

The U.S. in Postwar France

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A lot of very, very heavy questions hung over France as the World War went on in the early 1940s. The question of whether the resistance moment would make the liberation of France and whether it would be able to chart a postwar France. The question of whether, if that resistance movement were capable, really, of making that liberation, who would control that resistance movement — whether it would be the Gaullists or whether it would be the Communists. The question of whether, if the Communists did control the resistance movement, they would be a revolutionary party or, actually, a party of order, a party of reform. The question, if you please, and the very crucial one, of whether Vichyites — the ones, after all, who had made that counter-revolution, the conservatives and the reactionaries — would save their skins. Whether they would protect themselves behind the back of De Gaulle and behind the back of the American occupation and work their way into the Fourth Republican and eventually into the Fifth Republic. And the crucial question of what the Americans would do, or, more precisely, how American policymakers would try to insert France, a postwar France, into that schema for a postwar world economic order that had already been designed in Washington.

And I tell you that these are very heavy and very crucial questions. Because on the answers to those questions turns the destiny, not only of the French, but indeed of West Europeans in general. And, if you stop to think of it, on the answer to those questions also turns the destiny of literally millions of men and women within the French Empire. Look: I had a conversation some six years ago with an extraordinarily bright critic in France, a man named Claude Bourdet, who himself was a great resistance fighter, who after the war founded a great magazine called *France-Observateur*, which put such a tremendous muscle in the campaign to liberate Algeria. And Bourdet said to me one day some six years ago, at the very time that the American government was committed to a military victory and solution in Vietnam, and Bourdet said to me: "You see, if the French left had been able to install itself in power in 1945, if it had not been De Gaulle, if it had not been the Americans after De Gaulle — then, you see, everything would have been different, because we never would have blundered into that First Indochinese War in 1946, which lasted all the way down until 1954. There would have been a unified Vietnam, a government by Hồ Chí Minh. And if that were the case, you would never be in Vietnam in the second of those wars."

And, consequently, you begin to understand how absolutely fundamental these very heavy questions are that hang over France in this particular period. There are not only Frenchmen

whose destiny is at stake but great numbers of other people in a kind of a revolving American aggression that takes place, then, in Southeast Asia and even in North Africa.

And so we ask the question about American policy. And what is it that the Americans wanted out of France? What kind of a post war France did they want? And how did they operate in that country during the war? And it goes, if you please, by stages. There is a certain chronology connected to it.

If you take the period between the installation of Vichy in the summer of 1940 down to the end of 1941 when the United States enters the Second World War, then you have a period in which the design of American policymakers is, really, a very simple economic one. It is, really, to wedge open the markets, especially of the French Empire, much wider than they have been. If you take a second period that goes from the beginning of 1942 down until the end of 1943, it's a much more complicated set of tactics that really revolves itself around the struggle between an American Vichy party and De Gaulle. In other words, it is the search on the part of Americans, out of the Vichy establishment itself, for some kind of a party of clients that will do the American bidding — and an effort to forestall De Gaulle who was very suspect and whom American policymakers, ultimately, hated and feared in terms of what he might do in France. And finally, in the period of '44 and '45, it is a reconciliation all, but a very difficult one with De Gaulle. Because at that time, the issue is no longer a Vichy-American party versus De Gaulle: the issue then is De Gaulle versus the left wing of the resistance movement. And, consequently, Gaullism becomes a barrier to the possibility of a social revolution of a Communist-led resistance movement installing itself in France.

Now, let's take those three stages because they tell us a great deal about the way in which decisions, ultimately, were made. In that first period, we say there is a desire to wedge the door open, especially in a French North African empire where the United States has had very little economic or trade connection, where it has had very little economic interest. And I want you to keep in mind, of course, that Vichy is a crypto-fascist regime: that it is very close in its collaboration with the Nazis, that the British hate it, and, as a matter of fact, consider it as an enemy, and blockade the trade between North Africa and the rest of the world. All of that must be kept in mind when you consider what American policymakers — in this instance, Admiral [William D.] Leahy, who is the American ambassador to Vichy; Robert Murphy, who is the great State Department expert on France — those men, after all, are interested in utilizing the difficulties of Vichy France in order to get better economic terms. When I say the difficulties, what I mean is that Vichy bears very heavy occupation costs imposed by the Germans. And the trade that her North African empire had was reduced because of the British blockade. And, consequently, in February of 1941, you get the Weygand-Murphy Accord. Robert Murphy strikes an accord with General [Maxime] Weygand, which is a bilateral economic accord that gives the United States a much larger economic position in North Africa than it had ever had and

conforms to that principle of wedging the door open regardless of what the political implications of that particular action happen to be.

But once the United States goes to war at the end of 1941, then the whole diplomacy becomes much more complicated. Because what American policymakers want, then, is to find a viable American party within the constellation of Vichy — in other words, those officials, those generals, really, who will be the pro-American force inside Vichy, and, consequently, operate as a transition in a post war period to doing the American bidding. Quite concretely, the problem was the invasion of north Africa, was it not? Because the Anglo-American forces, and, particularly, the United States were going to invade North Africa on the night of the 7th and 8th of November of 1942. And, consequently, the problem was what Vichy would do in North Africa. Because Vichy still controlled the empire and that North African part of the empire was under the command of Admiral [François] Darlan, the head of the French Navy, was the governor-general in North Africa in 1941 and '42. And the question was what would the French army, in North Africa, do? Would it join with its German friends when the Anglo-Americans invaded or would it bolt into an Anglo-American alliance against the Axis or would it remain neutral?

Now, quite obviously, for American policymakers, just at the sheer military plane, the desire was to have collaboration in North Africa. But two possibilities were perfectly ruled out. One possibility was to provoke an uprising in North Africa. American armies were not into that bag at all. You see they were not like the French of the 1790s; they were not like the Russian armies of 1919 and '20, in which, as the armies moved, they could rouse the populations to great liberation struggles and, consequently, get the support of the people. No way was the American army going to provoke an Arab rebellion, for example, against French rule because that, quite obviously, would disturb all of the relationship between the Third World and the advanced capitalist empires. And the United States would not do that. The other solution that was ruled out was De Gaulle. Because De Gaulle, as Admiral Leahy kept telling Roosevelt, was nothing but a British tool. And, consequently, that Committee of National Liberation, which he established in London and which was financed by the British, was considered to be a British ploy. And that meant that even though the United States was this great ally of Great Britain that it would be propping up somebody who would turn French interest over into British hands, not only during the war, but in the postwar period.

The problem was to find good pro-Americans in Vichy and that wasn't so difficult. Because, you see, there is what is called a Vichy resistance. Well, a Vichy resistance, it's not really very admirable or idealistic. What you're talking about are generals and officials who, in mid-1942, have the idea that, if Russia has entered the war and the United States has entered the war, that maybe Germany hasn't won, maybe they've chosen the wrong side — and maybe they can get rid of this occupation now by switching sides. You see what this Vichy resistance was: they were

anti-German, anti-occupation, but they were perfect Vichyites. They believed in the National Revolution, in Vichy. They were reactionary. And suddenly they had the brilliant idea that if the Germans couldn't protect them, maybe the Americans could. And that's one of the most intelligent things they ever thought.

And so it was that you get an industrialist, for example, like Jacques Lemaigre Dubreuil — who was a leader of this so-called Vichy resistance, he himself a great industrialist in vegetable oils — who constantly was telling his Vichy friends that the Americans will be our protection against De Gaulle, who we don't trust, and against the Russians, who are dangerous, and against internal revolution. And this Lemaigre Dubreuil, as a matter of fact, as late as July of 1944, was in Lisbon dealing with German intelligence agents and American intelligence agents trying to bring about a negotiated peace between the United States and Germany so that the two friends of the Vichyites, somehow, would make a cordon sanitaire against the Russian armies. And that was broken up only when [Hitler's foreign minister Joachim von] Ribbentrop found out about it and told German intelligence not to negotiate upon this score at all.

Well, the Americans looked in that kind of milieu. And to look is to find. And, consequently, the American general Mark Clark and Robert Murphy went into the Vichy area and found a French general named Henri Giraud. And Henri Giraud had been taken prisoner by the Germans, during the short war, escaped, was back in Vichy. A perfect imbecile. Giraud — absolutely a Vichyite, a reactionary, simplistic, believed in the National Revolution, believed in an authoritarian government, but wanted the German occupation out. And, consequently, told the Americans that, yes, if he were installed in North Africa, he would be their man. But Giraud was the ace up the sleeve because there still was Darlan in North Africa. And Giraud was a kind of contingency plan — that if Darlan didn't work out, he would be removed and Giraud would be put in.

And so the invasion took place on the 7th of November of 1942, and hot and heavy negotiations began with Admiral Darlan. And he wasn't anxious to join the Allied side. He hated the British, first of all. He was one of those Anglophobes, born that way. And, consequently, really couldn't stand the whole British imperial drive. And secondly, he didn't want to jeopardize that sovereignty of Vichy, which he might do if he joined with the Allied side. And so he was almost tempted to go into the war on the side of the Germans. But three things forced him out of that. First of all, the German occupied all of France, on the 11th of November of 1942, and so there was nothing to say. Vichy sovereignty really was destroyed by that action. Secondly, it was Darlan's idea that, if Vichy sovereignty was done in, perhaps he could reinstall it in North Africa. Perhaps he could really install around his own personage, with only lip service to Marshal Pétain, that Vichy regime. And the Americans would support it. And, in the third place, he had the dictum of General Clark that, if he didn't join the Allied side, he would be ousted and somebody would be put in his place. And so came what we call the Darlan deal. And the Darlan deal was consummated on the 22nd of November of 1942, that astonishing act in which

American policymakers strike an accord with an absolutely pro-Nazi French Vichyite Admiral Darlan. And the accord is that the United States recognizes the sovereignty of Darlan in North Africa, recognizes his rule there, will outfit his French army in return for which Vichy goes to war against the Axis.

Now, that, after all, has a lot of implications if you stop and think about it. For Darlan, of course, it is perfect. He can set up his little Vichy regime. And so he organizes what's called the Imperial Council. He himself is called the head of the French state in North Africa. And the Imperial Council is composed of Vichyites, of those who left the mainland of France, those whom he picked up in North Africa — people like General [Jean] Bergeret, for example, who had been the Minister of Aviation in Vichy; General Giraud, who was now flown down into North Africa to join this Imperial Council — and that Imperial Council keeps intact all of the legislation of Vichy, including the anti-Semitic laws, all of that is intact.

Secondly, for Darlan there is the idea that, somehow, the American will always protect a regime of that sort if they can claim that it keeps communism from coming to power.

And third, the implications are very rich for us. Because it shows, prototypically, the kind of regime that American policymakers rather liked. They installed them because they were safe, because they were predictable. And yet there's something strange about this Darlan. Somehow he is a bit too independent. And, consequently, you can't trust him. And he is a megalomaniac, and he likes power. And then it's mana from heaven. Only a month after the Darlan deal of November 22, on Christmas Eve, if you please, of 1942, Darlan is assassinated. Now, he is assassinated by what are called right-wing terrorists. But the right-wing terrorists were picked up and executed the next morning. They were never interrogated. We have no idea of who they were. And if you're as suspicious as I am, then you think that either the British did it because they detested Darlan, or the Americans because they weren't quite sure about him.

That we don't know. What we do know is that the Imperial Council met immediately after the assassination of Darlan, and they thought they would put in his place General Bergeret. And Dwight Eisenhower came with a message directly from FDR and said, "No, it will have to be Giraud." And General Giraud became the head of the French State in North Africa. And all was well. With one slip: that Giraud had no support among any French group. And that made it a little bit embarrassing. And if it was a resistance, after all, the leader of the resistance, certainly outside, was Charles de Gaulle. And it was De Gaulle's Committee of National Liberation which had gotten, at least, lip service from all of the resistance groups inside France by the beginning of 1943. It was De Gaulle who had captured the imagination of French resistance people inside. And it was De Gaulle, even, who had the support of rank-and-file citizens and soldiers in North Africa. You had to do that terrible thing, to deal with De Gaulle. And that, the American didn't want to do. I tell you there is a passion, in Roosevelt, of hatred against De Gaulle that could be

understood only if you understand the whole picture.

For a long time, you know, historians have thought that there was this terrible abrasive personality clash. Charles de Gaulle was not the easiest person in the world, granted. He was a bit of a loner, contemptuous of everyone but himself, not easy to get on with, but it doesn't really explain it. And, you see, De Gaulle was so brilliant in his kind of strategy for the ruling class. He's the only one, you see, who had a sense of how, really, to save the bourgeois state. He's the only Gramscian elitist, if you want to use that term: the only one who understands that you give head to the radicals in the resistance movement — you're not afraid because you can contain, you know you can corrupt, you know, ultimately, you can crush them. Or so you think.

And yet the Americans wouldn't deal with him. It was something almost pathological, in 1943. But not so pathological at all. Because it is Anthony Eden [British foreign affairs liaison and postwar prime minister] — who, after all, loved De Gaulle for reasons that we will explain — it is Anthony Eden who, after talking to [US Secretary of State Cordell] Hull and Roosevelt in Washington in March of 1943, records in his memoirs of that period, in a book called *The Reckoning*, the following: "It seemed to me that Roosevelt wanted to hold the strings of France's future in his hands so that he could decide that country's post-war fate. And, in that sense, he could not deal with De Gaulle." And Eden, of course, was perfectly to the mark. There is a struggle, you see, that goes on around De Gaulle, which is a struggle between the United States and Great Britain. They are, to be sure, allies in the war. But the whole question of what the postwar world is going to be is never distant from the minds of a Roosevelt or a Churchill. Now, you see, the point is that De Gaulle was a British cat's paw. So far as Great Britain was concerned, he was their man. And what did that mean?

What it meant was that the foreign office group, and Anthony Eden, they had a pretty good idea of what Great Britain's problems would be in the postwar world — that Great Britain would have to try to stand head against the United States, against the Soviet Union, and that it would be a grotesquely weaker power. The idea was: How was England to have any clout? How was it to assure its capitalism of markets? How was it to have political influence in world affairs?

One way, obviously, was to hang onto that empire and to make that empire a political and economic bloc behind British power. But the other idea that went with it was an early variant of what we call the European idea in a much later time: the idea of European capitalists, over the past half-dozen years, that they are to build up a Europe to stand head against Russia and the United States both; that they are to make that their kind of competitive instrumentality. And Great Britain had that idea that somehow in Western Europe — among the small nations that we call the Benelux countries, but with the cornerstone in France — it would build up a political bloc and an economic bloc that could stand head against the United States and against the Soviet Union. And so we get it very categorically stated by Anthony Eden in his memoirs: "In dealing

with our prospects for the future, we are likely to have to work very much more closely with France even than with the United States. And while we should naturally concert our French policy so far as we can with Washington, there are limits beyond which we ought not to allow our policy to be governed by theirs." And the same Eden who says in the House of Commons in September of 1944: "It will give us more authority with the other great powers if we speak for the Commonwealth and for our near neighbors in West Europe, especially France."

You see the ploy. The ploy on the part of the British was to build up France as much as possible but to make it a client of Great Britain. For that reason it's English diplomacy that is constantly insisting that France is a great power, that it must have equal weight in the United Nations, that it must be one of the occupying powers in Germany, that it must maintain its empire. All of which is that European bloc idea, and that was anathema to the Americans. Because the Americans didn't want any blocs — the world was their bloc. And, consequently, the idea of having either the empire as a bloc or Europe was simply a barrier to this idea for a reconstructed world economic order.

Now, De Gaulle knew what the British game was and, consequently, as late as March of 1944, he's talking about a European bloc. He knows he's got to play the British game at that time. But Washington likewise knows. And so you get Franklin Roosevelt on his way to Tehran, in November of 1943, saying: "The British obviously want to build up France into a first-class power which would then be on the British side in world economic affairs." And so it couldn't be De Gaulle.

But he forced the issue. He was an extraordinary guy, you see. And you couldn't keep him in London, not when there was action in North Africa. And, consequently, on the 30th of May of 1943, De Gaulle leaves London and installs himself in North Africa. He starts negotiations with the Vichy regime to become the sovereign head of that French empire in North Africa. And out of those negotiations comes, on the 3rd of June of 1943, a reconstructed Committee of National Liberation with two presidents: a Committee of National Liberation under General Giraud and under General De Gaulle. Now, you know that De Gaulle doesn't play at co-presidencies. And so there are real implications to that act. The implications, in the first place, that, once you had that kind of reconstructed Committee of National Liberation, that in North Africa you have made a provisional government — that Vichy sovereignty really has disappeared. And you are now talking about a sovereign kind of provisional government in North Africa. And, in the second place, that De Gaulle is going to use that co-presidency to push, and push, and push. It was a great blitzkrieg.

It was a blitzkrieg that Washington saw coming. And Washington did the piddling little thing. It invited General Giraud to Washington in the middle of July. And it gave him tickertape. And it drove him all around. And it called him the leader of the Free French and so forth. But,

meantime, back in Algiers, De Gaulle was stripping Giraud of all possible powers — giving him honorific titles, pushing him off into a corner, not telling him when the Committee was meeting. And consequently, poor, poor Giraud, on the 10th of November of 1943, he resigned and disappeared from politics. No loss!

So, suddenly, you have De Gaulle making his little coup. And, at that point, the Americans have to respond. And the Americans at that point have to respond, because the issue by the end of 1943 was no longer the question of a Vichy party versus De Gaulle. The issue by the end of '43 was the resistance movement and whether it would be Gaullist or whether it would be the left. And here, De Gaulle finally secured the American aid.

Now, that resistance movement is in two parts, is it not? There is an external resistance and there is an internal resistance. Externally, it is Gaullist. And make no mistake about what it is: it is elitist, it is bourgeois, it is conservative. There is no left in that Gaullist movement. To talk about "left-Gaullist" is really a total misnomer. What you are dealing with is a De Gaulle who wants the "politics of no politics," a De Gaulle who talks about a "patriotic party" — in other words, there must be no division in this resistance movement, which means that there can be no demand from below — who talks about the need for a generation of France which he begins to crystallize in his own person. The cult of personality begins to become his resistance movement; all of this very cleverly done.

But the problem is the internal resistance movement. Because here the force of De Gaulle is very, very narrow. There are very few Gaullists, really, in that sense — in that elitist sense — of old Vichy generals and officials inside France. The resistance inside France is to the left. And it is to the left around the Communist Party. The Communist Party is the fulcrum of the resistance movement. And once the line changed, as it did in June of 1942, the Communist resistance was magnificent. You, after all, have to think about this. You have to think that the Communist Party is called the *parti des fusillés*, the "party of the people who got shot," that their sacrifice was terrific, that their courage was terrific, that their capacity to organize was terrific, and people flocked to their banner. Workers did, and intellectuals did, and the young did, and women did, and all kinds of people who thought in terms of another liberated society. And these Communists had the biggest of the armed forces in the resistance. They had the FTP, the *Franco-tireurs et partisans* — which you can translate as the "Free Fighters and Partisans" — the FTP, which became the largest and the most aggressive of the armed sectors of the resistance movement.

And so everything turns, does it not, on what the Communists want? Refresh your memory that, in May of 1942, there was a meeting in London between De Gaulle and Molotov. And at that De Gaulle-Molotov meeting of May of '42, Molotov said that the Russians "would use their good offices" — to use the euphemistic terms he used — "would use their good offices with the French Communist movement to force them to put themselves under De Gaulle's leadership. In

return for which De Gaulle promised that he would use his "good offices" with the Allies for a second front. In other words, it is the Russians saying that they're not concerned about a revolution in France. What they want is the support of De Gaulle. Consider that.

Consider the fact that, in January of 1943, the Communists sent a delegate to the Committee of National Liberation in London — an official Communist delegate who was sent to De Gaulle. Now, that delegate was a man named Grenier, Fernand Grenier. And he went up, in January of 1942, and De Gaulle recognized his visit in a letter which I want to read part of because it's very instructive. De Gaulle sends a letter back to the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, on the 10th of January of 1943, to acknowledge the fact that Fernand Grenier, this Communist, has come up there as an emissary of the French Communist Party. And this is what De Gaulle says — and I want you to understand that, in saying this, De Gaulle isn't describing the facts that have been, he's describing the facts as they must be; it is his version of the relationship between the Communists and his resistance movement. So listen to this letter: "The arrival of Fernand Grenier, the total support of the Communist Party of France for the Committee of National Liberation in London, which he has brought in your name, the placing under my command of your valiant unions of Francs-tireurs et partisans will serve French unity. I am certain that the delegates whom I have designated to establish liaison with you in France will find you, the Communist leaders, as cooperative and disciplined as I have always found you." You see what it is: it is De Gaulle saying, "Alright, you have sent a delegate up here. You can be inside this resistance movement. Your fighting is valued in France. But you are under my command!"

And then De Gaulle goes to Algiers at the end of May of 1943, and he reconstructs that Committee of National Liberation. And early in June, the Communist Party officially joins the Committee of National Liberation in Algiers. And that an extraordinarily interesting thing, because that happens just a few days after Stalin dissolves the Comintern — in other words, that symbolic act that there will be no kind of world revolution fomented by the Communists. And when the Communists go into the Committee of National Liberation in Algiers, they tried to make a condition. And the condition is spelled out this way. It's not very radical. But the party says, we will join this Committee of National Liberation if you, De Gaulle, agree to this plank. And I quote: "Agreement on a democratic and social program which will, then, galvanize all French energies and create enthusiasm for the participation of everyone in the war of liberation."

In other words, all that the French Communists said is the only condition we set is that this Committee of National Liberation draw up a program for the renovation of France, that there be some great reforms that people can fight for. And De Gaulle turned that down categorically. Not because there was anything radical in that plan — needless to say, any resistance movement would have to have such a program. He turned it down, categorically, because he would not accept a program or a commitment from the Communists. In other words, an accord had to be

something on his terms. There were to be no mitigating circumstances in it. And the Communists accepted that.

Or consider the fact that, inside France, on the 27th of May of 1943, was finally organized a resistance council of the interior, the so-called Conseil national de la Résistance, the CNR — the CNR which is established on the 27th of May of '43. And the Communists dominate that. And it does bring together all the resistance groups. And, by all odds, it should have been a revolutionary organization, something that really fought to dismantle the structures of counter-revolution that Vichy had established. And De Gaulle, looking at this National Council of Resistance inside France says: "The only constituent party in it is the Communist Party. I will not recognize it unless the other parties reorganize and become constituent members." In other words, unless the Socialist Party, the Radical Party, all of them had delegates within this Council of National Resistance. And, consequently, the Communists debated that. They opposed it at first.

And listen to Jacques Duclos, who was the head of the French Communist Party inside France since Thorez was in Moscow. Duclos writes a little history of the Resistance called *Le PCF dans la Résistance*, in which he explains why the Communists accepted that rather incredible condition that De Gaulle set. "It is a fact," writes Duclos, "that, in France, political life has traditionally been expressed in the great parties which are the specific fact of bourgeois democracy. Apolitism and the condemnation of parties have always gone hand-in-hand with reaction." In other words, it's Duclos saying, "Well, that's the democratic way to have this kind of contractual relationship among parties." What, in effect, the Communists are saying when they accept this is, that the National Council of the Resistance inside France will not be a revolutionary organ: it will be a contract among those old parties; that you will restore that kind of bourgeois party system after the resistance. Now, all of that means that the Communists, if they were in the vanguard of the resistance, showed in 1943, rather categorically, that they were not, at that point, at any rate, to launch a social revolution.

But De Gaulle, you see, used the Communist threat with the Americans. And the Americans, toward the end of 1943 and the beginning of '44, not understanding a great deal about the inner workings of these things — the Americans, after all, saw that the resistance movement was growing, that the network of the resistance was spreading all over France, that the Communists had the greatest armed force inside the resistance movement — they began to get scared. And De Gaulle played on this. And De Gaulle, through his emissaries, told American policymakers that if you keep looking for a Vichy party, if you keep playing that game, you would play into the hands of the Communists. And it worked, because it was a long and torturous history. But on the 6th of July of 1944, after the Americans had finally landed in Normandy, General De Gaulle pays his famous visit to Washington. And his Committee of National Liberation is declared the de facto government of France.

So the question is the question of 1944 and '45. The question is the question of 1944 and '45. The question is, can De Gaulle coopt it? The question is, can he really control this resistance movement? Can he control people on the march? Well, I tell you it was terrific. It was terrific, and you have to know *résistants* to understand what '44 was like in France. And once the Americans landed in Normandy, once Project Overlord became a reality on the 6th of June of 1944, there was a tremendous resistance activity everywhere in that country. What I want to point out to you is that the resistance disarmed the Germans, displaced the Germans, cracked the whole fabric of Vichy rule before the armies got there — that it was very much like what the Italian resistance movement did in northern Italy — that General Eisenhower himself said that what the resistance did in the weeks after June 6th of 1944 was worth to the American cause fifteen divisions. They did that much work. And in the vanguard of that effort was the Communist Party.

And that is the critical moment. Because, at that point — and I want you, really, to sort of ponder this — the question of revolution, you see, is not an abstract question of whether you can have a working-class uprising. The question of revolution is to turn this mass movement in process into the effective sovereignty of France. It is not to confront De Gaulle. It is to force De Gaulle to confront that fact. It is not to bargain with the Americans, but to force the American occupation to face a *fait accompli* — and then, if it chooses to contest that *fait accompli*, to rouse a national resistance even to the Americans. That was the revolutionary strategy.

And De Gaulle was worried. And he spent much of the spring of 1944, planning his way of avoiding that eventuality. And he and General Kœnig — General Pierre Kœnig, who was his military aide-de-camp and very important in this story — tried a ploy in March of 1944. And what they did was to make a liaison committee between the internal resistance (the so-called FFI, the French Forces of the Interior) and the Committee of National Liberation. And that liaison committee was called CONCAC, which was the French initials for a committee of military liaison. And, in that particular committee, there were the representatives of the resistance. And this is the way the bargaining went through the spring of 1944 and into the summer, and it is the internal resistance led by the Communists saying that they want a great national insurrection. They want a national insurrection that really will bring power in the hands of the people, but they want it genuinely national. They want De Gaulle and his committee to support it. They want, if you please, arms. And De Gaulle is very clever. And he holds them on a string. And he gets all kinds of concessions. And he gets the concession that he will be the nominal leader of this insurrection. He gets the concession that General Kœnig will be the military liaison. All kinds of concessions and, then, the military aid is never forthcoming. And this liaison committee goes out of existence.

And so comes the invasion of the 6th of June of 1944. And De Gaulle, at this particular time, is pretty worried, but he thinks, nonetheless, that he may have to use a national insurrection. And

note this well because it's one of the revealing parts of the story. He doesn't really trust the Americans and for good reason. As late as the summer of 1944, American policymakers, like Leahy, were still talking about the possibility of restoring Pétain after the war. You are still talking about the possibility of getting a Vichy-style government. No, no. De Gaulle would make the great risk. He might even try to use a national insurrection.

The problem was it was bigger than he thought. And it is the liberation revolt in the city of Paris. And Paris had been like a kind of beehive. It has hummed with resistance activity all through the summer. And there is the 14th of July of 1944, and there are 100,000 people who demonstrate under the noses of the German occupation in the city of Paris. And there, on the 17th of August, a strike — a strike which begins with the postal workers, spreads to the subway workers — begins to become a general strike and, finally, finally, the Communists issue the order on the 19th of August, the order for an insurrection in Paris. And that insurrection, they thought, would simply oust the German troops there and would coordinate with the American troops that were coming that were only 25 miles from Paris. But, you see, it was out of hand.

And this is part of the story that it is really very, very difficult to grasp: that parties don't control mass movements once they get rolling — that this mass was fantastic in the days between the 19th of August and the 25th — that what it did really was to disarm the Germans and drive them out, and took quarter after quarter in the city of Paris.

And De Gaulle, suddenly, got worried and used his best trump card. And he went to Eisenhower, and he said that the Americans had best rush into Paris. They are 25 miles away. Their plan, really, is not to invade Paris but to encircle it. They had best move in immediately. And if they did not, that French forces would, that General Le Caire and the French division were already racing toward Paris. And Eisenhower, with that threat of a Communist takeover, with that threat that the French army itself might occupy Paris, complied. And on the 24th of August of 1944, the Americans switched plans and moved directly on Paris and arrived there on the 25th. And they arrived in the nick of time. They arrived when the city had really fallen into the hands of the resistance. And the American army moved into that city. And behind the American army came General Kœnig and General De Gaulle — and came, in other words, the official form of the French resistance movement. And the Americans took the surrender from the Germans and immediately named General Kœnig the military governor of Paris. And De Gaulle — De Gaulle was there.

And De Gaulle was terrific, absolutely terrific. You know, if a ruling class needs somebody at a critical hour, it really needs a De Gaulle. And he came into Paris that 25th of August. And it had all been planned out. And on his way through that city the first thing he did was to stop off and visit the ministry of War. And he visited the Ministry of War, according to his memoirs, "I wished to establish that the state was returning to where it belonged." The state was himself, of

course. And he was going to the Ministry of War to say that he had military force behind him. He then accepted the surrender from the Germans in the name of *his* provisional government, not in the name of the resistance. The next day, the 26th of August, was all De Gaulle. He organized an immense parade. And there was enthusiasm that was absolutely uncapped in the city of Paris. And in that parade, he marched in the front, of course, and the resistance leaders, the leaders of that Conseil national de la Résistance, marched in the back. And on the way he stopped off at the *hôtel de ville*, the city hall of Paris, and he accepted the keys to the city in the name of his provisional government. And then, on the way back, he stopped off at Notre Dame and said Mass, under the auspices of Vichyite priests. And the next day the 27th of August, he invited the leaders of the Conseil national de la Résistance to see him in his office. And they came, and he thanked them for their efforts, and said, "Your committee is dissolved." The Americans responded to that. And, consequently, Eisenhower thought that was a great snow job and appreciated it.

And if you ask the question of how De Gaulle got away with that, how De Gaulle really established himself there in August of 1944, the answer has to be threefold. It has to be, first of all, the Americans who really were sold, at this particular time, on the idea that they had no alternative, if they were to prevent communism, than De Gaulle. And Eisenhower recognized De Gaulle as the civil authority in France on the 26th of August, and gave him, as a matter of fact, a French division in order to keep order inside the country. Secondly, you cannot underestimate the charisma of De Gaulle himself. De Gaulle was incredible. You know if you have ever seen that man on television, if you have ever heard a speech of his, it really is mesmerizing. There is that kind of long, equine face. There is that kind of strange lift to the heavens. There is that kind of resonant voice talking about "*la France éternelle*" and so forth. Until, finally, you believe all that crap, and you have this notion, after all, that what Gaullist nationalism is, really, adds up to a program. That charisma was terrific in August of 1944.

But [thirdly] don't underestimate the role of the Communists. And this is the point: the Communists let it happen. And they let it happen really without any opposition. And the explanation of that has to do, certainly, with the position of the Russians. And there is Stalin at Tehran, in November of 1943, saying to Roosevelt and Churchill that France is a very pleasant country but unimportant — telling them, in other words, that he is not going to fight for a revolution in France. And here we have the word, then, of [US ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell] Harriman in his own reports to the State Department, in July of 1944, on the basis of his talks with Molotov in Moscow. And listen to this: Harriman writes, "Several times this month Molotov has assured me that the Soviet government would take no action vis-à-vis France at variance with our American position." And so the Communists must operate within that framework.

But, you see, it isn't that easy. And I have talked to a lot of Communists out of that period,

people who are my friends, people who have been very disenchanted, people who have gone through the party and out — Jean Girault, for example, a militant in those days who's now gone way out of the party and so forth — and they all tell you the same thing: that what you know now wasn't apparent to rank-and-file Communists in 1944 and 1945. That mass of Communists, the people that kept pouring in, did not think the French Communist Party was not hellbent on a revolution and was going to sell it out. Alright, De Gaulle has come in as the provisional head of the government in August of '44. But wasn't that natural? He was the head of the resistance movement in terms of a personality. And there was the American army. But think of the next six months — think of those last six months of 1944. The position of the Communist Party becomes stronger; its membership doubles; *L'Humanité* is the biggest newspaper in all of France; people pour into the unions that are Communist-run. It is a real force. And it still has armed militias. It still has these *milices patriotiques*. It still has its weapons. And, consequently, it still is a force for revolution. And it's cut off from Moscow. And that is terribly important. And here is Jacques Duclos, who, after all, is acting as the head of the party inside France, at this particular time, addressing, on the 27th of October of 1944, addressing the Central Committee and saying, that we have militia and we have weapons, and we will not give them up. The next day, the 28th of October of 1944, De Gaulle declares the militias dissolved and insists that the weapons be given up. And, interior in the French Communist Party, circulates the order that the militia should not dissolve and that the weapons should not be given up.

And then Thorez comes back. And Thorez comes back from Moscow where he has been all through the war, and he comes back on the 27th of November of 1944. And when he arrives, his first speech says, "One state, one police, one army" — that we will not have our own militia, and we will not have our own weapons. And he orders that the militia be dissolved and that the Communists give up their guns. And the explanation of that: well, obviously, Thorez had words from Moscow.

And you must coordinate that action of the 27th of November with what takes place on the 2nd of December of '44. Because, on the 2nd of December, De Gaulle is in Moscow. And when he is in Moscow, he makes a bilateral accord, the famous De Gaulle-Stalin Accord of the 2nd of December of 1944. And according to that accord, each of those powers — De Gaulle and his provisional government, the Soviet Union — will support the other, diplomatically, against the pressures of the Americans. In other words, it is De Gaulle's support for Russian aims in Eastern Europe and it is Moscow's support for De Gaulle in France.

And after that, it is all downhill. Because, at that particular point, Thorez really goes into high form. And he tells the Central Committee of the Communist Party in January of 1945, "The task of the Liberation Committees, all over France, is not to administer but to help those who administer. They must organize the masses to support the provisional government of De Gaulle." In other words, the party will now, really, stand foursquare behind De Gaulle. And that policy is

followed by the famous policy of the "battle for production." And note it well, because it tells you everything about this interstitial period.

The battle for production — what Thorez called the battle for *la France éternelle*, for eternal France — the battle for production meant that the Communists in the unions, the Communist workers, the Communist cadres, must work overtime without strike, with tremendous energy to build the production of France. The explanation was that the war wasn't over and needed this production to defeat the Germans. Nonsense — horsefeathers. The Germans were beaten anyway by that time. And what in hell difference did piddling little French production make? But that wasn't the point. The point was that there would be no interstitial period. No vacuum in which the whole economy would collapse. And the proof of that comes in the fact that the battle for production even after the war is over.

And so you get the minor strike of July of 1945, and Thorez is angry about it. And the miners are Communists, and they are striking for decent pay. And he goes there to the *Nord*, up into the north of France, and he says to the miners, on the 21st of July of 1945, "We cannot approve any strike, especially when it breaks out against the will of the union leadership. The French economy has lost 30,000 tons of coal by what the miners have done and that is scandalous."

And what you are talking about is that the French Communist Party disarmed its own troops, that it gave French capitalism breathing space, that it rebuilt a shattered French economy — all of that because Stalin wanted no social revolution that should disrupt or disturb his relationships with the West.

And I want you to think of the enormity of that: that we have all paid — the French have paid, we have paid, the Russian people have paid — for the mythology — the mythology! — that Stalin wanted a revolution in Western Europe and that the Communist parties were going to make it, which they never did and would not make. And for that mythology, we've had the war state, and we've had aggression, and we've had Cold War, and we've lived in a state, really, of a kind of intellectual and moral paralysis. All for that fantastic, magnificent myth, it never was — it could have been. But it never was to be. And I want you to think about that and see, really, what it is you have been sold. [applause]