft of a sixteen-volume handbook for France appeared in October 1943. Each primitively-printed book covered one of the following subjects using descriptions and charts: Geographical and Social Background; Government and Administration; Legal Affairs; Government Finance; Money and Banking; Natural Resources; Agriculture; Industry and Commerce; Labor; Public Works and Utilities; Transportation Systems; Communications; Public Health and Sanitation; Public Safety; Education and Public Welfare.

Much of the text is insulting and even racist by contemporary standards. The French are depicted as unambitious alcoholics who have thoughts only for their next meal:

What the French want out of life is typical of their moderation—enough money to permit them a little leisure to enjoy the conversation, the food, and the family life which they prize so highly. Generally, they take little interest in advancing themselves socially or in making considerable sums of money. But they are desperately afraid of becoming poor. Hence, the famous thrift and niggardliness of the French...

Primary reference materials for the French Civil Affairs Handbook include a novel by Edith Wharton, several tour guides from the 1930's and AT(E) zone handbooks based on British impressions. The foolish stereotypes that run throughout these texts are an inevitable result of the clichéd nature of their sources. The handbook helps explain French reactions to the aged gentlemen administrators who appeared on their territory amid the chaos of June 1944. One thing is certain—Allied Civil Affairs troops were unprepared for the complexity of the French they encountered in person.

Roosevelt and de Gaulle

Although the role of personal relationships between political figures in making history is frequently exaggerated, it is hardly possible to overemphasize the impact of the antipathy between President Roosevelt and General de Gaulle on postwar Franco-American relations.

As the biggest victor of World War II, the United States Government found its most immediate political and financial rewards in its ability to reshape Europe—and most of the Western hemisphere—to its liking. The key to exploiting this limitless potential lay in ensuring friendly relations with as many strategically vital nations as possible. However, intervention with those countries' internal politics beyond a certain point would only increase hostility to the point that U.S. influence would be radically diminished. Nowhere was this principal put more to the test than in France.

Roosevelt's dislike of France and de Gaulle in particular is well documented. At times the American President stood nearly alone in his own administration in his refusal to accept a postwar role for de Gaulle. There is no doubt that his desire to impose Allied Military

Government on France was an instrumental part of his plan to keep de Gaulle out of power. Roosevelt's flirtation with AMGOT seriously imperiled his country's postwar relationship with France and sowed the seeds of postwar French anti-Americanism.

Roosevelt refused to recognize de Gaulle's CFLN, tried to keep the Free French from anything other than a passive role in D-Day plans and only formally acknowledged de Gaulle's Provisional Government on October 25, 1944—four months after the rest of Europe had already done so. Both Gaullists and French Communists were alienated by the American attitude. De Gaulle's men believed that their role in the Free French had earned them a moral right to rule the country. Meanwhile, the Left was irritated that their participation in the Resistance had been a stumbling block for CFLN recognition.

French suspicions of Allied intentions had become acute by mid-1943, in the aftermath of the Sicilian and Corsican actions. The War Department confirmed French fears that the draconian AMGOT plan would be used uniformly throughout northwest Europe without regard for each nation's wartime status (Axis member, collaborationist régime or occupied nation). Neither the Communist-dominated Resistance nor the Gaullist CFLN could allow AMGOT in France if they were to seize power in the wake of the retreating German armies. At best, the two parties would have to compete in Allied-run parliamentary elections. Neither group was willing to settle for anything less than complete political domination. For de Gaulle, who benefited from favorable press and his affiliation with the British, Roosevelt and his Civil Affairs divisions were his primary obstacle to power.

Civil Affairs Invades France, June 7, 1944

American OSS agents in de Gaulle's CFLN had informed Washington of de Gaulle's plans to seize power during May and June but found their warnings largely ignored. The Free French had made no secret of their intentions. By declaring themselves the "French Provisional Government" in late March and choosing cabinet ministers and other officials on June 3rd, the CFLN-turned-GPRF hoped to manipulate international opinion to the point that its seizure of power would be accepted as the logical culmination of efforts to which the Allies had implicitly agreed.

Eisenhower's frustration with Roosevelt's position on the CFLN evolved to a crisis in March. The Allied war chief needed intelligence that only the French could provide. He felt that he could no longer for Washington to make up its mind. He secretly sent for de Gaulle's liaison officers and met with them about D-Day, without Roosevelt's approval or knowledge. The Free French meticulously transmitted details of the briefings to Free French headquarters in Algiers.

Despite the fact that both sides of the civil administration controversy knew exactly what was transpiring, the French enjoyed several strategic advantages over the American Civil Affairs men. They had established contacts already in the invasion zone and had orchestrated a widespread propaganda campaign in the American press. Most importantly, they held a vital

though immeasurable trump card—they were French where and when being French would mean everything.

On the afternoon of the second day of operation OVERLORD, June 7, 1944, the first Civil Affairs detachments from the British and American Second Army dropped by parachute northwest of Bayeux, the first Norman town to be liberated. During previous actions, such as in Italy, AMGOT men had arrived with the first wave of troops. The bloodletting at Omaha Beach, however, was deemed too fierce.

Although the battle between German gunners in fortified block houses and Allies disembarking from amphibious landing vehicles continued to rage on the 7th, Roosevelt ordered that Civil Affairs be deployed in the second wave to forestall a Gaullist coup d'état. At Normandy, Civil Affairs personnel averaged thirty-five years of age; several officers were older than sixty. There are no casualty figures available specific to the Civil Affairs Division. Upon landing, over 1,000 Civil Affairs soldiers, including about 200 officers, sped to the nearest villages to seize the mairies by fiat. They were ordered to dismiss Vichy mayors who refused to cooperate with them.

The primary reference text for the British section of the Civil Affairs Division, *Civil Affairs and You*, described the experiences of an AMGOT officer who had landed in Italy. Civil Affairs troops at Normandy were ordered to carry out similar duties:

CA officers will accompany attacking troops in landing craft on invasion day and will proceed right forward on land. They will go into towns and villages the moment they are captured, for it is then that local services will be in chaos, the civil population stunned, and the need for help and control most necessary. The CA officer arrives, having frequently taken part (as in Italy) in a bit of street-fighting first, contacts the mayor and the local head of police, and starts to work. The first thing needed to be done is to make the civilians stay put, and to prevent them from flocking on the roads as refugees; so he sees that nobody moves out of town. He then makes sure that the black-out is in order and enforced, imposes a curfew (stray civilians at night are a nuisance), organizes labour squads, gets the roads clear of debris, the civilian dead buried, sends the wounded away if he can, finds out where food stores are and arranges for them to be guarded, and very often quells a riot. There are certain buildings he wants kept clear of troops, if possible: the police station, the town hall offices, the banks, the telephone exchange and the post office. Papers are often valuable, and if destroyed irreplaceable. The plan of the town drains, the criminal records in the police station (liable to be destroyed by the local bad hat), the register of ration cards issued, and so on.

Civil Affairs troops enforced AMGOT-type actions by heavily relying on the local police and government, even when dominated by Vichy or Nazi sympathizers:

To restore law and order, existing organizations must be the basis. It would need far too many men to build up a completely new organization. It would be impossible, for instance, to put in a complete police force in a foreign country, and quite useless. What can be done is to get a local police force going again and then make certain that it does what the army wants. So civil affairs officers work by indirect control, through the medium of the reconstituted native administration.

The American text, which supersedes but is largely based on the British version, was issued in May 1944 as the definitive text for Civil Affairs personnel in the Allied armies. Civil Affairs priorities as enacted in France were in the following order:

- The restoration and maintenance of law and order
- Assistance to the local population, when possible
- Guarantee of a steady supply of food and other goods
- Coordination of reconstruction projects, using local labor
- Medical care and other relief as necessary

Other principal Civil Affairs policies, which do not substantially deviate from AMGOT as used in Italy, were carried out in Normandy:

- _ Priority of military requirements over civil rights
 - _ Free French liaison officers to relay Allied orders to Gaullist and Resistance forces
 - _ Military courts to preside over all violations against Allied troops
 - _ Dissolution of all pro-enemy political parties and organizations
 - _ Prohibition on political activity
 - _ Top-level collaborators to be purged from government and business
 - _ Freedom of movement and association suspended
 - _ Allied control of local police
 - _ Restoration of all prewar laws
 - _ Media and mail censorship
 - _ Armed protection of archives, monuments and art works
 - _ Providing food (2,000 calories per person per day)
 - _ Providing clothing, medical care, fuel, etc.
 - _ Restoration of utilities, transportation facilities
 - _ Civilians to be banned from using telephones or mails
 - _ Wage and price controls
 - _ General control of economy, including banks, the issuance of occupation francs, audits of government expenditures during wartime
- In response to developments during its first three days of action, Civil Affairs added the following three activities in liberated areas:

- _ Prevention of looting
- _ Food inventories
- _ Placement of brothels off-limits to Allied troops

According to French sources, these orders were carried out fully during the first few weeks after the invasion. Adjustments, when they occurred, resulted from Gaullist pressures. French civilians greeted their liberators enthusiastically, but were perplexed by the appearance of "new" money, road blocks, strict curfews and confiscations of private property by Civil Affairs troops. Protests were few, probably because the euphoric population was eager for the restoration of prewar living standards. Many reasoned that liberation had just begun and that maintaining order was absolutely essential to avert a revolution.

The Currency Issue

The controversy over Allied plans to distribute invasion currency, or "occupation francs," after D-Day became a symbol of Gaullist-American conflicts. On October 6, 1942, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau appointed his right-hand man, Assistant of the Division of Money Resources Harry Dexter White, as the Treasury's liaison to AMGOT.

Morgenthau was anxious to avoid a French franc fiasco similar to one during World War I. American GI's in France had been paid their salaries in U.S.-backed francs. When the franc was devalued in response to inflationary pressures in 1919, the payments' equivalents in U.S. dollars dropped, creating a massive paper loss to the Treasury. Allied troops landing at D-Day would need local money to buy goods and services. Therefore, he planned to issue occupation francs without any U.S. guarantee. The risk of inflation would rest squarely with the French. Even partially-guaranteed occupation currency would create a financial windfall because of the delay between meeting obligations by occupation franc payments and the actual remission of U.S. dollars. The result was a sophisticated war tax on the country to be liberated. The Free French objected to the issuance of occupation francs on several grounds: that they were clearly printed overseas was a violation of national sovereignty, the absence of de Gaulle's endorsement would weaken his claim to power and the issuance of money in addition to the money already in circulation would spark runaway inflation in an economy already overburdened by Third Republic banknotes, German Army scrip and black marketeering.

The Allies plainly intended to dump their occupation francs into the French economy and force an as-yet-undetermined postwar French government to make good on them. France would foot the bill for its liberation indirectly.

Negotiations between Morgenthau and CFLN representative Pierre M  ndes-France dragged through the spring of 1944. The United States issued a nebulous guarantee on the notes, but de Gaulle never approved their design. Tens of billions of occupation francs were printed at the Treasury between February and May 1944. The American-style (long and thin rather than short and wide) black-and-green notes read only "...mis en France" and featured a picture of the French flag on the reverse with the slogan "Libert  ...galit  -Fraternit  ".

Without Gaullist approval, 97.3% of the 42,449 Allied troops dispatched to Normandy between June 6th and 9th received occupation franc equivalents of four dollars each. In all, 40 billion occupation francs (out of 80 billion printed) were placed into circulation in liberated sections of northern France during June 1944, in addition to the approximately 600 billion metropolitan francs already in circulation—an increase of more than six percent. Most of the Allied money was in unpopular 500-franc denominations; there were shortages of 50-centime, 1- and 2-franc notes throughout the summer.

Allied troops began spending their occupation francs within days of landing. In response to an urgent communiqu   from Morgenthau, a flustered Jean Monnet approved the money "for emergency use only" on June 10th. Roosevelt later referred to Monnet's approval as evidence of Gaullist complicity with Allied monetary policy, conveniently ignoring that the francs were issued prior to the "approval." Roosevelt defended his position, noting that D-Day was as good an emergency as any.

The American Embassy in London advised Washington on June 7th that Franco-American relations were at "the breaking point" due to the currency controversy. The Free French took to

the airwaves on June 8th, repeatedly referring to the Allied currency as "fausse monnaie," and issued a formal protest to Washington.

Churchill questioned the design of and payment guarantee on the occupation francs. He feared that the Allies rather than the French might end up paying for the latter's liberation:

I have now seen the specimens of the notes in question. They do not strike us as very reassuring. They look very easy to forge. Nothing is said on whose responsibility they are issued and who is responsible for redeeming them. Surely there must be some authority behind them. . . Should we let de Gaulle obtain new status as his price for backing these notes or should we take the burden on ourselves for the time being and improve the issue later on and settle up at the peace table where there will be many accounts to be presented?

Eisenhower became increasingly desirous of a monetary policy that would not offend de Gaulle, whose men he required for military intelligence. He attempted to circumvent Washington by discouraging GI spending. The Army encouraged soldiers to send money home to the United States and to buy war bonds. They also set up post exchanges to sell luxury and semi-luxury items. The British War Office authorized the release of 5.5 billion "metropolitan," or prewar, francs to replace some occupation notes. These steps proved effective; more than 90% of the occupation francs were returned for deposit to Army paymasters by mid-August 1944.

Roosevelt refused to compromise. On June 12th, we declared that he would not accept de Gaulle's authority over fiscal matters on any level. He told Churchill that the occupation francs were being widely accepted by French shopkeepers, forgery was impossible and he was prepared to issue "yellow seal" and BMA notes which would further depreciate the franc if de Gaulle were to "incite" the French into refusing them. He told a June 13th press gathering that the Allies would accept currency issued by any legitimate French authority, but would not allow "that jackanape" to take over. He claimed that Monnet had approved the notes and blamed the Gaullists for not reaching an agreement with the Allies before D-Day.

The Free French called in favors with their allies in the American press. British and American dailies ran editorials calling for the White House to recognize de Gaulle and immediately withdraw the occupation francs. The French-language press in Algiers played up Roosevelt's supposed willingness to back the currency, gambling that the President would withdraw them rather than pay dollars for them. On June 9th, Eisenhower advised the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the notes were being considered "manifestations of AMGOT."

The New York Times reported on June 12th that the Allied francs were "dissimilar from [those] in circulation before the war and contains no imprimatur of any French authority... The self-styled 'Provisional Government' not only resents what it regards as an unprecedented violation of sovereignty but is concerned over the possible inflationary effect and anticipates friction between the troops and the populace if the status of the notes is not clarified soon."

Reports of inflation and shortages of consumer goods appeared within a week. The June 20th Times said that Allied soldiers were paying 120 francs (\$2.40) for ten eggs and \$9 to \$10 per bottle of "inferior wine." The various types of currency in circulation, including North African

francs, had created economic chaos because uniform pricing or rationing had become impossible. Francs were circulating at the rate of 400 per British pound sterling.

French merchants generally accepted the invasion currency after being assured by troops that it was U.S.-backed (it was not). Whether or not they resented it is another matter. When given the choice, they tended to prefer metropolitan francs. French banks maintained separate account records for the two types of money. In order to remove the Allied notes from circulation, GPRF Commissioner François Coulet directed banks to accept deposits in both currencies but to issue payments only in metropolitan francs.

The standoff over the currency issue lasted three weeks. Eisenhower negotiated secretly with the GPRF, culminating with a June 27th verbal agreement. French General Koenig agreed not to discredit the occupation francs. Meanwhile, the Allies began replacing occupation currency with metropolitan francs. Although the controversial money remained in circulation for some time, the U.S. Army discontinued it as legal tender on September 1st. De Gaulle's press blitz had defeated the U.S. Army.

Civil Affairs' Attempted Coup

G-5 dispatched its first weekly "Civil Affairs Summary" on June 12th:

SECOND ARMY,

202 CADet established BAYEUX 7 JUNE. SOUSPrefect in charge and people co-operative. Food plentiful and health good. Only 8 days med sups available. Currency accepted everywhere.

DE GAULLE undoubtedly regarded as leader of liberated FRANCE.

No refugee problem so far.

FUS no report available.

Civil Affairs troops fanned out through the French countryside, setting up road blocks, directing traffic, seizing food, assessing war damage and arranging for the evacuation of injured or malnourished civilians to Army and local hospitals. They patrolled the streets to prevent looting. They gathered the dead for burial, imposed military censorship on local newspapers and satisfied themselves that, for the most part, incumbent mayors would obey Allied officers.

Civil Affairs officers enforced curfews on the national roads and issued driving permits. They seized control of and cleaned local jails, which had badly deteriorated during the Nazi occupation. They reopened post offices, using overprinted Pétain stamps while the U.S. Postal Service produced new ones.

There were shortages of food, shoes and blankets; the U.S. First Army brought these in under Civil Affairs supervision. The Vichy rationing system was continued, but rations were reduced. German saboteurs had flooded 5,000 acres of farmland near Bayeux before retreating; Civil Affairs civil engineers were assigned to drain the land. They also restored electricity and running water by replacing destroyed switching stations.

In some places, G-5 found a complete lack of authority. Near Caen, the Germans had kidnapped the mayor and other officials of La Haye de Puits. Civil Affairs issued orders to the population in the name of the "Allied Military Authority."

Allied forces found relatively little damage to historical monuments and museums during the first few days of combat. Most art works had been hidden in 1940. Civil Affairs soldiers retrieved and guarded these. Their arrival was too late to prevent the burning of a chateau at Lasson and a church at Norrey.

Normandy was an agriculturally rich region of France and its inhabitants had not suffered from starvation during the occupation. Ironically, Allied bombings of train lines had stopped food exports to the rest of the country, creating a massive food surplus and low prices. The situation was radically worse thirty miles inland.

At Cherbourg civil administrators collaborated with French businessmen to reopen an employment office, generally to provide civilian labor for Allied restoration projects.

Vichy-era laws deemed useful were retained. A January 6, 1944 law providing allowances to war refugees was upheld under Civil Affairs authority. Civil Affairs detachments with agricultural expertise found themselves evacuating cattle from battle zones. They also cared for farm animals wounded by mines and stray bullets. They cleared farms of mines and guarded abandoned farmhouses.

Medical teams treated prostitutes during a typhus outbreak. They also deloused civilians and distributed scarce drugs to French physicians.

The educational section seized schoolhouses to quarter Allied troops and announced that the traditional beginning of the school year on October 1st would be postponed indefinitely. Former American high school teachers worked through the summer to delete "objectionable Vichy passages" from textbooks.

Caen was the first real challenge to the Civil Affairs Division. The city had been almost completely levelled by Allied bombings, during which 20,000 of the city's 50,000 people had fled. Of the remaining 30,000, 17,000 had been wounded or killed. An original plan to transport food and medical supplies by rail from Omaha Beach had to be abandoned due to the wrecked rail lines. British Civil Affairs officers were forced to request their Gaullist liaison officers to arrange relief supplies from further inland through the Resistance. The Free French were frequently invited to supervise civil administration in regions where they had failed to seize it in advance.

Civil Affairs reported that conflicts between the French and Americans arose over occupation francs, the Allied-backed black market and troops' rowdy behavior, respectively. The Allied civil administrators strived conscientiously to follow their directives, usually without the language or

interpersonal skills necessary to make themselves understood. These policies—martial law, suspension of civil liberties, seizure of private property—realized the Gaullists' worst fears. Sources in the liberated zone advised Free French officers in London that "AMGOT" was in full swing.

François Coulet

The CFLN Commissaire de la République for Normandy, François Coulet, was de Gaulle's secret weapon in his war against Allied Military Government. Coulet was a sophisticated, witty former diplomat who had become de Gaulle's aide-de-camp after helping to counteract AMGOT in Corsica. On June 5th, the original D-Day date, de Gaulle was advised by Eisenhower that the Allied landing was at hand. De Gaulle's intended Regional Commissioner, the man charged with establishing a Gaullist political foothold in France, was Henri Bordeau de Fontenay, but he was trapped behind enemy lines and could not reach Normandy in time. A sudden storm delayed D-Day to the next day and de Gaulle decided to appoint the fiercely loyal Coulet instead. De Gaulle brought Coulet with him during his unauthorized visit to Normandy on June 13th via the destroyer *La Combattante*. The Gaullists paraded briefly through Bayeux before dropping Coulet off at the mairie to take charge. Coulet's mission: "Coulet will arrive at the liberated zone as soon as possible and will begin exercising his duties. If I [de Gaulle] arrive in France as I expect, I will bring Coulet along and leave him in place where he will manage as best he can. . . ." Coulet created a precedent for Gaullist mini-coups. They planned to seize France village by village in a wave matching the Allied advance. Coulet ordered the Free French to provide enough cooperation to satiate the Allies while subtly usurping their civil administration. Actions against such Civil Affairs policies as the occupation francs not only removed barriers to the exercise of Gaullist power but also showed the world that they were willing and able to act as a governing body.

Six CFLN members, including Allied-Free French liaison officer Pierre Laroque, accompanied Coulet to Bayeux as fighting with German forces continued south of the city. His first act was to fire the Pétainist mayor and subprefect. Laroque advised Coulet against overtly condemning the occupation francs to avoid offending the Allies.

On June 15th, Coulet issued a proclamation urging civilians to cooperate with Allied troops while declaring that he represented "the rights of French sovereignty." The next day he called a press conference at which he fended pointed questions about his legitimacy with a lethal combination of self-confidence, arrogance and humor.

Coulet Captures Normandy

On June 19th the Allies decided to confront the Gaullists who had seized the local government of Bayeux at gunpoint. Possibly at Roosevelt's request, Churchill dispatched U.S. Second Army Brigadier General R.M.H. Lewis, four or five officers from the British 21st Army Group and officers under General Omar Bradley's U.S. First Army to Bayeux's mairie. When it became

clear that they did not intend to leave, Lewis accepted the Gaullists "provisionally." Nonetheless, he advised them that they would remain only as long as the Allies wanted them there. Coulet slammed his fist on his desk, shouting that his authority came from the Provisional French Government—not from the Allies. He noted that the French had never interfered with the Allies and that the Allies should therefore return the favor. Lewis remained silent and left.

A second encounter occurred on July 9th. Coulet met with Lieutenant General Sir Bernard Montgomery, whereupon the Englishman spoke pidgin English to explain the Allied position on the occupation francs ("It's good money, understand? Our money, good money. . ."). Coulet, who spoke English fluently, was more bemused than insulted. When French General Koenig informed Montgomery that Coulet was Protestant, Montgomery immediately altered his attitude. He left the meeting addressing Coulet as "Mr. High Commissioner." Coulet remarked in 1966: "During wartime it can sometimes be advantageous to belong to the Protestant faith."

The Franco-Allied showdown proved to the Allies that the French were not only eager to assume civil administration, but that their exclusion would create formidable political difficulties. In his memoirs de Gaulle credited Coulet with preventing AMGOT-like rule over France almost single-handedly. It should be noted, however, that Coulet's willingness to cooperate with most Civil Affairs Division policies allowed him to selectively oppose those facets of Allied policy that the Free French deemed most onerous. For example, Coulet issued a sweeping directive to Rouen-area mayors on July 6th calling for compliance with Civil Affairs on the confiscation of photographic equipment, carrier pigeons and firearms, blackouts, curfews, restrictions on movement, road blocks six kilometers outside each village and the forced evacuation of women and children from battle zones. After he announced his intention of reinstating the pro-Vichy subprefect of Bayeux elsewhere, the Communists accused him of treating collaborators as laxly as Civil Affairs. Nonetheless, Civil Affairs reported that "M. Coulet has tended to by-pass Civil Affairs units and has cooperated with them to only a limited extent."

Coulet's men seized the legal initiative on June 26th. They encouraged the Consultative Assembly to revoke Vichy racial laws and disband right-wing organizations. Civil Affairs had intended to effect these actions after the liberation of Paris. The Gaullists took over other functions as well: they appointed new officials, requisitioned goods and services and censored newspapers. They zealously appointed new mayors, in some case two per town. One example of the chaotic political situation was the Chasseurs resistance group's habit of arresting Civil Affairs-appointed mayors in the mistaken belief that they were Vichyites attempting a reverse coup. By usurping rather than thwarting the roles of Allied civil administrators, the Gaullists provided de facto approval of their activities.

Colonel Pierre Chevigne, Coulet's military counterpart, seized control of the Norman police by ordering the Gendarmerie not to arrest anyone based on Allied requests without Free French approval. He prohibited arrests unless the offenses involved were covered under French as well as Allied military law.

Coulet's men infiltrated the French judiciary to invalidate the Civil Affairs Division's military courts. The first military tribunal convened on July 4th in Bayeux under Free French control. Two "enemy agents" were sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor. Coulet refused Allied

requests to seat Civil Affairs judges, but permitted a British Civil Affairs attorney to observe the proceedings. In August the Gaullists put several accused spies to death, a shocked Civil Affairs officer reported to London, but optimistically noted that "indications are that French courts will prosecute vigorously offenses against U.S. forces."

Gaullist economic actions included limiting bank withdrawals and fixing prices. They ordered banks to seize deposits belonging to accused collaborators.

A wave of similar actions swept eastward with the German retreat. De Gaulle had named Resistance agents already on location to seize control of each village as it was liberated. They simply awaited the first signs of battle and entered the mairies during the ensuing confusion. For those appointees dispatched with the French Army, the situation was more dangerous since they had to cross enemy lines, but the process of sneaking into town halls amid the chaos of battle was similar. In Rouen, the Gaullist-designated Commissioner entered the prefecture, arrested the prefect single-handedly, read his nomination proclamation to the assistants and started work during the afternoon of August 3rd. The Germans were still packing their property downstairs in the same building. Most of these mini-coups were peaceful; the outgoing Vichyites seemed to accept the end of their régime with more relief than hostility.

De Gaulle's Coup D'état

Roosevelt began to capitulate due to pressures from the British Government, the American press and key American figures like Eisenhower and Hull after the Allied landing on June 6th failed to produce a French group more palatable to his tastes than the Gaullists. In response to Civil Affairs reports of the Free French leader's popularity, Roosevelt invited de Gaulle to Washington on June 9th. However, the American president noted, it would not be considered a state visit. Roosevelt still did not consider de Gaulle the leader of France. On June 13th The New York Times called for recognition of de Gaulle in its lead editorial:

Despite the arrangements announced last week for General de Gaulle to visit President Roosevelt in the near future, American relationships with the French Committee of National Liberation remain unsatisfactory. If there were any other French agency, in France or outside France, which had stood for resistance since June, 1940, as General de Gaulle's movement actually has, some hesitation in making a choice would be natural. But, as far as we know, there is no such agency. . . The practical facts of the situation are that civil administration must be restored in France and that the choice will lie between those who fought for freedom during the occupation, meaning largely de Gaulle and his underground allies, and those who did not. . .

Roosevelt told a June 13th press conference that "he saw no change in this country's relations with the French Committee." The next day, however, he issued a secret personal directive to General Marshall that advised him of the Free French movement's vital role. Roosevelt retroactively approved de Gaulle's visit to France on the 13th, but cautioned that U.S. support should remain secret. This June 14th communiqué is the first known evidence of American willingness to acknowledge the de facto involvement of the Gaullists in French civil administration:

It is my thought that we should make full use of any organization or influence that de Gaulle may possess and that will be of advantage to our military effort provided that we do not by force of our arms impose him upon the French people as the Government of France. After all, over 99 percent of the area of France is still in German hands. Therefore, there does not appear to be any objection to de Gaulle's visit to France as arranged by the British Government without consulting the U.S.

The June 14th cable was the first of a series of decisions which led to eventual U.S. recognition of de Gaulle's de facto authority over civil administration on July 11th, a formal civil affairs agreement on August 25th, an American mission in Paris on September 3rd and formal recognition of the French Provisional Government on October 23rd. The discovery of this communication resolves speculation about the exact date of Roosevelt's first willingness to accept de Gaulle; previous estimates placed the time as no earlier than the 19th.

Postwar Implications of Civil Affairs Policy on France

It is fair to say that the U.S. intended to treat liberated France about the same as Italy in 1943 and Japan in 1945. Allied Civil Affairs troops failed to impose military government on its former ally, but only because of Gaullist interference. The presence of an internationally acknowledged resistance organization ready to assume the reins of power upon liberation did nothing to alter the Roosevelt Administration's view of France as a purely collaborationist nation. France might have paid a high price for this American perspective. Its civil liberties would have been suspended up to a year. It might have been governed by a postwar pro-American puppet régime, a politically emasculated country stripped of full control over many of its colonies.

The U.S. atavistically jeopardized the French economy by deliberately devaluating the franc and attempting to force the French to bear the costs of their own liberation. Allied armies distributed U.S.-printed occupation currency, an act which the Gaullists perceived as a snub to national pride that even the Germans had not imposed. The U.S. annulled French laws without appropriate action by a French legal body, imposed military courts on civilian offenses, enforced martial law, confiscated both public and private property, enacted censorship beyond wartime exigencies, dissolved political organizations and retained Vichy collaborators in office. Although the AMGOT nomenclature disappeared in early 1944, its organization and policies remained virtually intact within the Civil Affairs Division.

Eisenhower's Allied Expeditionary Force tried its best to exclude the Free French and the Resistance from a role in civil administration for weeks after D-Day, even when the official anti-Gaullist position appeared untenable. Only after numerous forceful actions undertaken by Gaullist operatives did Civil Affairs begin to act as assistants to the French rather than the reverse. Ultimately, however, the Roosevelt Administration yielded to pro-Gaullist press coverage, American and French public opinion polls, and British and American military concerns. The civil affairs controversy revealed that military leaders were willing to circumvent political aims in order to pursue purely military goals, even to the point of disregarding orders. These realities forced Roosevelt to issue his landmark June 14th statement on Free French

political involvement—an act which led to a fading role for Allied Civil Affairs during the summer of 1944.

French-American relations remained strained for some time after World War II. Gaullist views of American policy soon became French popular opinion. To make things worse, de Gaulle thought that the United States had imposed military government without British consent. The French Government flirted briefly with the Soviets in late 1944. The American press took Roosevelt to task for these developments.

A few token gestures might have forestalled the growth of postwar anti-Americanism in France: including de Gaulle in D-Day planning, placing his name on the occupation francs, inviting him to Washington earlier. American policy was characterized by hesitancy, delays and inconsistencies. It is remarkable that, despite these blunders, postwar France was ruled by a relatively pro-American, non-Communist régime. Perversely, Civil Affairs' inability to fully enact its mission permitted the salvage of some French goodwill.

The United States has not altered its civil affairs policies substantially since 1945. The Pentagon continues to maintain a Civil Affairs Division for duties similar to those handled by Allied troops at Normandy. When U.S. troops invade foreign soil, they deploy Civil Affairs squadrons to care for the wounded, to begin rebuilding and to seize control of the local civil apparatus. They played significant roles in recent U.S. invasions of Grenada, Panama and Kuwait. Since February 1991, Civil Affairs has supervised the capping of oil well fires, written regulations for the police, helped placate the population (even assisting in arrests of Kuwaitis suspected of pro-Iraqi collaboration) and repaired damaged structures. Civil Affairs controlled the vast refugee camps for Kurdish rebels in Iraq and cordoned off a section of Iraq for this purpose. Their lawyers have convinced the ruling Emir to slowly restructure the Kuwaiti Government in accordance with U.S. legal precedent. Most importantly, Civil Affairs ensures the maintenance of pro-American governments in countries where they serve.

The Civil Affairs concept is the embodiment of what is perceived abroad as American imperialism. Its central premise—that the civil situation should not disintegrate into chaos during U.S. military actions—is fundamentally sound. But national consciousness has a long memory. The wholesale suspension of civil rights, the attempted creation of pro-American puppet states and economic opportunism naturally results in long-term resentment and the promulgation of nationalistic movements. In an era of nuclear proliferation, these are foreign policy side effects that a weary superpower can ill afford.

Glossary of Abbreviations

AMGOT: Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories, a subdivision of the U.S. War Department which handled U.S. civil affairs planning from early 1942 to late 1944

AT(E): Administration of Territories (Europe), a subdivision of the British War Cabinet which handled British civil affairs planning from early 1942 to late 1944

CCS: Combined Chiefs of Staff, the U.S.-British predecessor to the contemporary U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff

CFLN: Comité Français de la Libération Nationale (French Committee of National Liberation), the London- and Algiers-based political body of the Free French headed by General Charles de Gaulle

G-5: Civil Affairs Division of Allied Armies, the amalgamated body formed by AMGOT and AT(E) which handled Allied civil affairs planning and enforcement from January 1944 to the end of World War II and is now solely American

GPRF: Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française (French Provisional Government), successor body of CFLN declared in June 1944

Important Dates

1940

June 18: De Gaulle's BBC speech urging French resistance

June 21: Franco-German armistice signed, effective June 25

September 24: CFLN formally established in London

1941

December 7: Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. enters World War II

1942

February: AT(E) established by British

May: AMGOT school established at Charlottesville, Virginia

July 3: British acknowledge CFLN as "symbol of French resistance," U.S. on July 9

November 8: Allied landing in Morocco and Algeria, AMGOT applied sporadically

1943

February: First Civil Affairs Agreement between Norway and Great Britain

May: Quebec Conference decides D-Day will occur in 1944

May 8: Roosevelt says France should get harsh military occupation

May 27: Pre-CFLN CNR formed in Algiers with Jean Moulin as president

June 7: CFLN officially formed in Algiers, de Gaulle and Giraud share presidency

July 10: Allies land in Sicily; first full application of AMGOT

September: AMGOT absorbs AT(E)

September 17: Allied-French landing at Corsica

September 24: Signing of Dunn-Wright Agreement

October: First Civil Affairs Handbooks prepared

November: Giraud deposed; de Gaulle escalates anti-AMGOT planning

1944

January 21: Civil Affairs establishes base in Algiers for southern France

February: Civil Affairs placed under Allied Expeditionary Force

February - May: U.S. Bureau of Printing and Engraving prints occupation

francs; negotiations between CFLN and U.S. over currency collapse

March 27: De Gaulle mentions "French Provisional Government"

June 3: French Provisional Government officially formed in Algiers

June 4-5: De Gaulle visits London, is briefed about D-Day

June 6: D-Day, Allies land near Bayeux in Normandy

June 7: Civil Affairs detachments parachute into battle zone

June 8: Cherbourg liberated by Allies

June 9: Eisenhower announces nominal CFLN role in French civil administration; Roosevelt invites de Gaulle to Washington

June 13: De Gaulle visits Normandy, brings François Coulet

June 14: Roosevelt issues secret directive accepting CFLN civil administration role

June 19: First Allied challenge to Gaullist authority at Bayeux; British-French talks

June 27: Occupation francs repealed

July 7-8: De Gaulle visits Washington

July 11: Allies recognize de facto status of CFLN civil administration

August 15: Allied invasion of Provence in southern France

August 22: Civil Affairs post at Algiers disbanded

August 25: Paris liberated by French Army; Civil Affairs Agreement for S. France

September 8: U.S. mission to Paris established

October 23: Joint British-American recognition of French Provisional Government

November 4: Roosevelt reelected to a fourth term

December 10: Franco-Soviet pact signed

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