

France. To cover the withdrawal, OKW on 2 August ordered General der Flieger Karl Kitzinger, Military Governor of France, to construct and organize defensive positions along the line of the Somme, Marne, and Saône Rivers, to which the forces then in Normandy would retire. To insure a successful withdrawal to the Seine and Marne, Hitler directed OKH to establish a special command at Paris under *Army Group B*, and on 7 August he appointed Choltitz, former commander of the *LXXXIV Corps* in the Cotentin, Commanding General and Military Commander of Greater Paris.⁸

Choltitz's mission at first was to make Paris "the terror of all who are not honest helpers and servants of the front."⁹ He was to inactivate or evacuate all superfluous military services in Paris, dispatch all rear-area personnel able to bear arms to front-line units, restore discipline among troops accustomed to easy living, and maintain order among the civilian population. Several days later Choltitz received the prerogatives of a fortress commander—unqualified command of the troops of all services in the area and full authority over the civilian inhabitants. Paris was to be defended to the last man. All the seventy-odd bridges within the city limits were to be prepared for demolition. The troops were to battle outside the city as well as inside in order to block the Allies at the Seine.¹⁰

⁸ MS # B-034 (Schramm) and Choltitz, *Soldat unter Soldaten*, pp. 219-73, are basic sources; see also MS # A-967 (Boineburg-Lengsfeld), MS # B-611 (Hesse), and MS # B-741 (Ziegelmann).

⁹ Msg, Hitler to Choltitz, *OB WEST KTB*, *Anlage 1219*; *OB WEST KTB*, 8 Aug.

¹⁰ *OB WEST KTB*, 11 Aug; MS # B-732 (Hold); MS # B-728 (Emmerich); Interrogation of Col

Choltitz's predecessor in Paris, Generalleutnant Hans Freiherr von Boineburg-Lengsfeld, whose mission had been merely to maintain "peace and order," had on his own initiative constructed an "obstacle line" west and southwest of Paris, which he felt could be defended successfully with the troops at his disposal. He believed that fighting inside Paris would be an act of complete irresponsibility because of the almost certain destruction of irreplaceable art treasures. He judged that his forces—twenty-five to thirty thousand men of the *325th Security Division*, armed with light infantry weapons for guard duty—would be able to delay the Allies outside the city and west of the Seine. Just before Choltitz' arrival, antiaircraft and security elements occupied these positions to block the main highway approaches to the capital.¹¹

The forces west and southwest of Paris soon grew in strength in response to Hitler's desire for additional antitank weapons west of the Seine. Antitank companies from units in the *Army Group G* sector and from the *6th Parachute* and *48th* and *338th Infantry Divisions* (all of which were soon to become at least partially involved in the defense of Paris) were to move to the Paris-Orléans gap, screen the capital, and knock out American reconnaissance columns and armored spearheads that were moving eastward from le Mans. Col. Hermann Oehmichen, an antitank expert, arrived from Germany to teach local units the technique of antitank

Paul Krause, Mil Comdr East Paris, FUSA PWI Rpt 12, 29 Aug (hereafter cited as Krause Interrogation), FUSA (Tactical Echelon) G-3 File.

¹¹ MS # B-015 (Boineburg); *OB WEST KTB*, 8 Aug.

protection. With him he brought a cadre of instructors trained in antitank defense and demolition, a reconnaissance battalion, a column of light trucks, and a supply of *Panzerfaeuste*. Although Oehmichen's program was not completed in time to halt the American drive toward the Paris-Orléans gap, some of his antitank elements reinforced the Paris defenses.¹²

By 16 August the defenses west of Paris included twenty batteries of 88-mm. anti-aircraft guns, security troops of the 325th Division, provisional units consisting of surplus personnel from all branches of the Wehrmacht, and stragglers from Normandy. The remnants of the 352d Division were soon to join them. These troops, all together numbering about 20,000 men, were neither of high quality nor well balanced for combat. Upon the approach of American forces, Choltitz recommended that Lt. Col. Hubertus von Aulock (brother of the St. Malo defender) be placed in command of the perimeter defense west and southwest of Paris. Kluge, still in command of OB WEST and Army Group B, promoted Aulock to the rank of major general, gave him authority, under Choltitz, to reorganize the defenses, and assigned him Oehmichen to co-ordinate the antitank measures. Choltitz, with about 5,000 men and 50 pieces of light and medium artillery inside Paris and about 60 planes based at le Bourget, remained the fortress com-

mander under the nominal control of the First Army.¹³

When Kluge visited Choltitz around 15 August, the two officers agreed that the capital could not be defended for any length of time with the forces available. In addition, should the city be besieged, the supply problem would be insurmountable. Thus, house-to-house fighting, even assuming the then questionable presence of adequate troops, would serve no useful purpose. Destroying the bridges as ordered, even if sufficient explosives were on hand, was against the best German interest because the Germans could cross the Seine by bridge only at Paris. The better course of action was to defend the outer ring of Paris and block the great arterial highways with obstacles and antitank weapons.

Jodl probably informed Hitler of at least some of this discussion, for on 19 August Hitler agreed that destruction of the Paris bridges would be an error and ordered additional *Flak* units moved to the French capital to protect them. Impressed with the need to retain the city in order to guarantee contact between the Fifth Panzer and First Armies, Hitler also instructed Jodl to inform the troops that it was mandatory to stop the Allies west and southwest of Paris.¹⁴

Since the Americans had of their own accord stopped short of the gates of Paris, the defenders outside the city improved their positions and waited. Inside the

¹² OB WEST KTB, Anlagen 1241, 1298 (OB WEST Msg, 2115, 11 Aug), 1322 (OB WEST Msg, 1140, 12 Aug), and 1323 (OB WEST ltr, 12 Aug); Hitler Order, Wfst/Op. Nr. 772830/44, g.Kdos., Chfs, 11 Aug, quoted in Msg, AGp B to the armies, 0030, 12 Aug, AGp B Fuehrer Befehle.

¹³ Danke Telecon, 1400, 16 Aug, OB WEST KTB; Msg, OB WEST to OKW, roem Ia Nr. 6946/44 gen.Kdos., 0400, 17 Aug, OB WEST KTB, Anlage 1483; MS # B-732 (Hold); MS # B-728 (Emmerich); Kluge Msg, 1230, 17 Aug, and Speidel Msg, 1945, 18 Aug, AGp B Op. Befehle, folios 321 and 336; OB WEST KTB, Anlage 1628.

¹⁴ MS # B-034 (Schramm).

capital the garrison had a sufficient number of tanks and machine guns to command the respect of the civil populace and thereby insure the security of German communications and the rear.¹⁵

French Aims

Though the liberation of Paris was not an immediate major military goal to the Allies, to Frenchmen it meant the liberation of France. More than the spiritual capital, Paris was the only place from which the country could be effectively governed. It was the hub of national administration and politics and the center of the railway system, the communication lines, and the highways. Control of the city was particularly important in August 1944, because Paris was the prize of an intramural contest for power within the French Resistance movement.

The fundamental aim of the Resistance—to rid France of the Germans—cemented together men of conflicting philosophies and interests but did not entirely hide the cleavage between the patriots within occupied France and those outside the country—groups in mutual contact only by secret radios and underground messengers.¹⁶ Outside France the Resistance had developed a politically homogeneous character under de Gaulle, who had established a political headquarters in Algiers and a mili-

tary staff in London, and had proclaimed just before the cross-Channel attack that he headed a provisional government. Inside France, although it was freely acknowledged that de Gaulle had symbolically inspired anti-German resistance, heterogeneous groups had formed spontaneously into small, autonomous organizations existing in a precarious and clandestine status.¹⁷ In 1943 political supporters of de Gaulle inside and outside France were instrumental in creating a supreme co-ordinating Resistance agency within the country that, while not eradicating factionalism, had the effect of providing a common direction to Resistance activity and increasing de Gaulle's strength and authority in Allied eyes.

Although political lines were not yet sharply drawn, a large, vociferous, and increasingly influential contingent of the left contested de Gaulle's leadership inside France. This group clamored for arms, ammunition, and military supplies, the more to harass the Germans. Some few in 1943 hoped in this small way to create the second front demanded by the Soviet Union. The de Gaullists outside the country were not anxious to have large amounts of military stores parachuted into France, and the matériel supplied was dropped in rural areas rather than near urban centers, not only to escape German detection but also to inhibit the development of a strong left-wing opposition.¹⁸

Early in 1944 the de Gaullists suc-

¹⁵ See XII Corps G-2 Per Rpt, 19 Aug, XII Corps AAR, Aug.

¹⁶ The following account is from Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, and Participation of the French Forces of the Interior in the Liberation of France, a MS prepared by French Resistance Unit, ETUSA Hist Sec, 1944 and 1945, OCMH Files, Pt II, Ch. II, Sec. 6, The Liberation of Paris (hereafter cited as Resistance Unit, Liberation of Paris).

¹⁷ See App. A to Annex Rpt, French Resistance, 19 Apr, JIC Papers, Pogue Files.

¹⁸ See studies, Ltrs, and Msgs in SGS SHAEF File 373/2, Employment of Airborne Forces in Opn OVERLOOK, particularly those dated 21 and 23 Jun, 15 and 23 Jul, and 2 Aug.

ceeded in establishing the entire Resistance movement as the handmaiden of the Allied liberating armies. The Resistance groups inside France became an adjunct of OVERLORD. French Resistance members, instead of launching independent operations against the Germans, were primarily to furnish information and render assistance to the Allied military forces. To co-ordinate this activity with the Allied operations, a military organization of Resistance members was formed shortly before the cross-Channel attack: the French Forces of the Interior. SHAEF formally recognized the FFI as a regular armed force and accepted the organization as a component of the OVERLORD forces. General Koenig (whose headquarters was in London), the military chief of the Free French armed forces already under SHAEF, became the FFI commander. When the Allies landed on French soil, the FFI (except those units engaged in operations not directly connected with the OVERLORD front—primarily those in the south, which were oriented toward the forthcoming ANVIL landing on the Mediterranean coast) came under the command of SHAEF and thus under de Gaulle's control.¹⁹

News in July of unrest in Paris and intimations that there was agitation for an unaided liberation of the city by the Resistance led General Koenig to order

¹⁹ SHAEF/17245/6.5/20ps (A), Operational Dir to CG FFI, 15 Jun, SHAEF File G-5/702, Dirs, France; Notes of Decisions Made at a Mtg Held at SHAEF, 10 Jul; Min of Mtg, 14 Jul; Gen Eisenhower to Brig Gen William J. Donovan, FWD-12464, 26 Jul; AFHQ, Comd and Operational Employment of the FFI, 29 Jul; Etat Major des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur, Twelfth Monthly Progress Rpt to SHAEF Aug 44, 10 Sep. Last five in SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI. SGS SHAEF War Diary, 15 Jul.

immediate cessation of activities that might cause social and political convulsion.²⁰ Since Allied plans did not envision the immediate liberation of the capital, a revolt might provoke bloody suppression on the part of the Germans, a successful insurrection might place de Gaullist opponents in the seat of political power, civil disorder might burgeon into full-scale revolution.

Despite Koenig's order, the decrease in the German garrison in August, the approach of American troops, and the disintegration of the Pétain government promoted an atmosphere charged with patriotic excitement. By 18 August more than half the railway workers were on strike and virtually all the policemen in the capital had disappeared from the streets for the same reason. Public anti-German demonstrations occurred frequently. Armed FFI members moved through the streets quite openly. Resistance posters appeared calling for a general strike, for mobilization, for insurrection.

The German reaction to these manifestations of brewing revolt seemed so feeble that on 19 August small local FFI groups, without central direction or discipline, forcibly took possession of police stations, town halls, national ministries, newspaper buildings, and the seat of the municipal government, the Hôtel de Ville. The military component of the French Resistance, the FFI, thus disobeyed orders and directly challenged Choltitz.

The Critical Days

The challenge, although serious, was far from formidable. Perhaps 20,000

²⁰ Min of Mtg, 14 Jul, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

men in the Paris area belonged to the FFI, but few actually had weapons since the Allies had parachuted only small quantities of military goods to them. While the Resistance had been able to carry on a somewhat systematic program of sabotage and harassment—destroying road signs, planting devices designed to puncture automobile tires, cutting communications lines, burning gasoline depots, and attacking isolated Germans—for the FFI to engage German armed forces in open warfare was quite another matter.²¹

The leaders of the Resistance in Paris, recognizing the havoc that German guns could bring to an overtly insubordinate civilian population and fearing widespread and bloody reprisals, sought to avert open hostilities. They were fortunate in securing the good offices of Mr. Raoul Nordling, the Swedish consul general, who volunteered to negotiate with Choltitz. Nordling had that very day succeeded in persuading Choltitz not to deport but to release from detention camps, hospitals, and prisons several thousand political prisoners. The agreement, which “represented the first capitulation of Germany,” was a matter of considerable import that “was not lost either on the Resistance or on the people of Paris.”²² Having established a personal relationship with Choltitz that

promised to be valuable, Nordling was able to learn on the evening of 19 August that Choltitz was willing to discuss conditions of a truce with the Resistance. That night an armistice was arranged, at first to last only a few hours, later extended by mutual consent for an indefinite period.

Without even a date of expiration, the arrangement was nebulous. Choltitz agreed to treat Resistance members as soldiers and to regard certain parts of the city as Resistance territory. In return, he secured Resistance admission that certain sections of Paris were to be free for German use, for the unhampered passage of German troops. Yet no boundaries were drawn, and neither Germans nor French were certain of their respective sectors. Thus, an uneasy noninterference obtained.²³

The advantages for both parties were clear. The French Resistance leaders were uncertain when Allied troops would arrive, anxious to prevent German repressive measures, aware of Resistance weakness to the extent of doubting their own ability to defend the public buildings seized, and finally hopeful of preserving the capital from physical damage.

For the Germans, the cessation of hostilities per se fulfilled Choltitz' mission of maintaining order within the capital and enabled him to attend to his primary mission of blocking the approaches to the city. Having known for a long time of the attempts to subordinate the Resistance to the Allied military command, the Germans guessed that sabotage directly unrelated to Allied military operations was “mainly the work

²¹ See SHAEF/17245/6/5/2/Ops (A), Operational Dir to CG FFI, 15 Jun, SHAEF File G-5/702, Dirs, France.

²² Resistance Unit, Liberation of Paris, p. 1244 (see pp. 1242-44, and Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, pp. 139-46 for detailed account); Ministerial Counselor Eckelmann's Rpt to OKW/*Abwicklungsstab/Rudolfsstadt*, 31 Jan 45, Rpt D-32 (hereafter cited as Eckelmann, Rpt to OKW), OCMH Files. Eckelmann assisted Choltitz in Paris, was taken prisoner during the liberation, and was apparently released and repatriated.

²³ Krause Interrogation.

of communist groups.”²⁴ It was therefore reasonable for Choltitz to assume that the disorder in Paris on 19 August, which had no apparent connection with developments on the front, was the work of a few extremists. Since part of his mission was to keep order among the population and since the police were no longer performing their duties, Choltitz felt that the simplest way of restoring order was to halt the gunfire in the streets. To prevent what might develop into indiscriminate rioting, he was willing to come to an informal truce, “an understanding,” as he termed it.²⁵

A more subtle reason also lay behind Choltitz’ action. Aware of the factionalism in the French Resistance movement, he tried to play one group off against the other to simplify his problem of control.²⁶ Choltitz believed that since the insurrectionists directed their immediate efforts toward seizing government buildings and communications facilities, the insurrection was at least in part the opening of an undisguised struggle for political power within France. The Pétain government no longer functioned in Paris (Pétainist officials with whom the Germans were accustomed to work no longer answered their telephones), and in this vacuum there was bound to be a struggle for power among the Resistance factions. “The Resistance had reason to fear,” a German official wrote not long afterwards, “that the Communists would take

possession of the city before the Americans arrived.”²⁷ By concluding a truce, Choltitz hoped to destroy the cement that held the various French groups together against their common enemy and thus leave them free to destroy themselves.

That Choltitz felt it necessary to use these means rather than force to suppress the insurrection indicated one of two things—either he was unwilling to endanger the lives of women and children or he no longer had the strength to cope with the Resistance. He later admitted to both. In any event, French underground activities had become so annoying that Choltitz’ staff had planned a coordinated attack on widely dispersed Resistance headquarters for the very day the insurrection broke out, but Choltitz himself had suddenly prohibited the action. Instead of resorting to force, he listened to representations in favor of peace from the neutral Swedish and Swiss consulates. Meanwhile, should civil disturbance become worse, Choltitz gathered provisional units to augment his strength, securing, among other units, a tank company of *Panzer Lehr*.²⁸

Choltitz apparently informed Model, the new chief of *OB WEST* and *Army Group B*, of his weakness, for when Hitler on 20 August advised Model that Paris was to become the bastion of the Seine-Yonne River line, Model replied that the plan was not feasible. Although Model had arranged to move the *348th Division* to Paris, he did not think these troops could arrive quickly enough

²⁴ See Rundstedt’s Est of the Situation, 25 Oct 43; *Der Oberbefehlshaber West*, Ia Nr. 550/43 g.Kdos, Chefs, 28.10.43, *Beurteilung der Lage Ob. West* am 25.10.1943, Sec. K, *Innere Lage*, in Bavarian State Archives, Munich, Germany.

²⁵ Choltitz, *Soldat unter Soldaten*, p. 252.

²⁶ Choltitz Rpt, cited in *OB WEST KTB*, 23 Aug, *Anlage* 1646.

²⁷ Eckelmann, Rpt to OKW.

²⁸ Krause Interrogation; Telecon, 1900, 20 Aug, *AGp B KTB*; Telecons, 21–24 Aug, *AGp B KTB*, particularly Blumentritt and Tempelhoff, 1745, 21 Aug; Choltitz, *Soldat unter Soldaten*, pp. 252–53.

to hold the city against the external Allied threat and the internal Resistance disturbance. Apparently having misunderstood Hitler's desire, Model decided that the Seine was more important than Paris. Since the Seine flows through the city, defending at the river would necessitate a main line of resistance inside the capital. With the civil populace in a state of hardly disguised revolt, he did not believe Choltitz could keep civil order and at the same time defend against an Allied attack with the strength at hand. Model therefore revealed to OKW that he had ordered an alternate line of defense to be reconnoitered north and east of Paris.²⁹

Model's action seemed inexcusable since the order to create a fortress city implied that Paris was important enough in Hitler's judgment to warrant a defense to the last man. Furthermore, Hitler had explicitly stated on 20 August, "If necessary, the fighting in and around Paris will be conducted without regard to the destruction of the city." Jodl therefore repeated Hitler's instructions and ordered Model to defend at Paris, not east of it, even if the defense brought devastation to the capital and its people.³⁰

Hitler himself left no doubt as to his wishes when he issued his famous "field of ruins" order:

The defense of the Paris bridgehead is of decisive military and political importance. Its loss dislodges the entire coastal front north of the Seine and removes the base for the V-weapons attacks against England.

²⁹ Hitler Order, 20 Aug; Msg, *FHQ*, 20 Aug, *OKW/WFSt/Op. Nr. 772956/44*, in *OKW/175*; Msg, Model to Jodl, 1800, 21 Aug, *AGp B Fuehrerbefehle*; MS # B-034 (Schramm).

³⁰ Hitler Order, 20 Aug; *OB WEST* and *AGp B KTB*'s, 21 Aug.

In history the loss of Paris always means the loss of France. Therefore the Fuehrer repeats his order to hold the defense zone in advance [west] of the city. . . .

Within the city every sign of incipient revolt must be countered by the sharpest means . . . [including] public execution of ringleaders. . . .

The Seine bridges will be prepared for demolition. Paris must not fall into the hands of the enemy except as a field of ruins.³¹

The French Point of View

Resistance leaders in Paris had meanwhile radioed the exterior Resistance for help, thereby alarming Frenchmen outside Paris by reports, perhaps exaggerated, of disorder in the city and by urgent pleas that military forces enter the capital at once.³² De Gaulle and his provisional government had long been worried that extremist agitation not only might bring violent German reaction but also might place unreliable Resistance elements in the capital in political power. The parties of the left were particularly influential in the Paris Resistance movement, to the extent that the FFI commander of Paris belonged to one of them. Conscious of the dictum that he who holds Paris holds France and sensitive to the tradition of Paris as a crucible of revolution, its population ever ready to respond to the

³¹ Hitler Msg, quoted in full in Msg, *OB WEST* to *AGp B*, 1100, 23 Aug, *AGp B Fuehrerbefehle*. Choltitz (*Soldat unter Soldaten*, pp. 255-59) and Schramm (MS # B-034) date Hitler's order as 22 August, and it is possible that some commanders received the substance of the message before the official reception and recording of it. The *AGp B KTB* reports the order in an entry at 1030, 23 August.

³² See Resistance Unit, Liberation of Paris, *passim* and annexes, for Resistance messages from Paris to the exterior.

cry "*Aux barricades!*" the French commanders within the OVERLORD framework advocated sending aid to Paris immediately.³³ Their argument was that if riot became revolution, Paris might become a needless battleground pulling Allied troops from other operations.

An immediate hope lay in parachuting arms and ammunition into the city. This would enable the FFI to resist more effectively and perhaps permit the Resistance to seize tactically important points that would facilitate Allied entry. Despite a natural reluctance to arm urban people and SHAEF's concern that the heavy anti-aircraft defenses of Paris might make an air mission costly, an air-drop of military equipment was scheduled for 22 August. When a thick fog that day covered all British airfields, the drop was postponed. On the following day, when the British radio made a premature announcement that Paris had already been liberated, SHAEF canceled the operation.³⁴

The decisive solution obviously lay in getting Allied troops into the capital, for which provision had been made in Allied plans as early as 1943. SHAEF had agreed to include a French division on the OVERLORD troop list "primarily so that there may be an important French formation present at the re-occupation of Paris."³⁵ The 2d French

Armored Division had been selected. Just before the cross-Channel attack and again early in August, the French military chief, General Koenig, had reminded General Eisenhower of the Allied promise to use that unit to liberate Paris. Its entry into the capital would be a symbolic restoration of French pride as well as the preparation for de Gaulle's personal entry into Paris, symbolic climax of the French Resistance.³⁶ When the situation seemed propitious for these events to take place, General Leclerc's armored division was at Argentan, more than a hundred miles away, while American troops were less than twenty-five miles from the center of the capital. If the French could persuade General Eisenhower to liberate Paris at once, would he be able to honor his promise to employ Leclerc?

General Eisenhower had no intention of changing the plan to bypass Paris, as Generals de Gaulle and Koenig discovered when they conferred with him on 21 August, but he repeated his promise to use Leclerc's division at the liberation. Although the French had agreed to abide by General Eisenhower's decisions on the conduct of the war in return for Allied recognition of a *de facto* government headed by de Gaulle, General Alphonse Juin that same day, 21 August, carried a letter from de Gaulle to the Supreme Commander to threaten politely that if General Eisenhower did not send troops to Paris at once, de Gaulle might have to do so himself.³⁷ The threat was important, for de

³³ See Rousseau, *Bataille de Normandie*, pp. 204-05 for an account of French pressure on Eisenhower.

³⁴ Detailed accounts are found in Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, pp. 320-24, and in Resistance Unit, *Liberation of Paris*, pp. 1251, 1255.

³⁵ Ltr, Gen Morgan (Deputy Chief of Staff, SHAEF) to French Forces in London, 7 Mar, quoted in Resistance Unit, *Liberation of Paris*, p. 1236; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, p. 239; SH/3244/Sec, *Employment of French Forces in Continental Opns*, 19 Jan, one of many documents on this matter in SGS SHAEF File 381, French, I.

³⁶ Even, *La 2e D.B.*, p. 114, n. 9.

³⁷ Ltr, de Gaulle to Eisenhower, 21 Aug, SGS SHAEF File 092, French Relations; Pogue, *Supreme Command*, p. 240; Interv by Pogue with de Gaulle, 14 Jan 47, and Butcher Diary, 11 Jul, Pogue Files.

Gaulle was the potential head of the French government and would theoretically stand above the Supreme Commander on the same level with President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill.

Leclerc, who was conscious of the historic mission reserved for him, had long been impatient for orders to move to Paris. As early as 14 August, when he learned that Patton was sending part of the XV Corps (but not the 2d French Armored Division) eastward from Argentan, Leclerc had requested the corps commander to query the Third Army commander as to when the French division was to go to Paris. Leclerc's explanation—"It is political"—availed little, for the army chief of staff bluntly ordered that Leclerc was to remain where he was. Two days later Leclerc wrote Patton suggesting that since the situation at Argentan had become quiet, the 2d French Armored Division might commence to assemble for its projected march on Paris.³⁸ That evening he visited Patton's headquarters, where he saw Bradley as well as Patton, and gained cordial assurance from both that he would have the honor of liberating the capital. Patton laughingly turned to General Wood, who was also present and who had been pressing for permission to lead his 4th Armored Division to Paris. "You see, Wood," Patton supposedly said, "he [Leclerc] is a bigger pain in the neck than you are."³⁹ Patton nevertheless announced his intention of moving Leclerc to Dreux as soon as possible.⁴⁰

³⁸ Telecon, Gaffey and Menoher, 1715, 14 Aug. and Ltr, Leclerc to Patton [16 Aug.], XV Corps CofS Jnl and File.

³⁹ Quoted in Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, p. 310.

⁴⁰ Notes [16 or 17 Aug.], XV Corps CofS Jnl and File.

Unfortunately for Leclerc's hopes, the last stage of operations to close the Argentan-Falaise pocket had started, and his armored division found itself again engaged, eventually under the control of the First U.S. Army and General Gerow's V Corps. Although Leclerc was not told, Bradley and Patton on 19 August agreed once more that only the French division would "be allowed to go into Paris," probably under First Army control.⁴¹ Leclerc fretted and bombarded V Corps headquarters with requests premised on the expectation of a momentary call to Paris—for example, he attempted to secure the release of the French combat command attached to the 90th Division. For his part, General Gerow saw no reason to employ the French division any differently from his American units, for Paris was no specific concern of his.⁴²

Invited by General Hodges to lunch on 20 August, Leclerc seized upon the occasion for "arguments, which he presented incessantly," that roads and traffic and plans notwithstanding, his division should run for Paris at once. He said he needed no maintenance, equipment, or personnel, but a few minutes later admitted that he needed all three. General Hodges "was not impressed with him or his arguments, and let him understand that he was to stay put" until he received orders to move.⁴³

When British troops on 21 August moved across the V Corps front and V

⁴¹ 12th AGp Memo for Rcd, 19 Aug, ML-205.

⁴² Ltr, Leclerc to Gerow [20 Aug.]; Msgs, Gerow to Leclerc, 2045, 20 Aug, 1400, 21 Aug; V Corps Dir, 21 Aug, and Ltrs of Instrs, 21 and 22 Aug. All in V Corps G-3 Jnl and File. Unless otherwise noted, documents hereafter cited in this chapter are in the V Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

⁴³ Sylvan Diary, 20 Aug.

Corps divisions began to withdraw to assembly areas south of Argentan. Leclerc saw no justification for remaining so far distant from his ultimate objective. "We shall not stop," he had said in 1941, "until the French flag flies over Strasbourg and Metz," and along the route to these capitals of Alsace and Lorraine, Paris was a holy place.⁴⁴ He persuaded himself that Gerow was sympathetic to his wishes, and though the corps commander was powerless to authorize Leclerc's march on Paris, Leclerc convinced himself that as the sole commander of French regular military forces in Operation OVERLORD, he was entitled to certain prerogatives involving national considerations.⁴⁵ Furthermore, since Koenig, who anticipated that the 2d Armored would liberate Paris sooner or later, had appointed Leclerc provisional military governor of the capital, Leclerc felt that this gave him authority to act.⁴⁶

With at least an arguable basis for moving on Paris, Leclerc on the evening of 21 August (the same day that Eisenhower had rejected de Gaulle's request) dispatched a small force of about 150 men—ten light tanks, ten armored cars, ten personnel carriers—under a Major Guillebon toward the capital. Guillebon ostensibly was to reconnoiter routes to Paris, but should the Allies decide to enter the city without the 2d French Armored Division, Guillebon was to accompany the liberating troops as the representative of the provisional govern-

ment and the French Army.⁴⁷ Writing to de Gaulle that evening, Leclerc explained, "Unfortunately, I cannot do the same thing for the bulk of my division because of matters of food and fuels" (furnished by the U.S. Army) and because of respect for the "rules of military subordination."⁴⁸

Knowing that Guillebon could not reach Paris undetected, Leclerc sent his G-2, Maj. Philippe H. Repiton, to Gerow on the morning of 22 August to explain his act on the following basis: insurrection in the capital made it necessary for an advance military detachment to be there to maintain order until the arrival of regular French political authorities. Guillebon's absence, Leclerc pointed out, did not compromise the ability of the division to fulfill any combat mission assigned by the corps. Gerow, who was thoroughly a soldier and who had received a peremptory message from the Third Army asking what French troops were doing outside their sector, saw only Leclerc's breach of discipline. "I desire to make it clear to you," Gerow wrote Leclerc in a letter he handed personally to Repiton, "that the 2d Armored Division (French) is under my command for all purposes and no part of it will be employed by you except in the execution of missions assigned by this headquarters." He directed Leclerc to recall Guillebon.⁴⁹

Unwilling to comply, Leclerc sought

⁴⁴ Quoted in Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, pp. 211-12.

⁴⁵ See Rousseau, *Bataille de Normandie*, pp. 204-05.

⁴⁶ Ltr, Koenig to Leclerc, # 2039, 11 Aug, cited in Even, *La 2e D.B.*, p. 114, n. 9.

⁴⁷ Even, *La 2e D.B.*, pp. 114-16; Etat Major des Forces Françaises de l'Interieur, Twelfth Monthly Progress Rpt to SHAEF Aug 44, 10 Sep 44, SGS SHAEF File 322, FFI.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, p. 313.

⁴⁹ Dir, Gerow to Leclerc, 22 Aug, with handwritten note; Even, *La 2e D.B.*, p. 116; Dansette, *Libération de Paris*, p. 314; Ltr, Gerow to OCMH, 22 Sep 54.