

Summer 1962

The Problem of France and its Effect on the Potsdam Agreements

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THE PROBLEM OF FRANCE AND ITS
EFFECT ON THE POTSDAM AGREEMENTS

being

A thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts

by

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July 24, 1962

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ABSTRACT

France, in the Potsdam Agreements, was accorded equal power in the occupation and control of defeated Germany with the Big Three. Yet, the French were not bound, in any way, to the Potsdam Agreements by which the occupation and control of defeated Germany was to proceed. The purpose of this study has been to discover how and why this omission occurred and its effect upon the Potsdam design.

Pursuance of this study led to an investigation of Big Three wartime summit meetings and of Big Three relations with France during the various phases of the war. From June of 1940 to October of 1944 the Big Three were faced with the problem of finding and recognizing a French Government representative of the French people. Following the recognition of the Provisional Government of France on October 23, 1944, the three great powers were faced with de Gaulle's chauvinistic and ambitious plans for himself as well as his nation.

Full responsibility for the obstruction, however, cannot be delegated to France alone, for the responsibility must be shared by all four nations. By their attitude, the Soviets implied a continual belief in French inferiority, and Russia became a new symbol of danger to French security.

Great Britain and the United States, although the main supporters of French rights, failed to support France adequately when she needed it most.

The result was the frustration of the Potsdam design for the occupation and control of defeated Germany. The planned coordinated approach was replaced by a national zonal approach. The long-range effect can be discerned in the Berlin wall and the lack of unity between the Western powers; both of which are, in part, a result of the French obstruction following Germany's surrender.

PREFACE

An interest in the French problem was acquired during a seminar on the "Causes of the Cold War." Part of the material read for that seminar was an excerpt from James Paul Warburg's Germany: Key to Peace entitled "Onset of the Cold War." In this excerpt, Mr. Warburg credited Great Britain and the United States with the major political blunder of allowing the French equal power with the Big Three in the occupation and control of defeated Germany without binding France in any way to the Potsdam Agreements.

An attempt has been made to answer several questions. First, what was the origin and nature of the French problem, and what were the attitudes of the major powers toward France? This question led to an investigation of Big Three wartime summit meetings and the conditions under which the delegations assembled for the Potsdam Conference, as well as an investigation of the wartime relations between France and the Big Three. Second, why were the French excluded from the Potsdam Conference? Finally, who was to blame for French obstructive activity following Germany's surrender, and what was the result of that activity?

My conclusions are the result of an investigation

of publications of the United States State Department and the Soviet Foreign Ministry, memoirs and diaries of the outstanding personalities of the period, and major secondary works concerning the subject.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Eugene R. Craine, Dr. William Larrell Stump, Mr. Don B. Slechta, and Dr. Roberts Stout, all of whom have read the manuscript and offered helpful suggestions. To the library staff at Forsythe Library, the writer wishes to express his gratitude for their patience throughout the course of this study.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE

The Potsdam Conference (July 17-August 2, 1945) was the last of the wartime conferences between the leaders of the three great powers: Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The leaders of these nations had, with their various advisers, met twice before in attempts to settle problems which confronted them as allies in a world-wide conflict.

At Teheran (November 28-December 1, 1943) the three leaders met for the first time. Prime Minister Winston Churchill represented Great Britain; Premier Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union; and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the United States. The Communique issued at the end of this conference expressed the determination that the three nations would "work together in war and in the peace that will follow."¹ At this conference the basic cooperative military strategy for the successful completion of the war, particularly against Hitler's Germany, was discussed and decided. Here the Soviets obtained one of their chief desires; an agreement by their Western allies of a definite

¹Department of State, In Quest of Peace and Security: Selected Documents on American Foreign Policy, 1941-1951, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 6.

date for the launching of the much desired second front. Although some attention was accorded to postwar problems, these discussions were brief and vague. The American leaders were primarily concerned with one aim at that stage of the conflict; the winning of the war. They tended to postpone discussion of postwar problems until a later date.

At Yalta, the Crimea Conference (February 4-11, 1945), the leaders of the three great powers met for the second time. Conditions in the European theatre of war had changed markedly since the meeting at Teheran two years earlier. Obviously, the German armies were nearing the end of their efforts. Only a matter of time separated the Allied forces from total victory in this theatre. By the early 1950's the general theme developed in the United States that the Western delegates were on the losing side at this conference; that the free world was sold-out to the advantage of the Soviet Union. George N. Crocker, writing of the conference caustically remarked that "drink-ing-bout diplomacy had served the Russians well."² James F. Byrnes, a member of the American delegation to the conference, remarked that he "marveled that he [Roosevelt] made such a good presentation apparently with little

²George N. Crocker, Roosevelt's Road to Russia (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), p. 253.

preparation."³ Certainly the results of this historic meeting were different than desired by the Western leaders, but not all the fruit of the tree went to the Russians. The Soviet leaders also agreed to decisions not in accordance with their express desires; the most notable being their agreement to include France in the postwar occupation and control of defeated Germany.

A different perspective was cast on the results of the Yalta Conference by Captain Thornycroft in a speech to the British House of Commons, February 28, 1945,⁴ in which he expressed an opinion that the control of Eastern Europe had passed to the Soviets and that the Yalta Agreement was the "best settlement possible." This was merely an observation of a fact. Soviet armies controlled Eastern Europe, and to dislodge them against their wishes would have been a most difficult task.

Regardless of the various viewpoints expressed on the subject of Yalta, an undeniable fact was that the conference ended without concrete decisions being made on a number of issues. James Paul Warburg maintains that "the

³This is a reference to the state of the President's health at Yalta and a reply to the accusation that Roosevelt went to the conference unprepared. James F. Byrnes, All in One Lifetime (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 256.

⁴Norman A. Graebner, Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960 (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 139-143.

communique issued [at the close of the conference] ... showed clearly, by what it did not say, that the three leaders were far from seeing eye-to-eye concerning the post-surrender treatment of Germany."⁵ Similar views must also have been held by Prime Minister Churchill and President Harry S. Truman, for in a message to Churchill (May 14, 1945) Truman stated that "I am in full agreement with you [Churchill] that an early tripartite meeting is necessary to come to an understanding with Russia."⁶

While there was agreement for an early meeting of the Big Three, there was a divergence of opinion as to when the meeting should be held. Churchill pressed for the middle of June or the first of July at the latest. His anxiety was founded on the fear that the American Government would agree to a withdrawal of their forces from the central part of Germany, thus leaving that entire area under Soviet control. The Prime Minister believed that should such a step be taken the Western leaders would have nothing to bargain with at Potsdam "and all the prospects of the future peace

⁵James Paul Warburg, Germany: Key to Peace (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 17.

⁶Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers: the Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), Vol. I, p. 11.

of Europe might well go by default."⁷

Churchill's most forceful arguments, however, could not prevail over Truman's caution. Only a few months earlier Truman had been elected Vice-President of the United States. Suddenly he found himself filling a vacancy in the Presidency, a promotion which left him faced with the responsibility of helping make decisions which would create a peaceful world without the benefit of full knowledge of previous discussions and agreements between the leaders of the three major powers. His conviction was, therefore, that time was needed in order to inform himself on existing conditions and past negotiations. Thus, he notified Churchill (June 1, 1945) that "after full consideration July 15 was the earliest for him, and that arrangements were being made accordingly."⁸

Premier Stalin was in no hurry to have the proposed meeting, and Truman, in his note of June 1 to Churchill, informed the Prime Minister that Stalin was in agreement with the July 15 date. The Prime Minister had no choice but to accept the later date.

When the delegations assembled at Potsdam noticeable changes in their composition, in comparison to earlier con-

⁷Winston S. Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, Vol. VI of The Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 602.

⁸Ibid., p. 599.

ferences, were in evidence. Harry Truman had succeeded Franklin D. Roosevelt as the American leader. As noted above, he had delayed the meeting to inform himself on earlier conferences. Still, he was handicapped by taking over an unfamiliar hand in a game for high stakes. "The Secretary of State [James F.] Byrnes, had taken office only a few days before sailing."⁹ While he had attended the Yalta Conference, this was his first appearance in the capacity of Secretary of State. He was, therefore, unfamiliar with a number of issues with which he would have to deal and was forced to prepare himself as best he could on the trip to Potsdam.

Other familiar faces were absent from the American delegation. Harry Hopkins, who had served Roosevelt as a most trusted adviser throughout most of the war, remained in the United States in an attempt to regain his health.¹⁰ His absence was a handicap to the United States delegation because his vast experience in dealing with the Soviets was not available at a crucial time. Most of the remainder of the civilian members of the American delegation were career officers of the State Department and the Foreign Service; a

⁹Herbert Feis, Between Peace and War: the Potsdam Conference (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 160.

¹⁰Ibid.

group not included as policy makers at previous conferences. Finally, Averell Harriman, the United States Ambassador in Moscow, had to suggest himself to the President as a member of the delegation which "was indicative of the desire of both the President and the Secretary of State to leave themselves free to make up their own minds about the spirit in which to deal with the Russians."¹¹ He was "given little to do after arrival."¹²

The British delegation was noticeably changed in the persons of their two major delegates. Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden began the conference in their respective roles of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, but the British election returns, announced in the middle of the conference, replaced Churchill with Clement Attlee and Eden with Ernest Bevin. Yet, the British successors were more fortunate than their American colleagues for, as leaders of the loyal opposition party, they had been kept fairly well informed in the development of current situations and had had constant information on current British policy. Still, Attlee and Bevin were faced with the problem of taking over the reins of leadership in the middle of a crucial event.

Herbert Feis quite aptly summed up the Soviet

¹¹Ibid., p. 161.

¹²Ibid.

delegation to the conference with the statement that, "Of the Soviet group all that need be said is that Stalin was there, and [V. M.] Molotov [Soviet Foreign Secretary], always present...."¹³

It would be no exaggeration, then, to say that the Soviets held a definite advantage throughout the ensuing discussions. Only they had been present at all of the previous Big Three meetings. On the fine points which arose during the discussions, it was mainly to Stalin and Molotov that the conferees were forced to turn for interpretations of previous agreements and partial agreements. A wide range of topics, including a number of agreements "in principle" previously made and then deferred for final agreement, comprised the agenda.

Several of the issues at Potsdam have been given wide coverage in the years since that conference. The "Polish question" has been argued by a number of authorities. This issue, along with that of reparations, was a carry-over from the Yalta Conference. Other issues at Potsdam concerned war criminals, minority populations, plans for future peace conferences, and the problem of devising a design for the occupation and control of defeated powers.

There are two aspects of the Potsdam Conference, however, of which little has been written. One is the

¹³Ibid.

exclusion of France from the conference, and the second is the manner in which the French viewed the Potsdam decisions and their reaction to those agreements. Before these aspects are discussed, however, an investigation must be made of the position of France in relation to the three great powers.

CHAPTER II

THE BIG THREE AND FRANCE

France entered World War II as one of the strongest nations on the European continent. Yet, in six weeks of May and June, 1940, the German military machine rolled across France and forced an armistice from that nation. This event marked the beginning of the "French problem" which faced British, Soviet and United States Governments during and after World War II.

An immediate question regarding France was that of discovering which leader should be recognized as representing the government of France. In 1940, there were two possible candidates;¹ one the Vichy government which, under the leadership of Marshal Henri Pétain, had moved the site of the French Government to North Africa following the armistice. The second candidate was General Charles de Gaulle who ultimately became the leader of the Free French resistance movement.

American policy supported the Vichy faction from the outset. William Leonard Langer maintains that Vichy,

¹F. Roy Willis, The French in Germany, 1945-1949 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 2. Hereinafter cited as Willis, The French in Germany.

at the time, seemed to offer more advantages than did de Gaulle; that de Gaulle hardly offered an alternative.² It would be difficult to insist that a policy of support for de Gaulle, as a source of intelligence about Axis plans, should have been instigated from the start because of his distance from the scene of action. On the other hand, the Vichy government was known to have pro-Fascist leanings; but the fact that they were in contact with the Axis powers made them valuable to the Allies. Through their contact with the Axis leaders, the Vichy officials became acquainted with political and military information of the highest value,³ much of which was passed on to the American Government. What could de Gaulle offer in the medium of information?

F. Roy Willis reported the extent of de Gaulle's following in June of 1940 to be "some three thousand men."⁴ He further stated that

...his strength increased considerably during the following months. By September 1941 several of the French colonies had put themselves under Free French control, including Chad, Cameroon, Ubangi, Middle Congo, and Oceania.

Willis also pointed out that it was at this time that de

²William Leonard Langer, Our Vichy Gamble (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 394.

³Ibid., p. 387.

⁴Willis, The French in Germany, p. 2.

Gaulle organized the French National Committee.⁵ While de Gaulle's following was continually growing, however, it should be remembered that his headquarters had been established in London, and that his forces made little or no contact with the enemy. De Gaulle, therefore, could not replace Vichy as a source of information concerning enemy movements.

Another basic factor which led to the American policy of support for Vichy was Roosevelt's distrust of de Gaulle. He considered de Gaulle's pretensions false, his contributions to the war small, and his ambitions dangerous.⁶ Roosevelt was, therefore, opposed to recognition of the Gaullist faction until that action became an absolute necessity. The American Government thus became the major stumbling block to a formal recognition of the Gaullist movement. In the early phases, both President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull preferred to maintain diplomatic relations with Vichy, "thereby strengthening Pétain's will to resist Hitler's demands and maintaining a listening-post in the heart of Nazi-controlled Europe."⁷

⁵Ibid.

⁶Herbert Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: the War They Waged and the Peace They Sought (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 137. Hereinafter cited as Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin.

⁷Willis, The French in Germany, p. 3.

By the end of 1942, however, de Gaulle could no longer be ignored. The Vichy government continually disregarded the wishes of the Allies and moved closer to open collaboration with Nazi Germany. By the time operation TORCH was launched in North Africa, Marshal Pétain had become a mere figurehead. Winston Churchill's writing contains evidence that at the time of the invasion of North Africa the reins of authority in the Vichy government were held by Pierre Laval and Admiral Jean Darlan.⁸ As the Allied invasion forces drew near North Africa, the Germans contacted Vichy and offered aid against the invaders. But Laval, not Pétain, was contacted. Laval accepted German aid with Darlan suggesting the areas to which the aid should be directed. All the arrangements had been made and several hours had passed before Pétain was awakened and informed of the conditions and decisions.⁹

The question also arose anew as to whether the French people supported Vichy or whether they supported de Gaulle. Earlier reports reaching Washington from sources inside France did not indicate that de Gaulle was supported by

⁸Winston Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, Vol. IV of The Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), pp. 622-623. Hereinafter cited as Churchill, The Hinge of Fate.

⁹Ibid., p. 623.

large numbers of French people.¹⁰ Yet, by the end of 1942, it was becoming evident that the support of the French people lay more with de Gaulle than with the Vichy faction. But even with these changing conditions Roosevelt refused to accept any French authority headed solely by de Gaulle. As late as the summer of 1944, reports Willis, "Roosevelt was still convinced that de Gaulle was only a minor figure in the French resistance movement."¹¹ Besides, who would deny that de Gaulle was both ambitious and chauvinistic? General Henri Giraud, on the other hand, was much more welcome to Roosevelt than was de Gaulle, "since Giraud took every opportunity to point out that he had no political aims."¹² Giraud proved highly acceptable to the American leaders from the point of view that any French authority recognized at the time was to be temporary and would have to be replaced by a government duly elected by the French people following the liberation of France.

It was, therefore, largely at the insistence of the American Government that in June of 1943, Generals Giraud and de Gaulle met in North Africa in an attempt to work out the differences between them. On June 3, an agreement on vital points was reached by the two generals, and a

¹⁰Willis, The French in Germany, p. 4.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 5.

French Committee of National Liberation was set up which included Giraud, de Gaulle, General Georges Catroux, and certain members of the Gaullist Committee from London, which had been dissolved when de Gaulle left for North Africa. A de facto withdrawal of recognition from Vichy was especially noticeable by the exclusion of the former Vichy governors from the new body, "which was now to be the central provisional administration of Fighting France and her Empire until the end of the war."¹³ The American leaders agreed to accept this combination under the joint leadership of de Gaulle and Giraud. While the authority claimed by the Committee was all-inclusive, they had agreed to

...relinquish its powers to the provisional government which will be constituted in conformity with the laws of the republic as soon as the liberation of metropolitan territory permits, and at the latest upon the total liberation of France.¹⁴

The problem of recognition still remained unsolved, however, as the governments of the three main Allies were unable to agree upon a common basis of treatment of the French Committee. Feis relates that

Roosevelt had continued to refuse to consider any form of public statement that would accord or imply "recognition" of the Committee's claim to speak and

¹³Winston Churchill, Closing the Ring, Vol. V of The Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), p. 173.

¹⁴Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, p. 138.

act for the whole of the French people. He had been afraid that de Gaulle's growing control...might interfere with our military and political plans. He was determined, in the expression he had taken to using, not to give de Gaulle a "white horse" on which he could ride into France and make himself the master of a government there.¹⁵

The American Government, therefore, continued to frustrate de Gaulle's desires. What, though, were the attitudes of our allies?

From the very beginning the British had favored collaboration with and support of the Gaullist movement. When Prime Minister Churchill visited France before the signing of the armistice in 1940, he left with the conviction that "de Gaulle was the one man with the will to lead France to victory."¹⁶ The British Government committed itself to relations with the Free French by an agreement on August 7, 1940, which "recognized that an exclusively French force under the command of General de Gaulle was being recruited on British soil, and announced that the costs of maintaining this force would be borne by the British Government."¹⁷ Still the British did not aspire to push Vichy to open hostility.

Churchill's own views about Vichy seemed to be somewhat mixed. His distrust for that faction was clearly

¹⁵Ibid., p. 315.

¹⁶Willis, The French in Germany, p. 2.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3.

displayed by a message to President Roosevelt, February 7, 1942, upon hearing of pending negotiations between the United States and Vichy concerning continued Vichy control of Madagascar, asking that no guarantees for the non-occupation of Madagascar be given.¹⁸ His major fear, apparently, was that should the Japanese desire that island they could take over with little or no resistance from Vichy.¹⁹ Yet, the British deemed Vichy to be important enough to the defense of North Africa that they offered to send air and ground aid to that area.²⁰ The importance ascribed to Vichy is probably best portrayed by Churchill in his chapter dealing with the final shaping of TORCH.²¹ The prevailing attitude of both the British and American officials was that the extent to which the French in North Africa resisted the Allied landing would greatly influence the success of that landing. Also, Churchill paid tribute to the efforts of Admiral Darlan in reducing French resistance to the Allied activities in the African theatre. In Churchill's own words, Darlan "brought to Anglo-American allies exactly what was needed, namely, a French voice

¹⁸Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, p. 222.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 223.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 22-23.

²¹For a full discussion, see The Hinge of Fate, pp. 525-548.

which all French officers and officials in this vast theatre, now plunged in the war, would obey."²²

There are also grounds for believing that part of Churchill's acquiescence to the American policy of supporting Vichy was the simple fact that he did not thoroughly trust de Gaulle. In 1941, for example, the Free French seized the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon after giving assurance that they would not do so.²³ This action embarrassed both the British and the Americans who conveyed this assurance to Vichy. At the Washington Conference, May 12-25, 1943, President Roosevelt clearly displayed his strong feeling against de Gaulle by continually handing to Churchill accusing documents against the Frenchman's activities. Churchill's own indecision concerning de Gaulle at the time have since been expressed in the following manner:

I was at this time most indignant with de Gaulle. I felt our continued support of him might lead to an estrangement between the British and United States Governments and that no one would like this better than de Gaulle. I brought all this forcibly to the notice of my colleagues at home. It hung in the balance whether we should not break finally at this juncture with this most difficult man.²⁴

The Prime Minister expanded on his opinion a month later

²²Ibid., p. 246.

²³Willis, The French in Germany, p. 4.

²⁴Churchill, The Hinge of Fate, p. 801.

(June 23, 1943), this time in a message to Marshal Stalin.

I am concerned to hear through Monsieur Molotov that you are thinking of recognising the French National Committee of Liberation recently set up at Algiers. It is unlikely that the British, and still more that the United States Government, will recognise this Committee for some time and then only after they have had reasonable proof that its character and action will be satisfactory to the interests of the Allied cause.

Headquarters cannot be sure of what he [General de Gaulle] will do or if his friendly feelings towards us if he obtained the mastery of the French Army....

General Eisenhower has...in the name of both the United States and the British Governments notified the Committee that General Giraud must remain the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army and have effective power over its character and organization....

We are very anxious to find a French authority to which all Frenchmen will rally, and we still hope that one may emerge from the discussions now proceeding at Algiers. It seems to us far too soon to decide upon this at present.²⁵

Thus, even though Churchill favored de Gaulle above Vichy, it seems clear that he did not trust the Free French leader.

The discussions referred to in Churchill's note to Stalin were those from which emerged the French Committee of National Liberation. Churchill welcomed the Committee, but he reserved the right to question the degree of recognition of this body as representative of France.²⁶

While the British Government tended more toward the

²⁵Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Presidents of the U.S.A. and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), Vol. I, pp. 135-136. Hereinafter cited as Stalin's Correspondence.

²⁶Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, p. 138.

recognition of the Committee's claims, they refused to chance the alienation of the American Government by openly opposing the position taken by that government, nor were they going to commit themselves without reservation to the newly formed Committee.

The Soviet views resembled those of the British. During the early phase of the war the Soviet Government had little to do with decision-making in the Western theatres. This was not to say, however, that they were not interested in activities there. In general, the Soviets were somewhat skeptical of the American policy concerning France. In the first days after the acceptance of Darlan as the French leader in North Africa, V. M. Molotov, Soviet Foreign Secretary, informed the American and British Ambassadors in Moscow that he had qualms about what was going on in North Africa, and that he and his colleagues were confused over the rapport with Darlan. The American and British Governments tried to allay the qualms by expressing in terms of military necessity their use of men who had served Vichy and appeared willing to serve Hitler.²⁷ This explanation seemingly satisfied the Soviets, but Molotov chose to remind the Western allies that the Soviets also were interested in French Africa and that he hoped no administration would be established there without advance

²⁷Ibid., p. 91.

consultation.²⁸ Stalin later added his personal approval of the American approach to the North African situation in separate notes to the Prime Minister and the President. To Churchill, on November 27, 1942, he wrote

As for Darlan, I think the Americans have made skillful use of him to facilitate the occupation of North and West Africa. Military diplomacy should know how to use for the war aims not only the Darlans, but even the devil and his grandmother.²⁹

His message to Roosevelt, December 14, 1942, expressed the belief that the American policy toward Darlan was "absolutely sound" and continued to say that he considered "it an important achievement that you have succeeded in winning Darlan and others to the Allied side against Hitler."³⁰ This Soviet acquiescence to American support for a former pro-fascist should not be considered as a trivality, for the Soviets engaged in a death-struggle with Germany, opposed any collaboration with the Nazis.³¹

Stalin's attitude toward the French Committee of National Liberation was similar to that of the British. He, too, tended more toward supporting the claims of that body. His reply to Churchill's note of June 23, 1943

²⁸Ibid., p. 92.

²⁹Stalin's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 80.

³⁰Ibid., Vol. II, p. 44.

³¹British and Soviet dependence on American Lend-Lease shipments, in the early stages of the war, were certainly a factor in the acceptance by the two nations of the American policy.

(asking that the Soviets withhold recognition of the Committee for a time), expressed surprise at the British attitude. "We had the impression," observed Stalin, "that the British Government had thus far supported General de Gaulle...."³² He agreed, however, to meet the British half way since the British had given assurance that no steps would be taken in the matter without consulting the Soviet Government. Then, following the pattern established by Molotov, he warned of Soviet interest in French affairs and reminded Churchill that information was necessary for appropriate decisions.

Herbert Feis maintains that the Soviet attitude of the time resulted from the fact that both Stalin and de Gaulle, in the summer of 1943, were each trying to use the other to their own advantage. De Gaulle wanted the help of the French Communists in fighting the war and in maintaining order in France after the war. This he hoped to gain by wooing Stalin. Stalin, for his part, hoped to gain influence for the French Communists.³³

For the next sixteen months, the exact status of the French Committee remained undecided. True, no other body competed for the status of representative government of France; but neither was this status accorded to the

³²Stalin's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 140.

³³Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, p. 315.

Committee. The United States was the major stumbling block throughout this period, for the Soviets had already expressed a willingness to grant recognition and the British, regardless of their expressed reservations, would undoubtedly have been glad to take the step were it not for the opposition of the United States. In August, 1943, Stalin agreed with Churchill that the French Committee should be represented on the commission for negotiations with Italy.³⁴ He later clarified his position on this question in a message to President Roosevelt in which he expressed his conviction that French representation "should be restricted to matters other than the military occupation of Italy in which the three Governments establishing the Commission decide that France has a direct interest."³⁵ He continued to say

It was never my intention that the French Committee of National Liberation should function on the same plane as the Governments of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States or enter its deliberation on all subjects.³⁶

Finally, on October 21, 1944, Roosevelt notified Stalin that active consideration was being given to recognizing the French Committee of National Liberation as the Provisional Government of France, since the consultative

³⁴Stalin's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 152.

³⁵Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 100-101.

³⁶Ibid.

assembly had been made more representative and the establishment of a real French zone of the interior was anticipated.³⁷ These were the two requirements which the United States Government had made as prerequisite to recognition of the Committee following the resignation from that body of General Giraud, an action which left de Gaulle in complete and undisputed control. Stalin welcomed the decision to recognize the French Provisional Government and informed the President that the Soviet representative in Paris had been given proper instructions on the matter.³⁸

This exchange of notes took place on October 21 and 22, 1944. The formal recognition of the French Committee of National Liberation as the Provisional Government of France was finally effected on October 23. Thus, after more than four years of indecision, the question of recognition, in regard to France, was finally settled. But the French question as a whole was far from solved, for de Gaulle then unleashed his chauvinistic ambitions to their fullest extent.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 165-166. The French zone of the interior, a civilian area completely controlled by the French, when established included most of France; see Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), Vol. II, p. 1434.

³⁸Stalin's Correspondence, Vol. I, p. 166.

De Gaulle was not satisfied with the position he had attained for France through recognition. He immediately notified the Allies that France claimed equal status in forming all decisions having to do with war settlements and postwar arrangements.³⁹ His demands were for

...a share in the military operations in Germany, the right to be consulted on measures involving the future of Europe or of the French Empire and, above all, occupation of an area of Germany by French forces after the war.⁴⁰

All of these demands were made during the winter of 1944, when the exact status of the French Government in the postwar world had not yet been decided.

One point of dissatisfaction was de Gaulle's position of dependency upon British and American good will. In November of 1944, in an attempt to secure his relations with the Soviet Government,⁴¹ de Gaulle notified Stalin that he would like to visit him in Moscow. Arrangements were made and de Gaulle arrived in Moscow on December 2. On that date, Stalin notified both Churchill and Roosevelt that he expected de Gaulle to raise two questions while in Moscow: (1) the conclusion of a Franco-Soviet pact of mutual aid similar to the Anglo-Soviet pact, and (2) a proposal for revising the eastern frontier of France and

³⁹Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, p. 471.

⁴⁰Willis, The French in Germany, pp. 7-8.

⁴¹Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, p. 473.

shifting it to the left [East] bank of the Rhine.⁴² He asked the two Western leaders for their position on these matters. On the following day, Stalin notified his allies that the questions had been raised.

The replies he received fairly well concurred with his own views. On the question of a mutual aid pact, Churchill (December 5, 1944) expressed approval for a pact with France, and even suggested expanding the Anglo-Soviet pact to include France.⁴³ De Gaulle, however, proved unresponsive to the suggested tripartite pact.⁴⁴ Roosevelt's reply (December 7) not only consented to the proposed pact, but even suggested that such a matter primarily concerned the European powers involved.⁴⁵ On the question of the eastern frontier of France, both Churchill and Roosevelt expressed a desire to postpone a decision pending further discussion by the Big Three. Churchill went beyond Roosevelt in expressing a desire to have the French present when this question was discussed.

De Gaulle now began to clamor for admittance to the oncoming conferences which would take place among the major powers. Here again the attitudes of the Big Three

⁴²Stalin's Correspondence, Vol. I, pp. 277-278.

⁴³Ibid., p. 281.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 284.

⁴⁵Ibid., Vol. II, p. 172.

toward France diverged. Churchill favored the inclusion of France at Yalta. Stalin, while not expressing enthusiasm, did not openly oppose such a step. Roosevelt, again, became the obstacle to French desires.⁴⁶ With the many other issues demanding attention, no pressure was put on the President to include France. Roosevelt expressed his opinion to Churchill in a message of November 18, 1944, which stated, "It does not seem to me that the French Provisional Government should take part in our next conference as such a debating society would confuse our essential issues."⁴⁷

De Gaulle was not long in reacting to this exclusion. On January 16, 1945, he notified the three major powers that

...it must be observed that the conferences held between the other great allied powers lead those to decide in advance, without the participation of France, the settlement of certain questions of a political or economic character which, however, interest France directly or indirectly, in which case the Provisional Government of the French Republic evidently could not consider itself bound by any of the decisions taken without it and, consequently, such decisions lose some of their value.⁴⁸

This clearly comprised a warning that no decisions must be

⁴⁶Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, p. 477.

⁴⁷Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers: the Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 16. Hereinafter cited as Yalta Papers.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 296.

made for France without representatives of that nation being present to inform the allies of the French views and to aid in making the decisions. The warning was, however, ignored.

Two important decisions were made at Yalta which affected the French directly: the French were given a zone of occupation in defeated Germany, and they were accorded representation on the Control Council which was to direct the occupation of Germany.⁴⁹ The question of a French zone of occupation created no overriding problem, although both Roosevelt and Stalin expressed the opinion that such an allocation was an act of kindness. On the question of French participation on the Control Council, however, debate was long and difficult.

Churchill carried the burden of championing French aspirations for representation on the Control Council. He used a three-pronged approach that (1) Great Britain needed a strong France for the purpose of helping to guard the left flank of England from possible future German attacks, (2) the United States would not be able to maintain an occupation force in Germany for any length of time and that Britain therefore needed France in the western

⁴⁹For the full text of this discussion see the Yalta Papers, pp. 299-300, 301, 303, 307, 309, 425, 440, 616-619, 634, 701-702, 704-707, 709, 710, 718-719, 729, 899-900, 908, 913, 927, 930, 933, 936-937, 948, 951, 961, 970-971, 978.

zone of occupation, and (3) France would not accept a zone of occupation unless she was also granted a seat on the control machinery.⁵⁰

Stalin readily accepted the burden of opposition. He countered Churchill's reasoning with the arguments that (1) to allow France to participate in the control machinery of defeated Germany would be opening the door to similar requests from other nations, (2) the control machinery should be limited to those powers who had stood firm against Germany and had made the greatest sacrifices to bring about an allied victory, and (3) France did not fit into this category while other nations did.⁵¹ He suggested that the British could represent the French on the Control Council.

Roosevelt at first took the position held by Stalin, that France should not participate in the control machinery. He later did an about-face, however, and aligned his views with those of Churchill. Roosevelt allegedly decided it would be easier to obtain de Gaulle's agreement to other decisions if France were allowed to participate in the control machinery.⁵²

Various interpretations have been given to the

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 616-617.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 617-618.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 899-900.

Soviet attitude toward French participation in the occupation of Germany. James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, noted in his Diaries an observation made by Secretary of State Edward Reilly Stettinius, Jr., at Yalta, the essence of which was that the Russians were not particularly interested in having the French occupy a part of Germany and expressed a general lack of interest in de Gaulle.⁵³ John L. Snell maintains that Stalin's main opposition, at Yalta, to a zone of occupation for France in defeated Germany arose from the accompanying arguments for inclusion of France in the control machinery.⁵⁴ While this interpretation has its merits, perhaps Snell misplaced emphasis on the question. The Soviets probably had little opposition to a zone of occupation for France in Germany, but the opposition was to placing France on the control machinery which would direct the occupation. The proposed French zone, after all, would be taken from the American and British zones and would therefore have little effect on the Soviet zone. But to place the French in a position where they would have a voice in governing occupied Germany would quite foreseeably affect the Soviets. This

⁵³Walter Millis and E. S. Duffield (eds.), The Forrestal Diaries (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 35.

⁵⁴John L. Snell, Wartime Origins of the East-West Dilemma Over Germany (New Orleans: The Hauser Press, 1959), p. 159.

interpretation gains support from Stalin's concession of a zone of occupation to France early in the Yalta Conference, while that conference was nearly over before he conceded to allow the French a position on the control machinery. The Soviet attitude was probably best stated in the following remark by Stalin to Roosevelt at Yalta: "It was unrealistic...for de Gaulle to insist upon full rights with the Big Three, in view of the fact that France had not done much fighting in the war."⁵⁵

Consequently, the period of the Potsdam Conference was approached with the position of France defined in an ambiguous manner. While she had been returned to her position among the members of the community of nations, she had not been recognized as an equal by the other major powers. Even Churchill, at Yalta, did not suggest that France participate in future meetings of the Big Three. She was not allowed representation at Yalta, yet both the American and British Governments felt that she should be consulted on matters which concerned her.⁵⁶ The Soviets

⁵⁵Edward Reilly Stettinius, Jr., Roosevelt and the Russians: the Yalta Conference, Edited by Walter Johnson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1949), p. 100.

⁵⁶For the American viewpoint, see the Yalta Papers, p. 945. The views of Churchill were expressed by Stettinius in Roosevelt and the Russians, p. 123.

would undoubtedly have been happy had France achieved only the status of a satellite of Britain and the United States.

While not recognized as an equal, France was given equal power with the other three powers in the occupation of Germany. Unfortunately, similar treatment of France continued.

CHAPTER III

PARTIES AT POTSDAM AND THE FRENCH REACTION

Two peculiarities concerning representation were noticeable as the various delegations assembled at Potsdam for this last historic war conference. The first was that a Polish delegation attended.¹ Under existing circumstances this might not be regarded as too strange, for the Polish question was one of the most important issues with which the conferees were faced. Peculiarity appears, however, when one considers that the French were not accorded representation at the conference. Thus, Poland was given representation while France, an allied power and a partner in the future occupation and control of Germany, was not.

Why were the French not included at Potsdam? The answer may have lain in the attitude of the great powers toward France. As shown in the preceding chapter, the French had not been accepted as an equal by the three great powers even at the conclusion of the Yalta Conference.

¹Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers: the Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960, Vol. II, p. XLVII. Hereinafter cited as Potsdam Papers.

Michael Balfour maintains that

It was inevitable that the other three Great Powers should fail to treat France on a footing of complete equality. Conditions since the liberation had made it impossible to replace the French Provisional Government by one elected on an agreed constitutional basis. Communications had suffered badly.... Memoires of the occupation and of the Vichy² regime made deep scars in the national consciousness.

The unity found in opposing the Germans, upon which so much hope for the future was based, gradually degenerated to internal factional quarrels. Also, the French were greatly dependent upon outside aid.³

While knowledge of the French attitude regarding their status does little or nothing to answer the question of the exclusion of France from the conference, it does extend that question. De Gaulle was determined to be admitted to this conference. Balfour found that

The chief concern of the French was to get themselves recognized as a Great Power, and to do this they had to share in the occupation on equal terms. ...So obsessed were the French with the change in their status that they devoted much of their energy to an attempt to persuade other countries that nothing had changed.⁴

²Michael Balfour and John Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria, 1945-1946, Vol. VI of Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946, edited by Arnold Toynbee (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 37. Hereinafter cited as Balfour and Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

With final decisions pending regarding the policy to be followed in at least the initial stages of the occupation of Germany, de Gaulle felt it essential that the French views be formally expressed and discussed. Of special interest to the French was the boundary question. Previous attempts to reach a decision with the three great powers on this question (e.g., de Gaulle's visit to Moscow in December, 1944) met with failure. The great desire of the French was that the eastern frontier of France be extended to the Rhine. The French were excluded, however, and the French views were largely ignored.

Available evidence suggests that neither Churchill nor Truman wished to have the French, and de Gaulle in particular, present at the conference. Both the Memoirs of Truman⁵ and the writings of Churchill⁶ devote space to the difficulties of dealing with the French during the invasion period. On more than one occasion the French deviated seriously from the invasion plan of February, 1945, and refused to yield their position until pressure

⁵Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, Vol. I of Memoirs by Harry S. Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1955), pp. 238-243.

⁶Winston S. Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, Vol. VI of The Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), pp. 561-568.

(e.g., threats to suspend aid and material) was applied.⁷ As a result of this activity both Washington and London became convinced that de Gaulle's presence at the conference would hinder rather than help, even if Stalin could be persuaded to include him. The conviction was that it would make the task harder and confuse, if not destroy, the progress of discussion.⁸

De Gaulle, doubtlessly, believed that his obstructive activities would show the Allies that he must be consulted on important decisions. Unfortunately, the result was the opposite. Thus, relates Willis, "France was to remain in official relegation until the end of the Potsdam Conference, in spite of the fact that France was then in possession of a zone of occupation in Germany."⁹ France did not, therefore, become a party to the Potsdam Conference nor a signatory to the agreements which resulted.

⁷Willis maintains that this furor resulted from French dissatisfaction with their part in the invasion of Germany as provided by the invasion plan of February 1945. They felt they should have been assigned a more active part in the invasion. See F. Roy Willis, The French in Germany, 1945-1949 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 166. Hereinafter cited as Willis, The French in Germany.

⁸Herbert Feis, Between Peace and War: the Potsdam Conference (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 138. Hereinafter cited as Feis, Between Peace and War.

⁹Willis, The French in Germany, p. 22.

Can the logic of the great powers be substantiated in this case? Apparently the decision to exclude France from the Potsdam Conference was based on erroneous judgement. The French, and de Gaulle in particular, had shown on several occasions that they would not adhere to decisions adversely affecting their national interests unless they helped formulate those decisions.¹⁰ Yet, the French were refused the desired opportunity to express their views at Potsdam.

Willis maintained that the results of excluding France from the Potsdam Conference might have been expected by the three great powers, for "France considered itself bound only by those Allied decisions on which it had been consulted; the others it felt free to accept or reject according to its own best interests."¹¹ In this contention, he is supported by other notable writers in the field. Feis expressed his view on this subject as follows:

If de Gaulle had been at Potsdam the trudge toward the word-wrapped accords reached there would have been even more wearing than it was. There is little or no reason for thinking that they would have lasted longer. What the interplay of personal relations between de Gaulle and the other three would have been bests the

¹⁰Examples of French activity of this nature have already been mentioned in this paper: e.g., the Free French seizure of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon in 1941, and the French obstructionist activity during the period of the invasion of Germany.

¹¹Willis, The French in Germany, p. 22.

imagination. All that can be said is that since the French government [sic] was not obligated by the Potsdam accords, it felt freer to combat their application in an effort to bend them to its purposes.¹²

Balfour, writing of the visit of de Gaulle and French Foreign Secretary Georges Bidault with President Truman in Washington shortly after the Potsdam Conference, reported that

The French leaders made it clear that not having been invited to Potsdam, they did not consider themselves bound by the agreements there reached. In particular, they deplored any suggestion of re-establishing a centralized German state, asked for a French-administered Rhineland to be separated from Germany, proposed the creation of an international authority to control the Ruhr, and sought permission to annex the Saar. They were afraid that the loss of Germany's eastern provinces might throw her centre of gravity towards the west and that a Russo-German alliance might bring Communism to the Rhine.¹³

If the Potsdam conferees did not understand the depth of the French feeling at their exclusion from the conference, the French reaction to the decisions made there should have given them clearer insight. The Potsdam Papers contain twenty-three pages of notes and conversations expressing the French reaction.¹⁴

¹²Feis, Between Peace and War, p. 313.

¹³Balfour and Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria, p. 123.

¹⁴For the full text of French reservations see the Potsdam Papers, Vol. II, pp. 1543-1566.

An early report observed that "while the general reaction appears to have been favorable it would be idle to deny that the French nonetheless have some reservations about the results of the Potsdam Conference."¹⁵ This report was sent by the American representative in Paris at 2 P.M. on August 7, 1945. Ten hours later, French Foreign Minister Bidault transmitted the French position to the State Department via the American representative in Paris. It became clear indeed that the French had some reservations concerning the Potsdam decisions.

The French Government raised no objections to the principle of the transfer to Germany of German minority populations which were still in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Noting the difficulties that could arise, from a sudden increase in population in the different zones, however, the French Government expressed unwillingness to take a definite fixed position on this complex problem until more detailed information could be received.¹⁶

No objection was raised, by the French, to the extension of the Polish western boundary. The belief was expressed, however, that "the problem of the frontiers of

¹⁵Ibid., p. 1549.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 1551.

Germany forms a whole and is not susceptible of solution until it has been examined jointly by all interested powers."¹⁷

The French Government accepted with pleasure the invitation to participate in the Allied Reparations Commission. At the same time, however, it reserved the right to make known at a later date the French Government's view on economic principles which should govern the control of Germany, especially the contemplated basis for settling the reparations question.¹⁸

The French gladly accepted an invitation to participate in a council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs. This opportunity was chosen to remind the great powers that France was obviously interested in all important questions concerning Europe or any region of Europe and to express the conviction that the French Government could not accept a priori the reconstitution of a central government in Germany.¹⁹

Regarding political principles, the French Government regretfully viewed the principles designed to govern Germany with reservations until full information on the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 1552.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1552-1553.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1553-1554.

subject could be more thoroughly observed. Two principles were mentioned in particular: the principle concerning political parties for the whole of Germany and the one concerning the creation of central administrative departments.²⁰

Willis maintains that the major economic principle to which the French objected was Clause 14, which stated:

During the period of occupation, Germany shall be treated as a single economic unit. To this end common policies shall be established in regard to (a) mining and industrial production and allocation; (b) agriculture, forestry and fishing; (c) wages, prices and rationing; (d) import and export programs for Germany as a whole; (e) currency and banking, central taxation and customs; (f) reparation and removal of war potential; (g) transportation and communication.²¹

He further related that the French especially opposed Clause 15 (c), which agreed upon "equitable distribution of essential commodities between the different zones so as to produce a balanced economy throughout Germany and reduce the need for imports."²²

Later the French added more complaints about the treatment they were receiving. While de Gaulle and Bidault were in Washington following the Potsdam Conference, Bidault met and conversed [August 23, 1945] with Secretary

²⁰Ibid., pp. 1554-1555.

²¹Willis, The French in Germany, p. 26.

²²Ibid.

of State Byrnes. Bidault referred to the fact of reparations being decided (at Yalta and Potsdam) without allowing France to present any argument as "a cruel fate, just as detrimental to the harmony between the Allies and the equitable settlement of current questions as to France herself."²³ He related that France had hoped to have German coal, which was desperately needed by the French, placed on the reparation list, but that in view of the coal settlement France was now faced with the problem of having to pay for German coal in dollars. In speaking of the settlement of the Polish western boundary Bidault noted that the German center of gravity would be moved westward. He suggested that should this westward shift continue France might be obliged to adopt attitudes necessary for her security, since historically a westward shifting of the German center of gravity had been bad for France.

On September 4, 1945, the French noted the constitution of a naval commission by delegates of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union to distribute German warships and merchant ships. They complained that this action was contrary to the approved agreement of the European Advisory Commission to settle all such questions on a quadripartite basis, and insisted

²³Potsdam Papers, Vol. II, pp. 1558-1559. For the full text of the discussion see pp. 1557-1564.

that the French be included and that no distribution be affected until this was done.²⁴

By the middle of September, 1945, then, the three great powers had been well informed to the effect that the French were not in complete agreement with the Potsdam decisions. In fact, they were in disagreement with several major aspects of the design for the occupation and control of defeated Germany. Willis maintains that the "French rejection of these aspects of the Allied solution to the German problem was due to a basic divergence of opinion about the measures to be applied to Germany."²⁵ This contention is without a doubt valid. The French had repeatedly stated their views how Germany should be treated since 1944. When Harry Hopkins was in Paris, he and the American Ambassador in France (Jefferson Caffery) met with France Foreign Secretary Bidault (January 30, 1945) from which the French position on post-war control of Germany was summarized as:

Elimination of all war industry and near-war industry in Germany, an international body to be set up to govern and control the Rhine region, the southern part thereof to be controlled exclusively by the French, the northern part under mixed control; Germany to be reduced to a status making it impossible for her to wage war again....²⁶

²⁴Ibid., pp. 1565-1566.

²⁵Willis, The French in Germany, p. 26.

²⁶Yalta Papers, pp. 299-300.

This view, which in some aspects resembled the Morgenthau proposal which would have reduced Germany to a pastoral state, was at variance with the Allied desire to create a centralized government in Germany at the earliest feasible opportunity. The French had not, however, been accorded an opportunity to present their views at Potsdam where such differences could have been dispelled.

While Willis points out that there was a difference in views, he fails to note the reason for the difference. The French had become highly concerned regarding their security. Three times, since 1870, French and German armies had met on the field of battle. On two of those occasions the French had been soundly defeated, and on the other (World War I) they had suffered severe losses and hardship. The French were determined that Germany should never again become a threat to their security, and one of the simplest methods of assuring this was to make certain that Germany would never again become a strong, centralized nation with war-making potential.

Still another aspect of the problem was that of French national honor. Attention has been given earlier in this study to the chauvinism of de Gaulle and to the French desire to persuade other nations that the status of France in the community of nations had not changed from that of pre-World War II. With this motivating desire in the background, the student wonders if the French would have been

satisfied to present their views for discussion and then been willing to compromise, or would they have demanded that the essential principles of their views be accepted. If the French were willing to compromise, then their exclusion from Potsdam was a grave error in view of their later obstructive activities. If, however, the French were unwilling to compromise, then to include them at Potsdam would certainly have been a trying and wasteful experience. This is mere speculation, at best, which can never be answered with certainty.

General Lucius D. Clay, an American military leader in Germany, expressed the opinion that even though the French were not in full agreement with the Potsdam Agreements, such differences could be worked out in future meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers.²⁷ Unfortunately, this attitude seemed to dominate not only American, but Allied thinking.

French obstruction began in the Allied Control Council. The Council was the most effective place to practice such activity since decisions reached by that body had to be unanimous to go into effect. Disagreement by any member, therefore, constituted an effective veto to enforce their demands.

²⁷Lucius D. Clay, Germany and the Fight for Freedom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 14.

At the end of October, 1945, General Louis-Marie Koeltz, the French representative on the Control Council, declared that on instructions from his government he could not accept the concrete proposals, reached by the Council, to create five central German administrative departments in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement.²⁸

In the ensuing period, France used her veto power in the Council to block every action which might lead to the re-establishment of a German nation through the treatment of Germany as an economic or political entity. She refused to permit free interzonal trade and economic unification, she obstructed the formation of political parties on a national basis, she refused permission for interzonal organization of trade unions, she vetoed a proposal to permit the issue of uniform postage stamps in the four zones, and she vetoed a proposal to permit uniform currency in the four zones.²⁹ By this obstruction the French hoped to obtain certain security demands which they considered indispensable.

Warburg observed that although the British and American authorities became exasperated with the ob-

²⁸Balfour and Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria, p. 124.

²⁹James Paul Warburg, Germany: Key to Peace (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 17.

structionist tactics of the French, they made no effort to deal with the very real problem of French security.³⁰ It was this activity which convinced Warburg that giving France such a degree of power as a zone of occupation, a seat on the Allied Control Council, and veto power over any Council decision without making her a party to the agreement which governed the quadripartite government of Germany constituted a serious blunder.³¹

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 21.

CHAPTER IV

EFFECTS OF FRENCH OBSTRUCTIONISM

Despite French tactics the British and United States Governments continued to support France. The position of the United States may be clarified by the following report handed to President Truman by officials of the Department of State on April 13, 1945:

The best interest of the United States require that every effort be made by this Government to assist France, morally as well as physically, to regain her strength and her influence. ...positive American contributions toward the rebuilding of France include: present and future rearming of the French Army; support of French participation in the European Advisory Commission, the control and occupation of Germany, the Reparations Commission and other organizations; and the conclusion of a Lend-Lease Agreement.¹

Hence, the American Government felt it necessary to continue to support France in order to help that nation regain its position among the nations of the world.

At Yalta Churchill expressed the British need for a strong French ally on the continent of Europe;² that Britain was in a position where friendly relations with France were necessary. Yet, Churchill did not like

¹Harry S. Truman, Year of Decisions, Vol. I of Memoirs by Harry S. Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1955), pp. 14-15.

²See page 28 of this study.

de Gaulle and considered him one of the greatest dangers to European peace.³ He felt, however, that the task of reaching an agreement with de Gaulle, although difficult, must be continued.

Consequently, both the British and American Governments continued to support France in keeping with their respective national interests. Possibly they tried to make a distinction between de Gaulle and the French nation, anticipating a national election in France that would remove de Gaulle from office and replace him with a more compliant man. Such thoughts, if they were entertained by the British and American leaders, soon were proven to be highly optimistic, for French obstruction continued after de Gaulle resigned and Félix Gouin formed a new government.

The Soviet attitude toward France apparently had not changed from that of the war years. The Soviets refused to accept France as a great and equal power. This attitude was probably most aptly expressed by the controversy which arose over a decision made in the Council of Foreign Ministers on September 11, 1945. On that date the Council agreed that:

...all five members [China, Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States] should have the right to attend all meetings and take part in all

³Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 242.

discussions but that in matters concerning peace settlements members whose governments had not been signatories to the relevant terms of surrender should not be entitled to vote.⁴

Molotov, the Soviet representative on the Council, then changed the Soviet position and expressed the interpretation that for peace treaties only ministers of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States should meet in discussion. This interpretation was based on the expressed belief that only signatories to the armistices should discuss the treaties.⁵ Prime Minister Attlee, in a message to Stalin,⁶ expressed the British interpretation that the Council of Foreign Ministers as a whole was responsible for discharging all tasks remitted to it and further pointed out that even if the Soviet approach would accelerate the work of the Council, as Molotov contended, it would not counterbalance the damage to harmonious collaboration. President Truman had sent a message to Stalin the previous day urging the Soviets to consider the bad effect it would have on world peace if Molotov should permit the Council

⁴Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Presidents of the U.S.A. and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great and Patriotic War of 1941-1945, Vol. I (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), p. 376.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Attlee to Stalin, September 23, 1945, Ibid.

to be destroyed.⁷ The Western protests were ineffectual, however, for Stalin upheld Molotov's stand on the issue.⁸

Byrnes observed that revoking the Council decision of September 11, 1945, would have allowed French participation in discussions on both the Italian and German treaties, but would have limited it to these discussions only.⁹ Probably of more importance, however, was his charge that "the Soviet attitude in effect killed any hope of real progress at London."¹⁰

The Soviets were, therefore, actually the first to obstruct the coordination of the Allies although the method of their obstruction had no direct effect on the control of Germany. This display of superiority toward France could only be accepted by the French as an affront to their position as an ally and to their national honor. Apparently the Soviets once again desired to exclude France from negotiations which the French considered important to the future of their nation. No doubt the French remembered this when they exerted their veto power in the

⁷Truman to Stalin, September 22, 1945, Ibid., Vol. II, p. 271.

⁸Stalin to Truman, September 23, 1945, Ibid., p. 273, and Stalin to Attlee, September 24, 1945, Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 377-378.

⁹James F. Byrnes, All in One Lifetime (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 316.

¹⁰Ibid.

Allied Control Council in October, 1945.

On returning from the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers (June 15-July 12, 1946) Secretary of State Byrnes reported that "it is no secret that the four-power control of Germany on a zonal basis is not working well from the point of view of any of the four powers."¹¹ He further reported that, at Paris, the French agreed to the establishment of central administrative agencies for purposes of treating Germany as an economic unit when the Saar was excluded from the jurisdiction of the agencies. The Soviets, however, could not agree without further study.

The immediate effects have been expressed in several sources. Former President Truman observed that "their [the French] desire to see Germany dismembered led them to obstruct a number of joint-control measures at a time when such cooperation might still have been possible."¹² Warburg's more detailed description related that the French tactics consequently divided Germany into "four, separate, hermetically sealed compartments."¹³ He elaborated on this

¹¹"Report by Secretary of State Byrnes on Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers, June 15-July 12, 1946," The Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XV, No. 369, (July 28, 1946), p. 171.

¹²Harry S. Truman, Years of Trial and Hope, Vol. II of Memoirs by Harry S. Truman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956), p. 121.

¹³James Paul Warburg, Germany: Key to Peace (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 22. Hereinafter cited as Warburg, Germany: Key to Peace.

conclusion with the explanation that:

Once it became clear that French obstruction was going to continue and that neither Britain nor the United States seemed to know how to put a stop to it, the Russians drastically changed their original policy of insistence upon carrying out the Potsdam contract. ...they shifted to a policy of getting the maximum advantage for themselves out of their zone of occupation. Instead of removing plant and equipment for reparations account, as agreed at Potsdam, they now switched to leaving plants in Germany and--contrary to the Potsdam Agreement--taking out a large part of their current production.¹⁴

Warburg further related that the Soviet Union had also seized the political initiative when on July 10, 1946, Mr. Molotov "went on record as opposing any French annexations of German territory and proposed the early creation of an anti-fascist central German Government."¹⁵ By this move the Soviet Union became, in the eyes of the German people, "the champion of German unity and the defender of German soil against French annexation."¹⁶

The Soviets also obtained an economic advantage which was quite lasting in nature. Warburg related that:

Continuation of the zonal barriers meant that, while Russia was taking out millions of dollars at one end of Germany, and France was making a slight profit out of its zone, Britain and the United States were compelled to pour in their own money at the other end--...some five hundred million dollars a year.¹⁷

¹⁴Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 22.

Willis has briefly described both the immediate and the long-range effect in the following analysis:

French opposition had the important effect of paralyzing implementation of the Potsdam decisions by the Allied Control Council. This paralysis brought about the virtual autonomy of each zonal commander and made possible a great differentiation of policy in the different zones. It also changed the very nature of the German problem by ensuring that the future trial of strength between Russia and the Western powers would have as its battlefield a divided rather than a unified Germany.¹⁸

Michael Balfour relates that Marshal Vasili "Sokolovsky [the Russian commander in Germany] would not believe that the Americans were not secretly encouraging the French;...that, were this not the case, the French would have been brought to heel by being denied the United States supplies on which they depended."¹⁹ This statement was indicative of the difference in systems represented by the occupying powers. Soviet centralization extended beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union proper and into all areas controlled by that nation. "The Russians, forming their opinions on the basis of their own treatment of satellites, could not understand why Britain and the

¹⁸F. Roy Willis, The French in Germany, 1945-1949 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 26.

¹⁹Michael Balfour and John Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria, 1945-1946, Vol. VI of Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946, edited by Arnold Toynbee (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 124-125. Hereinafter cited as Balfour and Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria.

United States did not make France come to heel."²⁰

Sokolovsky's statement also indicated that the Russians considered France to be only a satellite to Britain and the United States.

Attempts to bring the French into line evidently developed from a negative approach. In December, 1945, Secretary of State Byrnes announced that the United States would proceed without France in centralization measures for Germany.²¹ Eugene Davidson also reported this event, relating that "...the Americans...threatened to establish three-power machinery in the Russian, British, and American zones if the French persisted in their obstruction."²² But no record of such action was found.

The question was not, however, one of attempts being made to curb French obstructionism, rather it was one of when the attempts were made and of what type they were. The above threats seemed only to have had the effect of heightening French fears concerning their security. This being the case, the result could only be the opposite of

²⁰Warburg, Germany: Key to Peace, p. 22.

²¹Balfour and Mair, Four-Power Control in Germany and Austria, p. 124; citing Basil Davidson, Germany: What Now? (London: Frederick Muller, 1950), p. 70.

²²Eugene Davidson, The Death and Life of Germany: an Account of the American Occupation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 82. Hereinafter cited as Davidson, The Death and Life of Germany.

that desired. Apparently the time when France could have been controlled by threats had passed, and that the time had arrived when compromise was the key-word of cooperation. However, no evidence has been found to support a statement that a valid attempt at compromise was made, and the French fears persisted.

Warburg also questioned the Western approach to the issue of French security. Writing of this problem at a later date he observed that:

The outstanding fact about the four-power experiment, as the writer saw it in August, 1946, was that the initiative as to Germany's future had been left to France and Russia during the entire first year of occupation. The French knew what they did not want, and obstructed it. After six months of this, the Russians knew what they wanted, and proceeded to take it. Neither Britain nor the United States had a policy to supplant the broken-down quadripartite contract.²³

He became more specific with his charge when he stated that "indeed, the real fault lay in the failure of the British and American Governments to develop a common policy with the French."²⁴

General Lucius Clay related that in the early occupation the Soviets, although showing a distrust for France and Great Britain, evidenced a true desire to reach

²³Warburg, Germany: Key to Peace, p. 23.

²⁴Ibid., p. 31.

agreement with the United States.²⁵ By the spring of 1948, however, this desire had been eliminated from the Soviet policy. In the early part of 1948 (January-June) the United States, Britain, and France met in London with other nations of Western Europe on two different occasions. These conferences resulted in agreements for the close cooperation of Western Germany with the rest of Europe.²⁶ On March 20, 1948, after the first London meeting, Marshal Sokolovsky appeared at a meeting of the Allied Control Council long enough to read a paper declaring that "by meeting in London without Russia the three powers had acted illegally and the quadripartite government of Berlin was consequently at an end."²⁷ The Soviet reasoning was that Berlin was in the Russian zone and the quadripartite government there depended upon successful quadripartite action in all of Germany.²⁸

The long-range effects of French obstruction, then, might be described as playing a large part in turning Germany into a political battleground on which the powers of the world are at present engaged in a "Cold War"

²⁵Lucius D. Clay, Germany and the Fight for Freedom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 17.

²⁶Davidson, The Death and Life of Germany, p. 187.

²⁷Ibid., p. 188.

²⁸Ibid., p. 189.

composed of ideological conflict and the age old struggle of power politics. Charges leveled against the West, even by Western writers, were increasingly brought against all three Western powers, and particularly against the United States and Britain. Eugene V. Rostow provided a classical example of this in an article in The New York Times Magazine (June 6, 1948) in which he accused the United States and Great Britain of following a policy based largely on "blind irritability with the French."²⁹ He suggested that hindsight had proven the French policy to be correct in the period following World War I and that it might well be again correct.

For those who would maintain that French obstructionism was temporary in nature, however, brief attention must be given to more recent activity by that nation. When the question of rearming Germany by the creation of the European Defense Community arose in the early 1950's, the French again turned to obstruction. They maintained that "the future of the Saar must be settled before they would approve the arming of German contingents,"³⁰ despite Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' "expressed doubt

²⁹Eugene V. Rostow, "Germany: a Warning," The New York Times Magazine (June 6, 1948), p. 9+.

³⁰Davidson, The Death and Life of Germany, p. 348.

that the two questions could be tied together."³¹ Even though influential voices in France, the United States, and England warned that continued French obstruction could lead to the Germans being armed without French consent, the French Government refused to bring the issue before the National Assembly.³² Dulles applied threats of reappraisals in American policy even while compromising on some of the French demands, specifically the Saar question. Under pressure, the French Government finally took the question of the European Defense Community before the National Assembly on August 30, 1954, where it met defeat.³³ In the uproar that followed, Germany was re-armed without French consent, largely by way of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.³⁴

By 1954, Great Britain and the United States had evidently decided that France would not be allowed to check the whole of Western policy by her obstructive activity. Significant damage, however, had already been accomplished. Western unity, which might have accomplished much, was missing, and it has not really been attained even today.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., pp. 348-349.

³³Ibid., p. 362.

³⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The ideological concepts held by the occupying powers were as diverse in nature as were some of the national interests represented. Many opportunities for conflict among the powers were present. From this it might be assumed that the French problem lacked significance relative to the breakdown of the Potsdam agreements on the grounds that the breakdown would have evolved even without French obstruction.

Yet, one must consider such aspects as General Clay's observation that the Soviets evidenced a desire to reach agreement with the United States during the initial phase of the occupation. Harry Truman's analysis of French obstructionism, in effect, admitted that the French activity had closed the door on the chances of reconciliation while such chances still existed. Finally, the Soviets made no real effort to destroy the Potsdam accords until the summer of 1946, months after the French obstruction began. These considerations suggest that reconciliation was possible, but that French obstructionism proved an insurmountable obstacle which destroyed whatever accord remained among the powers and thus played a large part in the division of Germany into two camps:

East Germany, dominated by the Soviets; and West Germany, aligned with the Western powers. The Germany of today is a major pawn in a time of peace known as the Cold War; a battlefield characterized by ideological conflict and power politics.

It would, however, be unjust and the perpetration of a farce to attempt to blame the Cold War, or even the German phase alone, entirely on French obstructionism, for that struggle is also a culmination of many other factors. By the same token it would be unjust to blame only France for her obstructive activities and their results. The French were obsessed with two basic desires: national security and a return to greatness. These desires, to them, warranted priority above all else, and any method that would attain them was justified.

The Soviet Union must accept a share of the responsibility, as must Great Britain and the United States. The Soviets, although recognizing the overriding desires that motivated the French, failed to meet the French on a basis of equality. The contempt acquired for France in the opening phase of the war remained evident in the Soviet attitude. They opposed French participation in discussions and negotiations which the French considered important to their future. Consequently, not only did the Soviets continue to remind France of her humiliating position, but Russia became the symbol of a new threat to

French national security.

Great Britain and the United States, however, must accept a greater share of the burden of responsibility than the Soviet Union. Of the three great powers, they, more than the Soviets, should have understood the French, an ally of longstanding and a nation with which they had much in common. Moreover, Great Britain, and later the United States, had been the prime supporters of French rights. Yet, both powers failed to provide support when it was needed most. Both agreed to exclude the French from Potsdam, for no apparent reason other than that it would make the course of the conference less difficult. May the question be posed, "Where and when was a better time and place to dispell existing policy differences?" Furthermore, as supporters of France, the two powers neglected to successfully represent the French views at the conference. This aspect of the failure resulted largely from the fact that the American and British Governments never successfully reconcilled the differences which existed between their policies and that of the French. It might be added that these policy differences have never been eradicated. As a final point of failure, the two powers failed to convince the Soviets that France was not their satelllite. Hence, the Soviets believed, at least they expressed the belief, that the French obstructive activity took place with the approval, if not the

encouragement of, Great Britain and the United States.

A complex pattern of distrust and suspicion resulted which precipitated a breakdown of positive measures of cooperative action. The immediate result was that rather than approaching the occupation of defeated Germany as a cooperative project, each Allied power approached its own zone as a national project. Unity and coordination of aims became memories. The long-range effect becomes difficult to detect, because each succeeding event added to the pattern. Still, the influence is discernible. The Berlin wall constitutes a symbol of mockery to the joint control designed at Potsdam. Less tangible, but possibly more important, is the lack of unity among the Western powers. Both the wall and the lack of unity are, in part, the result of the French obstructionism following the German surrender.

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