

tack eastward, V Corps released the French division, retained command of the 4th Division, and received the 28th Infantry and 5th Armored Divisions.

Developments leading to the release of the French division began on 26 August, when General de Gaulle wrote General Eisenhower to thank him for assigning Leclerc the mission of liberating Paris. He also mentioned that although Paris was "in the best possible order after all that has happened," he considered it "absolutely necessary to leave [the division] here for the moment."¹²⁰ Planning a visit to Paris on 27 August to confer with de Gaulle on this and other matters and "to show that the Allies had taken part in the liberation," General Eisenhower invited General Montgomery to accompany him. When Montgomery declined on the ground that he was too busy, Eisenhower and Bradley went to Paris without him.¹²¹ At that time de Gaulle "expressed anxiety about conditions in Paris" and asked that two U.S. divisions be put at his disposal to give a show of force and establish his position. Since General Gerow had recommended that Leclerc be retained in Paris to maintain order, General Eisenhower, who earlier had thought of using Leclerc's division for occupation duty in the capital, agreed to station the French division in Paris "for the time being." To give de Gaulle his show of force and at the same time make clear that de Gaulle had received Paris by the grace of God and the strength of Allied arms, Eisenhower

planned to parade an American division in combat formation through Paris on its way to the front.¹²²

Ostensibly a ceremony but in reality a tactical maneuver designed as a march to the front, the parade would exhibit American strength in the French capital and get the division through the city—a serious problem because of traffic congestion—to relieve Leclerc's division.¹²³ While the 5th Armored Division assembled near Versailles for its forthcoming commitment, General Cota led the 28th Division down the Champs Elysées on 29 August and through the city to the northern outskirts and beyond in a splendid parade reviewed by Bradley, Gerow, de Gaulle, Koenig, and Leclerc from an improvised stand, a Bailey bridge upside down.¹²⁴

The motives behind de Gaulle's request for Leclerc's division to remain in Paris were two, possibly three. He may have wanted simply to remove friction between Leclerc and Gerow by diplomatically securing Leclerc's transfer back to Patton's Third Army. More to the point, he revealed a lack of confidence in his basic position vis-à-vis the French people. Although he had been assured on 23 August by one of his chief political advisers that "the authority of the Provisional Government of the Republic

¹²⁰ Msg, de Gaulle to Eisenhower, 1915, 26 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 092, French Relations.

¹²¹ Pogue, *Supreme Command*, pp. 242-43; Eisenhower to Montgomery, 26 Aug, and Montgomery to Eisenhower, 0336, 27 Aug, Pogue Files.

¹²² Butcher Diary, entry 26 Aug, and Ltrs, Eisenhower to Marshall, 22 and 31 Aug, Pogue Files; Eisenhower to de Gaulle, FWD-13336, 28 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 014.1, France; Gerow to Hodges, 0010, 26 Aug; *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, p. 205; Ltr, Pogue to author, 27 Sep 54, OCMH Files.

¹²³ V Corps AAR, Aug; Interv by author with General Barton; Ltr and attachments from General Blakeley to author; Interv with Gerow, Helmick, and Hill, 15 Oct 54. American engineers eventually opened five express routes through the city.

¹²⁴ *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, pp. 208, 211; Sylvan Diary, 29 Aug.



FRENCH RESISTANCE FIGHTERS *March in a Paris liberation parade.*

is recognized by the whole population," he gave at least one observer the impression that he was not entirely sure of himself politically.¹²⁵ Finally, de Gaulle did not seem to know "what to do with the F.F.I. or how best to use or control them," for since the FFI had been permitted to retain its arms, it seemed immediately after the liberation to be the "worst danger in Paris."¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Ltrs, Luizet to de Gaulle, 1800, 23 Aug, de Gaulle to Luizet, 2230, 23 Aug, quoted in Even, *La 2e D.B.*, pp. 118-21; Butcher Diary, entry 26 Aug (written by Lt.-Col. James Frederic Gault); see Resistance Unit, *Liberation of Paris*, p. 1253; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, p. 242, n. 32; Interv by Pogue with Gen de Gaulle, 14 Jan 47, Pogue Files.

¹²⁶ Butcher Diary, entry 26 Aug; Msg, Vissering

Staffed by men of courage who had helped their country in one of the darkest periods of its history, the FFI was the single avenue for unifying all the Resistance movements and was perhaps the greatest moral force in France at the time of the liberation. Yet active resistance through the FFI had appealed to the reckless as well as to the daring. With the arrival of Leclerc's soldiers, the FFI in the capital became "a band of forgotten men." Certain more responsible members, feeling their presence no

to SHAEF, 28 Aug, SHAEF File 014.1, France, II; Msg, 12th AGp to SHAEF, Q-20323, 12 Aug, and SHAEF Msg, 13070, 21 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI

longer required, disappeared and resumed their normal pursuits. Others sought to exploit their weapons for personal ends. Disturbing incidents took place in the capital and the provinces, some simple disorders, others, such as the proclamation of local soviets in isolated areas, politically inspired.¹²⁷

Koenig, anxious to relieve the situation by placing disturbing elements in uniform and thus under military discipline, asked SHAEF to furnish uniforms and equipment for 15,000 men. SHAEF complied immediately. SHAEF had earlier recognized that legal status for the FFI required the enrollment of its members in the French Army in order to provide them with a distinctive form of military dress that would distinguish them from irregular forces not entitled to the privileges and guarantees of military custom and law.¹²⁸ Using this as a lever, Koenig projected the policy by announcing that FFI members, "because of the magnificent patriotic zeal which they evinced in particular [ly] difficult circumstances, are naturally indicated to constitute the frame of our future Armies."¹²⁹

Such tactful circumspection was not de Gaulle's forte. Three days after the liberation of Paris, he ordered that, "beginning the 29 August 1944, the high command of the underground forces in

Paris are inactivated, dissolved, and their duties will be carried out by the Commanding Generals of the different military regions." Those Resistance members liable for military service were to be regularly drafted into the Army.¹³⁰ The French War Department implemented the decision by issuing the regulations "to be applied concerning integration of the FFI's into the Army."¹³¹ Despite criticism by extremists of the left, who declared that the action restricted the growth of a "national popular and democratic army," the Provisional Government in September passed decrees placing the FFI under French military law.¹³²

Although de Gaulle had wanted the 2d French Armored Division in Paris immediately after the liberation, Leclerc protested occupation duty. The division nevertheless stayed in the capital to clear the few remaining Germans and to guard bridges, military stores, and installations.¹³³ On 3 September, after de Gaulle apparently was satisfied with the order in the capital and the solidity of his political position, he requested General Eisenhower to remove the division from the capital for use in active operations. Five days later, the division rejoined the Third Army.¹³⁴

¹²⁷ Psychological Warfare Div AEF, Spec Rpt (France) No. 10, FFI, S.824R/L.S. 204, 9 Oct, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

¹²⁸ War Dept, Cabinet, Provisional Govt of the Republic, Memo for the Dept of the Chief of the General Staff, Ref No. 14/CAB, 28 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

¹²⁹ Office of the Secretary of War, Decrees of 19 and 20 Sep 44, concerning the Organization of the FFI . . . , excerpts from the "Journal Officiel" of the French Republic, No. 81, 23 Sep, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

¹³⁰ V Corps Dir, Gerow to Leclerc, 29 Aug, FO 23, 1100, 28 Aug, and AAR, Aug.

¹³¹ Pogue, *Supreme Command*, pp. 242-43; *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, p. 210.

¹²⁷ Psychological Warfare Div AEF, Spec Rpt (France) No. 10, FFI, S.824R/L.S. 204, 9 Oct, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

¹²⁸ Msg, Vissering to SHAEF, 28 Aug, SHAEF File 014.1, France, II; SHAEF/17245/6/5/Ops (C), French Forces of the Interior 22 Jul, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI; SGS SHAEF War Diary, 22 Jul.

¹²⁹ Spec Mil Staff of the Supreme Comd of French Forces in Great Britain, Organization of the French Forces of the Resistance, 2.051 EMP/DM, 11 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

The climax of deteriorating Franco-American relations in regard to Paris occurred when General Gerow turned Paris over to the French administration. Gerow had understood that, as the senior military commander in Paris, he had responsibility for exercising control over the city during the military phase of the liberation and that he was eventually to transfer his power to General Koenig, the military governor of Paris. Yet Gerow found his authority constantly challenged by de Gaulle, Koenig, and Leclerc, to the extent that he felt impelled to request SHAEF to clarify "how far their authority extends."¹³⁵

On the second day after the liberation, General Gerow stormed into the First Army headquarters and, in the absence of the army commander, made known his troubles to General Kean, the chief of staff. "Who the devil is the boss in Paris?" he asked. "The Frenchmen are shooting at each other, each party is at each other's throat. Is Koenig the boss . . . De Gaulle . . . or am I the senior commander of troops in charge?" Assured that he was in charge, General Gerow said "All right. . . . There will be repercussions, mind you. You will have plenty of kicks—and kicks from important people, but I have a military job to do. I don't give a damn about these politicians and [I mean] to carry out my job."¹³⁶

There were other irritations. General Gerow was surprised to find a Communications Zone representative, Brig. Gen. Pleas B. Rogers, in the city almost

immediately. He also learned that an international agreement had been made for the control of Paris, an agreement of which he had not been informed.¹³⁷ Furthermore, Koenig had arrived in Paris on 25 August and had immediately taken over civil affairs without checking with Gerow as a matter of courtesy. "So long as there was no interference on his part with tactical operations," Gerow wrote later, "I raised no objections to his action."¹³⁸

Judging the city militarily secure on 28 August, Gerow formally turned the capital over to Koenig, who flatly informed him, "The French authorities alone have handled the administration of the city of Paris since its liberation. . . . Acting as the military governor of Paris since my arrival, I assumed the responsibilities . . . the 25th of August 1944."¹³⁹ Koenig probably felt that he could not make the slightest sign that might be interpreted as admitting French dependence on the Americans. "We shouldn't blame them," General Eisenhower wrote with charity, "for being a bit hysterical."¹⁴⁰

Gerow turned U.S. military control in the city over to the Seine Base Section of the Communications Zone. During the early days of September, the large COMZ-ETOUSA headquarters moved from the Cotentin to Paris, a central location where adequate facilities, in contrast to those of the Cotentin, per-

¹³⁵ Ltr and attachments, Blakely to author, 30 Sep 55, OCMH Files.

¹³⁶ Ltr. Gerow to OCMH, 22 Sep 54; see Gerow to Hodges, 0010, 26 Aug.

¹³⁷ The letters are reproduced in *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, p. 209.

¹³⁸ Msg. Eisenhower to Marshall, 31 Aug, Pogue Files.

¹³⁵ Msg. Vissering to SHAEF, 26 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 014.1, France; see also *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, p. 198; Ltr. Gerow to OCMH, 22 Sep 54; *V Corps AAR*, Aug, and G-5 Sec Staff Rpt.

¹³⁶ Sylvan Diary, 26 Aug.

mitted more efficient operation. Occurring when transportation was so critical as to immobilize some combat units, the move came at an unfortunate time. Also, long before the liberation, General Eisenhower had reserved the city and its hotels, in his mind at least, for the use of combat troops on furlough. "Field forces in combat have always begrimed the supply services their rear-echelon comforts," General Bradley later wrote. "But when the infantry learned that Com Z's comforts had been multiplied by the charms of Paris, the injustice rankled all the deeper and festered there throughout the war."¹⁴¹ Though Eisenhower tried to reduce the number of rear-echelon troops in the city, the military population of Paris nevertheless swelled to what seemed like unreasonable proportions.¹⁴²

One of the first impressions the liberators of Paris received was that the population appeared "healthy and full of vigor." Yet at the time of liberation only one day's supply of food was on hand for civil population.¹⁴³ "The food situation is serious," de Gaulle had wired. "The lack of coal is grave. Thanks in advance for what you can do to remedy this." "You may depend on us to do everything consistent with the military situation," the Supreme Commander replied. "Every effort is being

made to rush food and coal to Paris."¹⁴⁴ A tremendous relief program was already under way.

The greatest problem in organizing relief for Paris was transport. Bombing and sabotage had disrupted railroads, rolling stock was in short quantity, bridges had been destroyed, heavy military traffic had damaged roads. The requirements of the breakout had placed a heavy strain on motor vehicles, and gasoline was in such short supply that combat operations were about to come to a halt.¹⁴⁵ So serious was the lack of transport that at least one Liberty ship with food for Paris could not be accepted for discharge on the Continent.¹⁴⁶

To overcome these deficiencies, General Eisenhower ordered carrier planes to supplement rail and road movements. On 27 August airplanes began delivering 3,000 tons of food, medical items, and soap from the United Kingdom at the rate of 500 tons a day. General Bradley authorized a daily allocation of 60,000 gallons of fuel—gasoline or diesel—and 6,000 gallons of lubricants for vehicles delivering supplies to Paris. He also allotted 1,000 gallons of fuel oil for collective kitchens in the capital. All transportation that could possibly be spared from military requirements was made available. Two ships departed the United Kingdom on 27 August carrying 179 3/4-ton trucks, each with a trailer, to be used to get supplies to the French.

Although every effort was made to get

¹⁴¹ Bradley, *Soldier's Story*, pp. 405-06.

¹⁴² Eisenhower to Lee, FWD-15033, 16 Sep, SHAEF File G-3 Ops A, 312.1-2, Dirs to AGps; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, pp. 320-33; Interv by Pogue with Maj Gen Walter Bedell Smith, Washington, 13 May 47, Pogue Files; see also Ruppenthal, *Logistical Support*, II, 31-32.

¹⁴³ V Corps G-5 Staff Sec Rpt, and AAR, Aug; *V Corps Operations in the ETO*, p. 206; Msg, Vissering to SHAEF, 27 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 014.1, France.

¹⁴⁴ De Gaulle to Eisenhower, 1915, 26 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 092, French Relations; Eisenhower to de Gaulle, FWD-133336, 28 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 014.1, France.

¹⁴⁵ See below, Ch. XXXII, for a detailed discussion.

¹⁴⁶ Msg, EXFOR Rear Movements to COMZ, QM-430, 30 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 014.1, France.



PARISIANS' WELCOME TO GENERAL DE GAULLE

coal into the city for essential utilities, its importation was an especially difficult problem because railroad service was lacking and because all the trucks in service were carrying food. Military vehicles rushed 1,000 tons of supplies per day from British and American continental stockpiles provided for that purpose. French and captured German trucks moved several hundred tons of nearby indigenous stocks into the capital daily. Ships brought cargo from the United Kingdom for relief distribution. To offset the diminishing military stockpiles, American agricultural specialist officers were assigned to help French officials locate supplies in surplus pro-

ducing areas and arrange for their delivery to the city. The French began to move cattle on the hoof to Paris.

Half the daily relief supplies provided by the Americans and 800 tons of coal per day were moved at the expense of the military effort. Representatives of the two army groups and the Communications Zone co-ordinated the flow within Paris, while French authorities arranged local distribution. More than a month and a half after the liberation of Paris, French relief was still a consequential Allied military responsibility.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Msg, Gen Eisenhower to Asst Secy of War John J. McCloy, FWD-13308, 27 Aug; Gen Bradley to Maj Gen Frank F. Scowden, Q-10373, 27 Aug;

In retrospect, the liberation of Paris was as much a Franco-American conflict as an Allied-German struggle. The French secured almost all they wanted by convincing a reluctant, but in the end amenable, Allied command to do their bidding. The restoration of French dignity, implicit in the liberation, had come about largely through French efforts sustained by Allied complaisance. If the Allies somewhat spoiled the liberation for the French by forcing the French to share it with American troops, their motives were as pure as their impatience was typical. Regarding the prestige inherent in the liberation as small repayment for the dead Allied soldiers lost between the beaches of Normandy and the gates of the capital, the Americans were astonished when the expected French gratitude for assistance became instead a resentment and insubordination that could not be dissipated by relief supplies. Interestingly enough, the British, whether by accident or design, refrained from participating in the liberation and the ceremonies, perhaps because they regarded the libera-

tion as primarily a French matter, possibly because they were aware of an undercurrent of anti-British feeling as a result of the destruction of the French fleet. It was unfortunate also that the man in the street confused the name of the American commander, Gerow, with that of General Henri Giraud, one of de Gaulle's political opponents, and that so overwhelmingly a de Gaulloist victory in the capital could have been blemished by a simple phonetic similarity. Over the entire experience hovered the shadowy figure of Choltitz, who sought to satisfy all masters and who in the end could say that he saved Paris from destruction and could be a hero to all. No wonder, with the complications that threatened to rip the fabric of the façade of the liberation—that wonderful joy and delight of the liberated people and of civilized people everywhere, the flowers, the kisses, the songs, and the wine—no wonder it seemed cruel to expose the intrigue and bickering behind the scenes. Certainly it was simpler to believe the legend that emerged afterwards: the French Resistance in Paris had liberated the capital without outside help.¹⁴⁸

Msg, Gen Eisenhower to Maj Gen John H. Hilldring, S-58600, 28 Aug; SHAEF to 12th AGp (Rear), FWD-13340, 28 Aug; Lee to Scowden, JX-13369, 27 Aug; 12th AGp to SHAEF G-5, Q-10443, 30 Aug; SHAEF Msg, FWD-13411, 30 Aug. All in SGS SHAEF File 014.1, France, II. See also V Corps G-5 Sec Staff Rpt, V Corps AAR, Aug.

¹⁴⁸ Adrien Dansette, "Du 19 au 25 août 1944: Paris se Libéré," *Miroir de l'Histoire*, No. 55 (August, 1954), 151-60; see also Pierre Billotte "10e Anniversaire de la Libération de Paris," *Le Monde*, Année 11, # 2980 (25 August 1954).

PART SEVEN

PURSUIT

CHAPTER XXX

The Battle for Brest

The Post-OVERLORD Decision

Near the end of August the Allies could consider Operation OVERLORD virtually complete. They had secured a continental lodgment area from which to mount an assault against the heart of Germany. The next step, according to plans, was to transform the lodgment into a continental base to support the blow that was to lay the enemy prostrate and allow Allied troops to overrun the German homeland.

To prepare for the final attack toward Germany, the Allies had intended, even as late as mid-August, to halt for several weeks at the Seine.¹ But developments on the battle front during the second half of August—the partial destruction of two German armies in Normandy and the landings in southern France—had prompted German withdrawal along the entire front. This made it imperative for the Allies to deny the enemy the chance to recover and make a stand at any of several terrain features along the path of retreat that were favorable for defense. Logistical considerations notwithstanding, pursuit operations had to be undertaken at once. (*See Maps I, VIII, XII.*)

When the Allies reached the Seine, the

¹ PS SHAEF (44) 11, Post-NEPTUNE Opns, First Draft, 12 Aug, Final, 17 Aug, SHAEF File 18008, G-3 Plans.

logistical situation was far from satisfactory. With the exception of Cherbourg, the Allies had no major ports. Preinvasion planners had assumed that the conclusion of OVERLORD would find the Americans in possession of the Breton ports of St. Malo, Brest, Quiberon Bay, and Nantes, and the British in position to take Rouen and Le Havre.² Although by mid-August the British could anticipate quick capture of the Seine ports and even the Channel ports, the Americans possessed only Cherbourg and the destroyed and useless harbor facilities at St. Malo. Strong German garrisons still held Brest, Lorient (and the Quiberon peninsula), and St. Nazarie (which barred the mouth of the Loire River and therefore access to Nantes). All Allied supplies were still coming across the beaches, with the exception of inconsequential quantities arriving through such minor ports as Isigny, Granville, and Cancale, and somewhat larger amounts discharged at Cherbourg. Although the tonnage landed with such limited facilities exceeded all expectations, the approach of autumn weather cast a shadow on future prospects.

The logistical apparatus on the Con-

² Of the many papers and studies that echo this premise, see, for example, SHAEF Plng Staff, Post-NEPTUNE Courses of Action After Capture of Lodgment Area, 3 May, SGS SHAEF File 381, Post-OVERLORD Plng.