

CHARLES DE GAULLE'S TRIP TO MOSCOW IN 1944

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the visit of General Charles de Gaulle to Moscow in late 1944. This event was important because it demonstrated de Gaulle's attempt to revive France as one of the major powers and showed his character, particularly his willingness to stand up to Stalin on the issue of Polish independence. The visit was also critical because it shed light on Stalin's policy of trying to isolate the Polish Government-in-exile in favor of a puppet government in Poland, the so-called Lublin Government, headed by the Polish Communist leader Boselaw Beirut. Finally, the meeting between de Gaulle and Stalin provided evidence of Stalin's desire to expand Communism westward, to control Poland as a security barrier between Germany and the Soviet Union, and to drive a wedge between the members of the Western Alliance.

There is not much written on de Gaulle's visit to Moscow. It is mentioned in the historiography of World War

II, but without much detail. It appears to be a non-event in the great histories of that cataclysmic conflict, possibly because France was defeated and occupied early in the war and de Gaulle, an isolated leader outside of France, did not have a chair at the diplomatic and wartime councils where Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Stalin—the leaders of the Powers arrayed against the Axis alliance—met and decided the fate of the world. The only document that fully covers the meetings and other events of the visit is Charles de Gaulle's memoir, *Mémoires de Geurre: L'Unité 1942-1944*. His memoirs are divided into three volumes. The first volume is entitled *l'Appel*, or in English *The Call to Honor*.¹ The second volume is titled *L'Unitié*, or *Unity* in English.² De Gaulle titled the final volume of his memoirs *Le Salut*, or *Salvation*.³ This author will primarily use de Gaulle's *Le Salut* throughout this thesis. Memoirs must naturally be used with caution because of the frailty of human memory and the tendency of individuals to be self-serving. Nonetheless, de Gaulle's memoirs have proved to be an inexhaustible resource for this author.

¹ Charles de Gaulle, *L'Appel* (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1954).

² Charles de Gaulle, *L'Unitié* (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1956).

³ Charles de Gaulle, *Le Salut* (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1959).

The Soviet record of the meeting between de Gaulle and Stalin has not been published, so that aspect of the story will remain untold until such time when the Russian government publishes the relevant documents. This author does not have access to the Russian archives and, in any event, cannot read Russian, so this account will depend upon published English and French sources. However, the British Broadcasting Corporation maintained a monitoring service from 1939 forward in which it broadcasted and then printed in English summaries and transcripts of the world's newspapers, journals, and radio transmissions, including news sources in the Soviet Union. The author does make use of this resource.⁴ This study also attempts to ascertain the Soviet view of de Gaulle's visit by examining the broadcasts of Radio Moscow, which were translated into English and published by the British Broadcasting Corporation during World War II. The broadcasts are full of propaganda, but a careful analysis of them reveals the basic dynamic of Soviet foreign policy toward the West, Poland, and, for purposes of this thesis, General de Gaulle and France. The BBC Monitoring Service is also used to

⁴ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, *Reports November 27-December 11, 1944*, Reel 146.

capture popular opinion in both Free and Vichy France regarding de Gaulle's visit to Moscow.

Beyond de Gaulle's own memoirs, the primary sources for this study are observers who were in Moscow at the time of the visit and reported to their governments or news organizations on the significance of the meeting between de Gaulle and Stalin. These sources include George F. Kennan's memoirs, titled *Memoirs 1925-1950*.⁵ Another memoir used in this thesis was W. Averell Harriman's memoirs, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*.⁶

Another valuable source for this study is the documents of the Vatican that were published in the 1960s and 1970s and covered the Catholic Church's activities during World War II. The Holy See's official policy during the war was neutrality, but it harbored feelings of support for both the Free French government of de Gaulle and the Polish government-in-exile.⁷ Needless to say, too, it was

⁵ George F Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967).

⁶ Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975).

⁷ Pierre Blet et al., eds., *Actes et Documents du Saint Siègre relatifs à la seconde guerre mondiale*, 8 vols., 1 : *Le Saint Siègre et la guerre in Europe (mars 1939 - juin 1940)*, 2 : *Lettres de Pie XII aux évêques allemands (1939-1940)*, 3 : Part 1 and 2 : *Le Saint Siègre et la situation religieuse en Pologne et dans les Pays Baltes (1939-1941)*, 4 : *Le Saint Siègre et la guerre en Europe (juin 1940 - juin 1941)*, 5 : *Le Saint Siègre et la guerre mondiale (juillet 1941 - octobre 1942)*, 6 : *Le Saint Siègre et les victimes de la guerre (mars 1939 - décembre 1940)*, 7 : *Le Saint Siègre et la guerre mondiale*

quite concerned about religious conditions in Soviet Russia and about the possibility that the Western Allies might for various reasons abet the expansion of Communist influence in Europe.⁸ De Gaulle was a staunch Catholic and the Holy See counted upon him to protect Catholic interests in Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, where the Red Army was marching.

An extremely critical source for this thesis is Winston Churchill's classic six-volume *History of World War II*, which stands as a model for writing history and memoirs. This author will primarily use the final volume of Churchill's work titled *Triumph and Tragedy*.⁹ Of course, Churchill, like de Gaulle, had a selective memory and his own agenda, which did not necessarily include an objective evaluation of de Gaulle's visit to Stalin. Nonetheless, Churchill's memoirs are remarkably accurate and informative.

(novembre 1942 - décembre 1943), 8 : *Le Saint Siège et les victimes de la guerre (janvier 1941 - décembre 1942)*, Citta del Vaticano : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1967-74). This study found vols 5 and 7 to be most useful and the documents are cited henceforth as *Actes et Documents*.

⁸ On the issue of the Vatican's concern about the naiveté of the West, see Dennis J. Dunn, *The Catholic Church and Russia: Popes, Patriarchs, Tsars and Commissars* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishers, LTD, 2004), 114-18. Also see Dennis J. Dunn, *The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government, 1939-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 90-91.

⁹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953).

Another key source for this study is the correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill during World War II, which can be found in Warren Kimball's work titled *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*.¹⁰ It is rich in commentary and insight regarding de Gaulle's personality and trip to Moscow, as well as documenting the ever apparent hostility between de Gaulle, Churchill, and Roosevelt. The correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill abounds with examples of how the two leaders felt about France's exiled ruler.

The Foreign Relations Papers of the United States are also essential documentation for this study. They contain observations by American observers and representatives in Moscow and elsewhere in the Soviet Union regarding De Gaulle and Stalin.

The recollections of some Soviet officials and military leaders have also been published in English and these books are also useful in providing background to de Gaulle's visit and the nature and course of Soviet foreign policy regarding the era of World War II.

All told though, there is not a surfeit of material or analysis of de Gaulle's dramatic visit to Moscow in

¹⁰ Warren F. Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

November 1944. This thesis will attempt to fill part of the void in scholarship relating to de Gaulle's Moscow visit.

CHAPTER II

CHARLES DE GAULLE BEFORE MOSCOW

Charles de Gaulle was born on November 22, 1890, in Lille, France. De Gaulle's father was a professor of philosophy and literature and eventually the headmaster of a Jesuit school named the College of the Immaculate Conception.¹ De Gaulle inherited his father's intellectual curiosity, Gaullic proclivity for precision, and leadership ability. He also took from his father, mother, and the Jesuits a strong attachment and commitment to Catholicism, which formed his character and guided his actions. By any standard, he was a virtuous man who kept his word, acted ethically, and openly confronted injustice. He also developed, probably from his parents, but certainly from his Catholic background and the French monarchical tradition, a patent reverence for hierarchy. He was an elitist who respected tradition, aristocratic values, noblesse oblige, and nobility of birth. Arrogance, austerity, and formality were natural traits for him, and

¹ Crozier, 19.

he carried his huge body, over six feet five inches, with aristocratic bearing and some measure of intimidation.

In contrast to his father, de Gaulle exhibited a great interest in military matters and the French martial tradition. He attended l'École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr, the French equivalent of West Point, where he graduated thirteenth in his class as a second lieutenant in 1912.¹² He then joined an infantry regiment commanded by Henri-Philippe Pétain in 1913.¹³

When World War I started in August 1914, De Gaulle showed great courage on the battlefield and was wounded twice before October but returned to the campaign after his wounds healed. He was promoted to the rank of captain in February 1915.¹⁴ During the battle of Verdun in 1916, he was wounded again and captured by the German forces. For the next thirty-two months de Gaulle was held in several prisoner of war camps and made five unsuccessful attempts to escape his captors.¹⁵ After the Armistice was signed in November 1918, de Gaulle was freed from prison and assigned to a Polish division being formed in France to support the

¹² Ibid, 26.

¹³ Ibid, 27.

¹⁴ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵ Ibid, 31.

new Polish government during the Russo-Polish war that broke out in 1920.¹⁶ For his effort, the Polish government awarded de Gaulle Poland's highest military honor, the *Virtuti Militari*.¹⁷ After the war, de Gaulle returned to his beloved France.

De Gaulle stayed busy during the inter-war years. Between the years of 1921 through 1933, de Gaulle's life developed much like any normal young officer. He became a lecturer at his alma mater, l'École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr in 1921 where he worked closely with Henri-Philippe Pétain, who became his close friend.¹⁸ De Gaulle married Yvonne Vendroux on April 7, 1921, and had his first son, Philippe, in December of the same year.¹⁹ In 1922, de Gaulle entered l'Ecole Supérieure, as was expected of the teaching staff of Saint-Cyr.²⁰ De Gaulle, the teacher, thus became a student once again.

From the beginning, de Gaulle found himself in conflict with the principal of l'Ecole Supérieure. De Gaulle was convinced that the real lesson of World War I

¹⁶ Ibid, 34.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁹ Ibid., 37.

²⁰ Ibid.

was that the next great battle would be fought with tanks and a high degree of mechanization.²¹ He was appointed the commander of the "Blue Uniforms" at l'Ecole where in war games he took his enemy by surprise, consequently winning the battle.²² The only problem with his victory was that the commander of the opposing force was the principal's protégé.²³ This did not sit well with the man who was ultimately in charge of de Galle's final grade. As a result of this personal conflict, de Gaulle graduated from the school in 1924 with the grade of "assez bien," a second class rank.²⁴ A first class ranking would have meant that he would have been transferred to the Central Command, or Planning Bureau, but instead de Gaulle found himself in the Fourth Bureau, which was the Supply Office, in 1924.²⁵

De Gaulle did not enjoy his post by any means, but it did give him time to study the German people who were still France's principal enemy and rewrite the notes that he kept during his captivity during World War I. The outcome of his work became de Gaulle's first book, *La Discorde Chez*

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

l'Ennemi, which was published in late 1924.²⁶ De Gaulle continued at the Transport and Supply Office until his long-time friend, Marshall Pétain from l'Ecole Superieur de Guerre called upon him.²⁷ Marshall Pétain appointed him to his personal staff in October 1925.²⁸ By this time, Pétain was the Vice-President of the Superior Council of War and inspector-general of the army.²⁹ De Gaulle's major role was to provide historic justification for the theories of static defense. Although de Gaulle personally hated a static defense, he performed his duty with his usual alacrity, and within a month, his findings were published in the December issue of *La Revue de la Militaire française*.³⁰

Pétain was pleased and rewarded de Gaulle with a pleasant surprise. As previously mentioned, de Gaulle left his beloved École de Geurre with a less than perfect grade. Pétain arranged for de Gaulle to go back to the school and deliver a series of lectures.³¹ De Gaulle was more than

²⁶ Charles de Gaulle, *La Discorde Chez l'Ennemi* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1924).

²⁷ Crozier, 44.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 45.

³¹ Ibid., 46.

willing to do so. He gave a series of three lectures dealing with military strategies and tank warfare at the school, astonishing his old professors and students alike with his perspicacity and knowledge of mechanized warfare. His reputation as a military planner and strategist grew immensely, much to the chagrin of some military leaders who saw him as a young Turk and parvenu.

De Gaulle still had something missing in his life. He desperately wanted to ascend the ranks of the French military. His dream finally came true in the latter part of 1926.³² De Gaulle's name was put up for promotion, but the military bureaucracy sat on the request for nearly ten months.³³ Finally, Captain de Gaulle was promoted to major in the French army in 1927.³⁴ In December of 1927, he was put in charge of the 19th Battalion of Light Infantry, which consisted of 700 men and was stationed in Trier, Germany.³⁵ De Gaulle remained with his men in Germany until the end of 1929. Again, de Gaulle had aspirations of advancing his

³² Ibid., 50.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

rank, but he would have to wait until May of 1940 after the battle of Montcornet for that honor.³⁶

De Gaulle remained in Trier until the end of 1929. His statutory two-year post drew to an end. De Gaulle did not like the time he spent in Trier and could not wait to leave his post. His wish was granted in 1929 when his application for a transfer to join the French forces in the Near East was approved without question.³⁷ De Gaulle's transfer was in no doubt another favor given to him by Pétain. De Gaulle was immediately transferred to Beirut to join the French forces in the Levant, or Middle East, as the region is known as today. He spent nearly two years in the Near East in places such as Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo and Jerusalem.³⁸ De Gaulle did not care for the Middle East very much. He felt that the area was "un-French" and foreign.³⁹ Near the end of 1931, de Gaulle returned to Paris and began preparing another book for the press. *Le Fil de l'Épée* was published in 1932 and was a scant 160 pages.⁴⁰ The book was de Gaulle's work on the

³⁶ Ibid., 93.

³⁷ Ibid., 54.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁴⁰ Charles de Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'épée* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1932).

defining qualities of leadership and the circumstances in which duty must be exercised.⁴¹

De Gaulle remained in Paris between 1932 and 1934. A prolific writer, he published his next book, *Vers l'Armée de Métier* in May 1934.⁴² The book, only 40 pages longer than his last work, centered on de Gaulle's belief that the French army needed an overhaul in military planning and leadership. The book blatantly defied all previous French military thinking and based its argument partly on France's geography. De Gaulle pointed out in the book that other countries, such as America and Great Britain, have oceans to protect them. Yes, France did have the mountain ranges of the Alps and Pyrenees, but Paris was wide open to an enemy's advance.⁴³ De Gaulle argued that what France needed was to create a small professional army of 100,000 men grouped in six mobile armored divisions.⁴⁴ De Gaulle's theories were immediately debated in military circles and among politicians. The theories brought him notoriety and respect, and he was promoted to colonel in 1937.

⁴¹ Crozier, 56.

⁴² Charles de Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier* (Beyrouth: Les Lettres Francais, 1943).

⁴³ Crozier, 63.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

De Gaulle's theories finally began to take hold in the minds of some of France's military leaders in 1937-38, but it was not until after the Munich conference in September, 1938 that the French military leaders created two armored divisions on December 2, 1938.⁴⁵ The two divisions consisted of four battalions of tanks. De Gaulle was eventually appointed colonel of the 507th Tank Regiment at Metz in December 1938.⁴⁶ The promotion was a two-fold win for the French military elite. Not only did the French army promote the most vocal and knowledgeable person on tank warfare to the post, but it also got rid of its most vocal critic in Paris. De Gaulle also grated on the nerves of French political leaders in France, and his position in Paris gave him ample opportunity to criticize them. Now that he was promoted and moved to Metz, the thorn in their side was removed.

De Gaulle shined in his new position. He finally had the opportunity to actualize his theories and see if they in fact worked. His enthusiasm for tank maneuvers and rapid actions gave way to a new nickname for de Gaulle,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

"Colonel Motor," which was a lighthearted, yet accurate moniker.⁴⁷

De Gaulle, ever the prolific writer, began another book, eventually called *France et Son Armée* (France and Her Army). It was the story of his military experiences in Poland and of his view of French military strategies that he thought should be used in the future.⁴⁸ Like his previous books, he argued for the creation of a modern mechanized army with specialized armored divisions, which still found little enthusiasm among the French military elite. De Gaulle, however, gained some support in military circles due to his success while commanding the French armored divisions.

The book caused a break between De Gaulle and Pétain. Pétain accused de Gaulle of using work material gathered while he was under Pétain's orders between 1925 and 1927 without his expressed permission.⁴⁹ Pétain also accused de Gaulle of taking credit for ideas conceived by the staff of the French War College during de Gaulle's stint there in 1925-1927, including the ideas of Pétain himself.⁵⁰ De

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Charles de Gaulle, *La France et son armée* (Paris: Plon, 1938).

⁴⁹ Crozier, 77.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Gaulle dismissed Pétain's criticism as trite and self-serving. He soon lost respect for the vaunted World War I hero, and what had started as a dispute soon evolved into a permanent cleavage.

When World War II broke out in 1939, de Gaulle was named commander of the Fifth Army's tank force in Alsace.⁵¹ This appointment can be directly attributed to de Gaulle's writings, lectures, and knowledge about tank battalions, and the French government's recognition that a mechanized army was indeed needed. De Gaulle quickly became frustrated with the army's inability to coordinate infantry, tank, and air support during large battles. When the German army broke through the French defenses at Sedan, de Gaulle was given command of the recently formed Fourth Armored Division. He attacked the German forces at Montcornet on May 17, 1940, but had little impact on the German's advance because he again lacked support from the air.⁵²

As the German advance continued on all fronts, the end of French independence loomed on the horizon. On June 5, 1940, the French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, appointed de

⁵¹ Crozier, 36.

⁵² Ibid.

Gaulle the minister of war.⁵³ De Gaulle immediately departed for London to coordinate military plans with France's main ally.

On June 16, shortly after de Gaulle's return to France, Pétain overthrew Reynaud and formed a government, eventually called Vichy France, which sought an armistice with the Nazis. France officially capitulated on June 22, 1940. De Gaulle fled to London because he was afraid of being arrested by the new French leadership.⁵⁴ Thus began Charles de Gaulle's exile in England that lasted until the summer of 1944.

In London, De Gaulle soon assumed leadership of the French resistance and the so-called Free French Forces that were not under Vichy or German control. Supported by the British government and Winston Churchill, de Gaulle began radio broadcasts to France to rally his countrymen against the German occupiers. He also began to build up the Free French Army from troops stationed in the French colonies that were not yet under German control.

De Gaulle's Free French government quickly moved to lay claim to and to contest Vichy France's right to control French military, physical, and territorial assets abroad.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Not only did it move in to French North Africa, but it also took over French positions in the Levant, particularly Lebanon and Syria in 1941. The Middle East was particularly important because it moved de Gaulle's government closer to the Soviet Union and to a position where it could exercise some influence based upon France's traditional involvement in the region and thus gain some respect and credibility from the Russians, English, and Americans. De Gaulle's representative in the Levant was General Georges Catroux, with whom the Vatican dealt.⁵⁵

The army that de Gaulle created answered directly to the British High Command.⁵⁶ This arrangement irritated the proud Frenchman, and, during his entire time in London, his relationship with the British leaders was strained.

In November, 1942 American and British forces invaded French North Africa. They decided to use the Vichy French leaders whom they found there, namely Admiral Jean Darlan and General Henri Giraud, who soon became the main contact between the French in North Africa and the Americans and British.

⁵⁵ *Actes et Documents*, Vol. 5, 264-65.

⁵⁶ Biography Resource Center. *Charles de Gaulle*. Galenet. <http://80-www.galenet.com.libproxy.txstate.edu>.

On May 30, 1943 de Gaulle moved his headquarters to Algiers where he became the president of the French Committee of National Liberation. He and Giraud reached an agreement where Giraud recognized de Gaulle as the leader of France, but he kept his position as the head of the now Free French military forces in North Africa.⁵⁷ On September 9, 1944, after the D-Day invasion and the liberation of France, de Gaulle successfully moved his government from Algiers to Paris.⁵⁸

Upon his arrival in Paris, Charles de Gaulle set up a provisional government with himself as president. He also continued to command French forces against the German army. As president of the provisional government, de Gaulle promptly set about trying to establish diplomatic relations with the Allies. Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt were the focus of de Gaulle's attention, but it was Stalin who initiated the first meeting between the provisional government and the Allies. On November 24, 1944, he invited de Gaulle to visit him in Moscow.⁵⁹ The invitation was a surprise, but a welcome development. It was a

⁵⁷ *Actes et Documents*, Vol. 7, 359.

⁵⁸ Charles de Gaulle
<http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/charlesdegaulle.html>

⁵⁹ Crozier, 326.

surprise because De Gaulle was an ardent anti-Communist. De Gaulle had little contact with the Soviet government, although he had cooperated with the French Communist Party in the ongoing struggle against the Nazi occupation.⁶⁰ He also had a representative in Moscow since March, 1942. Roger Garreau was there as the representative of the Free French forces, although the Soviet government had not officially recognized the Free French movement as France's official regime.⁶¹ De Gaulle tried to get a representative to Moscow before then, but it proved to be too difficult. On August 2, 1941, Father Michel-Clovis Florent, O.P., the French pastor of Notre Dame Cathedral in Leningrad, was expelled from the Soviet Union on the grounds that he was a citizen of Vichy France, which was then a puppet of Nazi Germany. Father Florent made his way to Beirut via Teheran and once he arrived he declared himself to be a supporter of de Gaulle's Free French government. The Papal nuncio in Istanbul, Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, telegraphed the Vatican that the priest was prepared to go to Moscow as the representative of the Free French government of General de Gaulle and that he, Roncalli,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 253.

⁶¹ For more information on Roger Garreau see Dunn, 1977, p 94, and *Actes et Documents*, vol. 5, p 637-38.

supported the move. The Vatican contemplated the consequences and ultimately concluded that such a bold political move would compromise its official position of neutrality, so it refused permission for Florent and Roncalli's proposal.⁶²

Stalin's invitation was a welcome development because it elevated his new government in international prestige and gave him a potential opportunity to gain access to the discussions of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin.

De Gaulle knew that Stalin had his own reasons for inviting him, mainly the endorsement of Soviet plans for Poland, but a meeting with Stalin also served de Gaulle's purposes.⁶³ The motives for de Gaulle wanting to visit Stalin were many, but certainly one of them was to persuade Stalin to leave France alone.⁶⁴ The invitation came at a pivotal time in France where the Communists were maneuvering to start a revolution. The Communist Party as a whole was intensifying its recruitment campaign for "patriotic militias," and France was ripe for the picking.⁶⁵

⁶² *Actes et Documents*, vol. 5, 333.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The Vichy French and German governments claimed for propaganda purposes that de Gaulle was a puppet of the Communists.⁶⁶

De Gaulle anticipated, too, that a visit to Moscow might irritate Churchill and Roosevelt and that in itself might give De Gaulle some leverage with Washington and London.⁶⁷ De Gaulle also knew that the British and the Americans were still denying France the status of being a great power. He yearned for this recognition. De Gaulle hoped that the signing of a treaty with Stalin would elevate France and his government on the international stage.⁶⁸

De Gaulle was also not unmindful of the tradition of French diplomacy of working with Russia to restrain Germany and of splitting alliances to boost French interests. He was a student of history, and he knew how to arrange alliances based upon common interests in the tradition of such French leaders as Richelieu, Mazarin, Talleyrand, and Napoleon. The French newspaper, Le Figaro, which had close ties to de Gaulle, reported that "General de Gaulle's and

⁶⁶ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 26 November 1944, Germany ES in French, (ii-iii).

⁶⁷ Ibid., 334.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 341.

Bidault's visit to Moscow will tighten our bonds with the Russian nation and will thus restart France's foreign policy on traditional lines."⁶⁹ In any event, the invitation and visit accorded him standing at a time when French fortunes were low.

De Gaulle took only four trusted advisors on the trip to Moscow. The key companion was his chief advisor, Georges Bidault. Bidault was born in 1899 in Moulins, France. He served as a decorated resistance fighter during World War II against the German invading forces.⁷⁰ In 1943 he was captured by the Germans. The Germans released him when he promised he would not join the underground French resistance forces. The Germans were in a generous mood in order to try to win popular support for the Vichy government and their own occupation. However, Bidault broke his promise and not only joined the French underground movement, but also became the leader of the main resistance army, the National Council of Resistance in France.⁷¹ In 1944 when the provisional government was set up, de Gaulle appointed Bidault his foreign minister.

⁶⁹ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 26 November, 1944. 2AC4 French Telegraph Service.

⁷⁰ Biography Resource Center. *Georges Bidault*. Galenet. <http://80-www.galenet.com.libproxy.txstate.edu>

⁷¹ Ibid.

Another critical member of de Gaulle's delegation was Alphonse Pierre Juin. He was born in Algeria in 1888, became a highly respected military leader, and was a divisional commander of French forces in North Africa in 1940 when France fell to the Germans⁷² Juin, too, was taken prisoner by the Nazis and not released from his incarceration until 1941.⁷³ Like Bidault, he, too, was allowed to leave prison upon the condition that he not take up arms against the German forces. Juin agreed to the German terms, but quickly made contact with the resistance. He also kept open a channel to the Vichy government in order to feed information from inside the occupation to the resistance. The government named him commander-in-chief of the French forces in North Africa in 1942, but he clearly sided with the resistance and soon fell in with General de Gaulle's French Committee of National Liberation. In 1943 de Gaulle named Juin commander-in-chief of French forces in North Africa and at the time of the Moscow trip, he was chief of General Staff of National Defenses.

⁷² Biography Resource Center. *Alphonse Juin*. H.W. Wilson Web. <http://80-vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.libproxy.txstate.edu>

⁷³ Ibid.

The third advisor de Gaulle whom brought with him was General Gaston Palewski.⁷⁴ Palewski was born in March 1901 in Paris. After attending l'Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques, l'Ecole du Louvre, and, finally, Oxford University, Palewski devoted himself to a life of public service. He was named the Chief of Staff of Paul Reynaud's cabinet from 1928 until 1939, became the attaché from the French delegation during a disarmament conference in Geneva, and was also named the head of French political affairs during the Free French movement in 1940.⁷⁵ He commanded the French forces in East Africa from 1941 until 1942. De Gaulle named Palewski his cabinet director in 1942.⁷⁶ The final member of the French mission was Maurice Dejean, the deputy foreign minister.⁷⁷

De Gaulle's visit to Moscow was publicly announced to the French Consultative Assembly on November 21, 1944, in a speech delivered by Georges Bidault.⁷⁸ The French government was in need of recognition in the international arena. The French leadership was well aware that an

⁷⁴ Crozier, 334.

⁷⁵ www.charles-de-gaulle.org/article.php3?id_article=840

⁷⁶ Crozier, 210.

⁷⁷ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 27 novembre 1944, i.

⁷⁸ John Young, "Stalin and de Gaulle," *History Today*, June 1990, 20.

alliance with the Soviet Union would be very popular among the people of France, no matter what political view the Soviets subscribed to.⁷⁹ French public opinion, as measured by the French Consultative Assembly, strongly endorsed de Gaulle's visit to Moscow for all the reasons that de Gaulle himself held, but particularly because it might lead to an alliance with Moscow that would provide France a guarantee against future German aggression.⁸⁰ In addition, as outlined above, the meeting could help re-establish the international position of France in the world arena.⁸¹

The Soviet Union appeared to be France's only hope for international recognition in 1944 because the United States and Great Britain were reluctant to include France in their councils and plans.⁸² France remained estranged from the United States because of disagreements over the Versailles Treaty, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, the League of Nations, French fiscal and economic policy in the interwar period, and the French policy of appeasement. In addition, Roosevelt did not like de Gaulle's imperious personality

⁷⁹ A.W. DePorte, *De Gaulle's Foreign Policy, 1944-1946* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸² To be sure, the United States and England recognized the Free French government of de Gaulle as legitimate, but the French wanted more. They wanted to be accorded the status of a major power, and that accommodation the West was unwilling to grant.

and commitment to rebuild the French empire that had been destroyed by Japan and Germany. Roosevelt preferred to deal with General Henri Giraud, who was a rival of de Gaulle for leadership of the Free French. Roosevelt entered into secret talks with Giraud and planned to initiate relations with him instead of de Gaulle.⁸³ Roosevelt also accused de Gaulle of not being cooperative when it came to French liberation in correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill. "It appears that de Gaulle is performing in accordance with his previous record of lack of cooperation in our effort to liberate France, Roosevelt wrote Churchill."⁸⁴ The comment was Roosevelt's reaction to a letter sent to him by Churchill about de Gaulle's arrogant comportment during a meeting between the two leaders. In Roosevelt's eyes France represented a ruined country without an army.⁸⁵

France was also at odds with Great Britain for some of the same reasons, particularly France's traditional diplomacy of attempting to play England off against Germany and Russia, to involve England in continental affairs for

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Kimball, *Correspondence*, 173.

⁸⁵ Raoul Aglion, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt: La France Libre aux États-Unis*, (Paris : Plon, 1984), 168.

purposes of advancing French diplomatic and economic interests, and to check and counter England's influence on the continent. In addition, Churchill did not like de Gaulle's arrogance and apparent lack of gratitude for British support in promoting de Gaulle as the leader of a reviving France and in rebuilding France as a power in Europe. Churchill was not against the re-creation of the French empire, after all he planned to revive the British empire, but he wanted France to be subservient to England, to follow England's lead, and to do nothing to upset the Grand Alliance, particularly the delicate relationship between Churchill and Stalin and the even more sensitive nexus among Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt.

Above all, Churchill was aware that British interests and re-establishment of Great Britain as a major power depended upon the continued engagement of The United States in European affairs. With Germany on the verge of defeat in 1944 and with the Soviet Union in the advantageous position for filling the vacuum in Europe that would develop with Germany's defeat, Churchill was anxious to keep the United States as an ally and to convince Roosevelt to be prepared to take steps to block Soviet hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe. Churchill did not want de Gaulle complicating that diplomatic play. On the other

hand, Churchill countenanced the resuscitation of France as an ally and power that could help balance Soviet hegemony if the Americans proved to be unwilling for whatever reason to take a strong stand against Moscow. Like Roosevelt, he preferred to work with General Giraud rather than de Gaulle.

It was under these circumstances that De Gaulle traveled to Moscow. De Gaulle looked to the Soviets for a friendly alliance, which would recognize the French Provisional government with full diplomatic privileges.⁸⁶ The United States and Great Britain had ties to De Gaulle's government, after all they liberated Paris and France, but they also tried to maintain links with Pétain and other French leaders like Giraud, which angered de Gaulle immensely. De Gaulle wanted to be recognized as the only spokesman for France and he counted upon Stalin to help him establish that precedent.⁸⁷ He knew that Stalin had his own agenda and he did not allow the Russian invitation to cloud his views of Stalin or Soviet politics. He also blamed

⁸⁶ Young, "Stalin and de Gaulle," 22.

⁸⁷ The French Telegraph Service reported that Germany and an alliance between France and the USSR were likely going to be the main topics of conversation between de Gaulle and Stalin. B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 27 November 1944, ii.

Stalin, as well as Roosevelt and Churchill, for leaving France out of the wartime summits.⁸⁸

As De Gaulle appreciated, Stalin did indeed have an agenda. The Soviet government cared little about French or De Gaulle's interests, but it was interested in advancing the Communist cause, and an alliance with France might support that expansion.⁸⁹ The Soviets wanted to create strong Communist parties in every state, and Stalin saw the opportunity to build a powerful French Communist Party through a strong tie with de Gaulle's government, even though de Gaulle was an ardent anti-Communist. De Gaulle was popular and he had a proven track record of rallying the French people and attracting Allied support. He was also a pragmatic man who readily accepted Communist support against the Nazi occupation. He also irritated both Roosevelt and Churchill, and for Stalin that trait in and of itself was sufficient reason to fashion an alliance.⁹⁰ Although Stalin's Red Army was marching across Eastern Europe, he was not an intimate of Churchill and Roosevelt—mainly because he did not want to be close to capitalist leaders or so friendly that it might lead his bedfellows to

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ DePorte, 76.

⁹⁰ Ulam, 358.

assume that he would make compromises, but still he did not like being the odd one out in the troika that dominated the anti-Nazi forces. He knew Roosevelt and Churchill had so much in common that they were virtually an unbreakable tandem. It would be advantageous for Stalin to hold De Gaulle in the wings as a friend and ally who might be tapped to help balance the British and American duo. The Soviets also understood the advantage of having a state friendly to Soviet interests, if not Communist values, as well as a state ardently against the Nazis.⁹¹

⁹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER III

DE GAULLE IN MOSCOW

On November 26, 1944, Charles de Gaulle and his diplomatic entourage arrived in Baku, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, after making the long and arduous journey through Allied-occupied Iran. The date of the visit was arranged by the French with Soviet concurrence. The Red Army saluted De Gaulle upon his arrival in Baku with a magnificent display of marching troops. He described the event in his memoirs as follows: "The Soviets honored our delegation with a splendid detachment of troop, bayonets down, chests out, steps thundering as they were marching by."¹

After a brief rest, the French delegation headed for Moscow on November 28. Normally the journey from Baku to Moscow was made by plane, but inclement weather made a flight hazardous, so the French made the trip in a train that Stalin sent from Moscow called the "Grand Duke." The

¹ De Gulle, *Salut*. 71.

trip took four days. The train was named for Grand Duke Nicholas, who used the train during World War I as a means of traveling behind the front lines.⁹³

In this writer's opinion, the train was a metaphor for three realities. It was a sign that the leaders of the Soviet Union were not entirely free of Russian tradition and the erstwhile Tsarist government. If they represented something entirely new and wished to have no connection with the former Romanov dynasty, they would have never retained and maintained a train used by Grand Duke Nicholas and called it the "Grand Duke." Secondly, it was an indication of Stalin's sense of history and shrewdness in handling a tough French general who admired the monarchical tradition and the old alliance between France and Russia. Stalin was the ultimate chess player and practitioner of realpolitik within the context of his ideological parameters, and he was willing to use the symbols of the hated ancien regime to entice or ensnare a man who stood for French traditional values such as the aristocracy and monarchy. Finally, the train reflected the relative priority of a meeting with De Gaulle for Stalin. To be sure, it was important, but if it were truly crucial, Stalin could have waited for the weather to clear and then

⁹³ Ibid., 72

had De Gaulle flown to Moscow rather than have him spend four days on a train traveling through the ravaged countryside of the western Soviet Union.

At any rate, de Gaulle took the train, but he did not waste his time. When the train reached Stalingrad, he asked to stop there as a gesture of respect to the Russian armies who won the most decisive victory for Soviet Russia in World War II.⁹⁴ His Soviet guides complied with his wish. Complete destruction and ruin greeted de Gaulle and his delegation in Stalingrad, but de Gaulle was impressed with the city's spirit. Even though the city lay in ruins, a great number of people were clearing debris from the streets and beginning the process of reconstruction. De Gaulle visited a bombed-out iron factory where workers had already patched a furnace, and iron ore was being smelted.⁹⁵ He also visited a completely rebuilt and re-equipped tank factory.⁹⁶ The delegation also went into many shops where de Gaulle exchanged pleasantries with the shopkeepers.

De Gaulle gave the city of Stalingrad the Sword of Honor, a gift from France for the city's bravery and commitment to the war effort. The French press hailed de

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Gaulle as the "first Allied chief" to visit Stalingrad.⁹⁷ After de Gaulle presented his gift, the delegation attended a lavish banquet prepared in its honor. De Gaulle and the other guests then re-boarded the Grand Duke for Moscow.⁹⁸

The French delegation finally reached Moscow on Saturday, December 2, 1944.⁹⁹ Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov was the first person to welcome the French leaders at the Moscow train station. He choreographed the normal pomp and circumstance that an arrival of this significance commanded, including bows and kowtows by a host of commissars, lesser officials, and generals. Other prominent officials sent to welcome the French delegation at Kursak station were Dr. Stefan Kedrychowski, the acting Moscow representative of the acting Polish Committee of National Liberation, Rev. Leopold Braun, the only American-born Catholic priest in

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⁹⁷ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 2 December 1944, vii.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 73

⁹⁹ Vichy French government news outlets called de Gaulle a traitor who was kneeling before Stalin. B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 1 December 1944, ii.

On de Gaulle's arrival see B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 2 December 1944, v.

For Soviet coverage of de Gaulle's arrival, see B.B.C. Monitoring Service 2 December 1944, vii.

Moscow, and Roger Garreau, the French Committee of National Liberation delegate to the U.S.S.R.¹⁰⁰

De Gaulle started off on the wrong foot with Stalin. The French leader refused to stay in the hotel that the Soviets had arranged for him and his entourage because he feared that the rooms were bugged. Instead, he decided to stay in the French embassy, even though the German artillery and bombs damaged the building causing it to be cold and uncomfortable. The other members of the delegation stayed at the assigned hotel. De Gaulle obviously did not care if their rooms were wired. He alone was the key speaker and decision maker.

After the ceremonial greeting, De Gaulle went immediately to his lodgings at the French embassy, while Bidault and Juin went to the separate accommodations that the Soviet government had arranged for them.¹⁰¹ Bidault and Juin held a series of meetings with Soviet generals and other officials, but nothing critical was decided. The important meeting would be between de Gaulle and Stalin, and that had to wait until de Gaulle was rested and Stalin was ready.

¹⁰⁰ W. H. Lawrence, "De Gaulle Visits Stalin in Moscow; Expect Talks to Have Wide Range," *The New York Times*, 3 December 1944, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ De Gaulle, *Salut*, 73.

The first meeting of de Gaulle and Stalin took place in the evening of December 2nd.¹⁰² The meeting lasted over fifteen hours.¹⁰³ De Gaulle described Stalin as a man who "was possessed by the will to power... accustomed by a life of machination to disguise his features as well as his inmost soul...to see in each man an obstacle or a threat, he was all strategy."¹⁰⁴ The two leaders exchanged the normal courtesies heads of state often exchange and then went straight to work.

W. Averell Harriman, the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union who returned to Moscow from Washington D.C. on December 5, 1944, noted in his memoirs that "Stalin's attitude toward de Gaulle had changed abruptly, showing no trace of bitter hostility. There was no more ridicule, no suggestion that France must be made to pay for her collaboration with the Germans, no further talk about stripping away her colonies. Instead de Gaulle was received in Moscow with all the honors due an Allied head of state."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Crozier, 335.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*, (New York: Random House, 1975), 375.

De Gaulle remarked that "whether talking or silent, Stalin kept his eyes lowered and doodled with his pencil."¹⁰⁶ The two leaders approached the subject of Germany right away. Both acknowledged that the Reich's days were numbered and that Germany would soon capitulate under the severe blows of the Allied armies. Stalin and de Gaulle both agreed on the necessity of neutralizing any future German threat.¹⁰⁷ The two leaders then broached the subject of a French and Russian pact directed against future German aggression. It was agreed that Bidault and Molotov would begin the work of writing the treaty.

Over the next week they met continuously and tried to hammer out a treaty. De Gaulle and evidently Stalin were kept abreast of the negotiations and constantly offered direction and advice. However, the details of the pact became increasingly difficult to iron out because the French and Soviets had different visions for the treaty. These differences allowed the French to understand Soviet strategy and aims. The Soviets tried to gain an advantage over the French by bringing up the question of governmental legitimacy and authority to sign treaties. The French government, of course, was provisional and the Soviets had

¹⁰⁶ De Gaulle, *Salut*, 74.

¹⁰⁷ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 4 December 1944, 11.

every right to question its legitimacy, but since Moscow had invited de Gaulle to the meeting, thus implicitly recognizing the provisional government as legitimate, it was clear that raising the issue of legitimacy now was simply a Soviet ploy to put de Gaulle on the defensive and to gain a psychological advantage for Stalin. De Gaulle, however, was unmoved. He was supremely confident that he represented France and he gave no quarter to Stalin on the issue of psychological advantage.

After the legitimacy issue was dismissed, the French and Russian negotiators Bidault, Molotov, de Gaulle, and Stalin discussed numerous issues, but the conversation kept returning to one topic - Poland. This topic was the focus of Stalin and de Gaulle's meeting on December 6, 1944.¹⁰⁸ The French had no problem with moving Poland's border into eastern Germany, to the so-called Oder-Neisse line. They were also willing to accept the advance of the Soviet border into eastern Poland, to the soi-disant Curzon line, which was really the border worked out by the Nazis and Soviets in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact of 1939, the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop line. The real

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 75.

problem was the nature and composition of the new Polish government.

The Polish territory had always been a vital area for Russia as indeed Russia had been for Poland. Poland and Russia were neighbors, but their relationship over the centuries had traditionally been strained. The issue of Poland can be seen as one of balance of power. Russia wanted to be insulated from attacks from the west, and therefore needed a Soviet-friendly neighbor on its western border.¹⁰⁹ From the late fourteenth century to the late eighteenth century Poland or, as it was then called, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, extended from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and included much of modern day Ukraine and Belarus. In 1772, 1793, and 1795 Russia with Prussia and Austria partitioned Poland out of existence. Russia annexed most of the eastern part of Poland, including Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, and regions that were solidly populated by ethnic Poles. After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the Congress of Vienna awarded Russia control of what was then called the Kingdom of Poland, which included central Poland and its capital city of Warsaw. Poland, in other words, was an occupied and divided country. Since the Russians controlled most of the

¹⁰⁹ "Abroad," *The New York Times*, 3 December 1944, p. E1.

Poles and pursued policies that blatantly discriminated against the Poles in education, employment, and religion, it was not surprisingly that the Poles focused on the Russians as their enemy, tormentor, and *bête noir*. The Austrians and Prussians also controlled some Polish lands, but they did not violently persecute the Poles, and the Austrians were quite willing to extend significant cultural and religious liberties to the Poles. For the Poles, Russia was the repressor and persecutor—the great Moloch that crushed and oppressed the Polish nature and culture.

For the Russians, the Polish issue was a source of great pain, and was apparent to everyone involved. Stafford Cripps, the British ambassador to Russia, remarked that "the hostility of Poland to Russia, largely due to the fear of Sovietisation, has its reciprocal in the attitude of Russia to Poland, which is now in evidence."¹¹⁰ The Poles were unhappy and rebellious. It is for these reasons the Poles remained a security threat for the Russians. The Russians wanted to control the Polish lands because they bordered the western side of the Russian empire. Controlling them increased Russian security against an invasion from the West. For centuries Russia had

¹¹⁰ Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps, A Biography*, (London: Heinemann, 1949), 180.

experienced Western invasions from the Poles, Lithuanians, Swedes, Germans, Austrians, and French. To prevent future invasions, the Russians wanted authority and control over Polish lands. What they did not want specifically was jurisdiction over Poles. They wanted domination over Ukrainians and Belorussians who had been within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth because these Eastern Slavic peoples shared to some degree ethnicity, language, and religion with the Russians. But the Poles were largely Roman Catholic, which was always viewed by the Russians to be a rival of Russian Orthodoxy and an inveterate opponent of the Russian state and culture. In addition, the Poles had supported the expansion of Catholicism among the East Slavic peoples of Ukraine and Belarus through the creation an East Slavic Catholic rite called the Uniate Rite. This rite appeared to be Orthodox, and it largely was, except that its adherents accepted the Pope as the leader of their church. For the Russians, this development was an intolerable fifth column that Westerners, including the Poles, were exploiting to undermine and break asunder Orthodox unity and solidarity.

The Poles and Russians had a history of animosity. They eyed one another suspiciously and each considered the other to be an implacable enemy. However, by the time of

World War II, much had changed. The Tsarist government of Russia fell from power in 1917 and Poland declared its independence from Russia at the same time. A Communist government that preached revolution and expansion replaced the old Tsarist regime. The Communists had Poland in their sights. The Poles, however, struck first when they declared war against the new Soviet government in 1920. The French backed the Poles. The treaty of Riga ended the conflict in 1921. Poland kept its independence and gained small parts of western Ukraine and Belarus from the new Soviet government, which officially changed its name to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922. Relations between Warsaw and Moscow remained strained for the rest of the interwar period.

In 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed a non-aggression pact in which they agreed to partition Poland—for the fourth time. In September of that year, Poland became the victim of Nazi and Soviet aggression. It was split and occupied by the Nazis and Communists. The Poles launched a massive resistance effort called the Home Army that wreaked havoc among the occupiers.

The Soviet occupation, however, ended abruptly when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. The Poles then warily allied with the Soviets against the Nazis.

They were also allied with England and, after Pearl Harbor in December 1941, with the United States.

By 1944 the Soviet Red Army was moving westward into Poland against the Nazis. Stalin still wanted to gain control of Poland. The issue, however, was sensitive. Poland had been victimized and deserved justice, not a Soviet occupation, and was also backed by the United States and England—two powers that Stalin could not yet afford to alienate.

The visit of de Gaulle to Moscow was part of Stalin's initiative to isolate, marginalize, and discourage the Poles. Stalin wanted de Gaulle to endorse a Soviet puppet regime called the Lublin government in Poland. De Gaulle, however, insisted that the Polish state be free and independent, provided that the state was friendly to French and Russian interests. De Gaulle insisted that Poland, from the Curzon line in the east and to the Oder-Neisse line in the west, be a truly independent state with the right to choose freely its government.¹¹¹ Stalin fervently disagreed with de Gaulle. "Poland," Stalin told de Gaulle in their December 6th meeting, "has always served as a corridor for the Germans to attack Russia. This corridor

¹¹¹ Ibid., 79.

must be closed off, and closed off by Poland herself."¹¹² Russia, he continued "had taken a major turn" in regards to the Polish nation, which had for centuries been Russia's enemy and which now the Russians regarded as a friend because of the proposed new Lublin government.

Stalin also declared that the Polish territory should not be governed by any of the "London Poles." He attacked and disparaged the London Poles as cowardly and fractious. With breathtaking cynicism, he criticized them for not being democrats. In contrast, Stalin argued that the "Lublin Committee," formed under Soviet guidance, was democratic, representative, and courageous. Stalin claimed that the Lublin provisional government should be at the heart of Poland's new government because it was in the field fighting for Poland and it was the government that the Poles who were in Poland were choosing. "The Poles," Stalin stressed, "do not see the purpose of the reactionary government in London and the Anders army. On the contrary, they recognize and respect the presence and the action of the 'Committee of National Liberation' and the troops of General Berling."¹¹³

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 80.

When de Gaulle refused to endorse the Lublin puppet government, Stalin tried another approach. He explained to de Gaulle that the Lublin government was already in place and was carrying out needed agrarian reforms in Poland, mainly the redistribution of land belonging to émigrés to local farmers.

Again, de Gaulle did not budge under Stalin's constant pressure. Eventually de Gaulle remarked, "I am taking account of your position, but I must repeat that the future government of Poland is the business of the Polish people and that the latter must be able to express themselves by universal suffrage."¹¹⁴ Stalin, who was not used to people who disagreed with him, replied that the leaders would understand each other eventually.¹¹⁵

De Gaulle then turned the discussion to the Balkan states. Stalin replied that Bulgaria, after accepting the Allied armistice conditions, would be able to keep its independence.¹¹⁶ Stalin further stated that Bulgaria would be let off without facing the punishment that it deserved. The same fate would befall Romania, Stalin continued. As

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 81.

for Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Greece, their fate, according to Stalin, was yet to be decided because the Red Army had not yet reached these states.¹¹⁷

De Gaulle was unaware of the fact that Churchill and Stalin had decided in November 1944 to divide the Balkan States into spheres of Russian and Western control. Ninety percent of Romania would be controlled by Russia, and the remainder would be controlled by Britain.¹¹⁸ Ninety percent of Greece was to be held by the British and Americans, with the remaining ten percent to go to Russia.¹¹⁹ Yugoslavia and Hungary would be equally split among the two factions with fifty percent going to the Russians and the other fifty percent administered by British and American forces.¹²⁰ Seventy-five percent of the Bulgarian state would be under Russian control with the last quarter to go to the Anglo-American forces.¹²¹ It became clear to de Gaulle that the "Soviets resolved to deal just as they

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Churchill, 227.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

chose with the states and territories occupied or about to be occupied by their forces."¹²²

Even though de Gaulle was not privy to the secret territorial protocol that Churchill and Stalin had worked out in which the east European states were divided up according to this "percentage" allotted to the Soviet Union Great Britain and the United States, he was not swayed by Stalin's casual and non-committal judgments. De Gaulle feared that the political situation in Central and Balkan Europe would turn very oppressive very soon.¹²³

Stalin eventually brought up again the possibility of an alliance with France. Stalin told de Gaulle that the British prime minister sent a telegram to Stalin telling him that the British did support the signing of a security pact between the Soviet Union, France, and Great Britain. Once Roosevelt was told that Churchill wanted to participate in a tripartite agreement, he advised Churchill that it would not be a good idea for Britain to enter into it because a treaty of this nature would be a competitor

¹²² De Gaulle, *Salut*, 82.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 83. It should be noted that the United States was not involved in the division of Eastern Europe and did not endorse the division when it was finally informed of what Stalin and Churchill had worked out.

for the future of the United Nations.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the Soviet government, Stalin said, found this idea satisfactory and Stalin wanted to know de Gaulle's position.¹²⁵

De Gaulle was surprised and upset by the fact the Churchill addressed himself exclusively to Stalin and not to the French. De Gaulle replied that he thought that France and Soviet Russia should privately come to an agreement about the German threat because France and Soviet Russia were the states most directly threatened by Germany. England, de Gaulle continued, would take a lot of time to mobilize its military because the British Commonwealth of states approved military action at a very slow pace.¹²⁶ France, de Gaulle continued, was not yet ready to participate in a tripartite agreement.

On the other hand, de Gaulle thought that such an alliance would eventually be possible, but first had to be preceded with building blocks. De Gaulle envisioned the political act of alliance developing in three stages.¹²⁷ The first stage would be a Franco-Russian treaty providing

¹²⁴ André Béziat, *Franklin Roosevelt et La France (1939-1945) : La Diplomatie de l'Entêtement*, (Paris : Harmattan, 1997), 423.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 84.

initial security in Europe. Next would come an Anglo-Soviet pact with two degrees, the first being the actual Anglo-Soviet pact, and the second consisting of the same agreement between France and Great Britain. The third alliance would consist of a future United Nations pact, in which the United States would play a pivotal role.¹²⁸ After repeating the reasons that France was opposed to a tripartite alliance, de Gaulle told Stalin that the French delegation would be leaving on 10 December as previously arranged.

Stalin then agreed with de Gaulle that there was no reason that the Soviets and French should not conclude a pact between themselves. Stalin again reiterated that Soviet Russia had major concerns when it came to the question of Poland's new government, but the essential prescription for Poland was to be friendly to the Allies, be absolutely anti-German, and be based on the "Lublin Committee's" vision of Poland. Stalin then told de Gaulle that the Soviets would sign a pact with them if the French would publicly and officially recognize the "Lublin Committee" as the legitimate government of Poland and establish official ties with it.¹²⁹ Stalin was slipping his

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 83.

views of Poland onto the table in the hope that de Gaulle would acquiesce. To make it more palatable, he simultaneously told de Gaulle that he would telegraph Churchill and inform him that his project for a tripartite alliance was not acceptable.¹³⁰

De Gaulle expressed his gratitude for Stalin's willingness to reject Churchill's proposal and he declared that France was indeed ready to form a security pact with the U.S.S.R. with a few provisions. However, de Gaulle also made it clear that while he bore no ill will toward the "Lublin Committee," the French government would neither recognize it as the legitimate government of Poland nor deal with it officially. De Gaulle again reiterated what the French wanted in Poland by saying that "France and Russia have a common interest in seeing an independent, united, and genuine Poland, not an artificial Poland in which France, for her part, would have no confidence. In our eyes, the question of the future Polish government can be settled only by the Poles themselves after the nation's liberation and with the agreement of the four Allies."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 85.

De Gaulle knew what Stalin was trying to do. He saw a comparison between the previously exiled-French government and the Polish government-in-exile in London. He knew that Stalin wanted to create a puppet government that would do his bidding and extend another Communist tentacle in Europe. The Polish government-in-exile would never be a puppet of Moscow just as the French government-in-exile had never become a creature of some foreign power. The establishment of a free Polish state was critical in de Gaulle's view.

Stalin did not reply to de Gaulle's position. Instead he shrugged and said that he was happy that the French and Soviets were on the right path again.

De Gaulle's trip was also filled with pomp and circumstance. After all, Stalin wanted to impress the French and show off the achievement and power of Soviet Russia. Stalin took de Gaulle to a ballet at the Grand Theatre in Moscow and arranged for a gala to be thrown in de Gaulle's honor at Spiridonovka Palace.¹³² Many People's Commissars, high officials, generals, and all of their spouses attended the gala. De Gaulle was in Moscow for a very important meeting, but Stalin wasted no opportunity to

¹³² Ibid., 77.

put the Soviet state on display. The leaders also attended an evening of folksongs and dancing at the Red Army Hall.¹³³ They visited Sparrow Mountain where Napoleon first saw Moscow, inspected several factories, a military hospital, and a signal corps school.¹³⁴ De Gaulle and Stalin also visited a military museum in Moscow, and later toured the Moscow subway.¹³⁵ The duo was always accompanied by Molotov who served as their guide in Moscow. The only time when Molotov did not accompany the leaders was when de Gaulle requested to go to mass at St.-Louis-des-Français, the only Catholic church in Moscow.¹³⁶ For this occasion new guides were assigned to the French delegation.¹³⁷

While de Gaulle and Stalin discussed the large issues of war and alliance, Molotov and Bidault worked on a draft of the Franco-Soviet treaty. Molotov, trying to force Russia's aims upon the French, delivered a draft of the agreement that included French recognition of the Lublin Committee. It also added a news release announcing the

¹³³ Ibid., 76.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 77.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷Details of some of the sight seeing are also reproduced in B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 5 December 1944, i. and B.B.C. Monitoring Service 6 December 1944, i.

news to the world of the pact and of the recognition of the French government of the "Lublin Committee."

The French instantly objected and then rejected the agreement and the news communiqué.¹³⁸ De Gaulle attributed this underhanded, last ditch effort by the Soviets to associate France with Russia's Polish policy as a way for Stalin to gauge France's intentions and alertness. It was shortly after this meeting on December 8, 1944, the final scheduled meeting between de Gaulle and Stalin, when de Gaulle announced the French delegation's departure planned for December 10.¹³⁹

But Stalin was not yet finished. He invited the chief members of the "Lublin Committee" to the French Embassy to consult on "matters of intelligence" on December 9, 1944.¹⁴⁰ Stalin "invited" the members of the Lublin Committee, mainly the Prime Minister of the Lublin Committee, Boleslaw Bierut, and General Rola-Zymiersky who was the head of national defenses, without de Gaulle's knowledge or approval.¹⁴¹ De Gaulle was wary, but the situation was awkward, so he allowed the Communist Poles into the

¹³⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 85.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

embassy. The Communist Poles immediately expressed their deep and great gratitude to the French for their willingness to recognize their government.¹⁴²

The group then described its committee, policies, and war effort. However, de Gaulle was not impressed. He saw the Lublin delegates as henchmen of Stalin, and he refused to recognize them as the representatives of the Polish nation. He described the meeting as follows: "I expressed France's deepest sympathy for their country, which despite its ordeal had never ceased to take part, everywhere in Europe, in the struggle against Germany."¹⁴³ De Gaulle also stated "the French government's desire to see Poland reappear independent and friendly to France and her allies" and that it "hoped that the Poles would reach an agreement among themselves in order to re-establish their government."¹⁴⁴ De Gaulle summarized the Pole's reactions as follows "they replied in the most partisan tone."¹⁴⁵

As far as de Gaulle was concerned, the meeting with the Communist Poles was over. However, according to de Gaulle, the Lublin delegation refused to leave. They

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

demanded, just as the Soviets had done, that France sign on and recognize them as the legitimate government of Poland. De Gaulle, clearly frustrated with the delegation and its members, proposed a compromise, namely, that a French officer be assigned to their committee and the territory under their control.¹⁴⁶ His job would be to settle practical matters concerning French nationals and French prisoners of war in those parts of Poland under the Lublin Committee's control. De Gaulle also agreed to accept a member of the "Lublin Committee", who would be stationed in Paris. The Polish Communist delegation accepted this compromise, and de Gaulle said that he would appoint Captain Christian Fouchet as the French officer assigned to the Lublin Committee. However, De Gaulle then reiterated the French position of continuing to recognize the Polish government-in-London as the legitimate government of Poland with full diplomatic relations and rejecting any diplomatic accords with the Lublin Committee.¹⁴⁷ The Communist Poles were not happy, but they finally did vacate the embassy.

While Bidault and Molotov continued to negotiate the treaty, de Gaulle planned on December 6th or 7th to go to East Russia behind Soviet lines to honor some of his

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

countrymen and show the French flag on the eastern front in a gesture he called "diplomatic fencing."¹⁴⁸ There was a French regiment on the eastern front fighting along side the Red Army called the "Normandie Niemen" regiment. Most of the members of the Normandie Niemen regiment were aviators, and de Gaulle planned to fly to the front to decorate and encourage each and every one of them. However, bad weather hampered his plan. When Stalin was informed of de Gaulle's dilemma, he had the whole regiment transported to Moscow by rail, where they arrived on December 8.¹⁴⁹

After de Gaulle thanked Stalin for his intervention, he personally thanked and decorated each man serving the French army on the eastern front.¹⁵⁰ De Gaulle also decorated the Russian officers and generals who came up from the front for the occasion. De Gaulle's purpose was threefold. The first and obvious reason that de Gaulle took the time to honor the regiment was because he wanted to do just that—honor the French troops fighting alongside the Russians. Secondly, he saw this experience as a way to show the legitimacy and power, however pusillanimous, of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 87.

¹⁴⁹ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 7 December 1944, iv. 8 December 1944, iii. 9 December 1944, iii.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

his government. Finally, the whole episode was a way of impressing Stalin with de Gaulle's authority and with the French willingness to fight and die for their freedom and independence. However, the event lost some of its drama, bravado, and impact on Stalin when the Soviet dictator showed his power by trumping de Gaulle's play and transporting the entire French regiment to Moscow to allow the French leader to indulge his desire.

After the Normandie Niemen ceremony, Stalin put on a lavish dinner at the Kremlin for the French delegation on the evening of December 9th. Dinner guests also included foreign diplomats, including the United States ambassador W. Averill Harriman, the British chargé d'affaires John Balfour, and various Soviet bureaucrats and generals. The list of officials included the People's Commissars like Vyacheslav Molotov, Lavrenti Beria, Nikolai Bulganin, Kliment Voroshilov, Anastas Mikoyan, and Lazar Kaganovitch.¹⁵¹ The Marshals invited to the dinner included the Marshal of artillery, Nikolai Vornov, Admiral Nikolai Kuznetzov, the aeronautics engineer Alexander Yakovlev, and the Chief of the air force, Nikolai Novikov.¹⁵² Diplomats

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁵² Ibid., 89.

who attended the banquet included Vyacheslav Molotov, Vladimir Dekanozov, and Alexander Bogomolov.¹⁵³ De Gaulle and Stalin carried on little conversation during the banquet.¹⁵⁴ Stalin ate and drank heavily during the meal, according to de Gaulle.¹⁵⁵ Eventually he delivered a series of toasts in which he commended the leaders of France, the United States, and England. Then he began to deliver what one author described as "flesh-creeping" toasts to various ministers of the Soviet government.¹⁵⁶ The minister of railroads was toasted as follows: "Here's to the Minister of Railroads. His trains run on time and help our armies. If they didn't, he knows he would pay for it with his head."¹⁵⁷

De Gaulle thought that Stalin's display of over forty toasts "could have no other purpose than to impress the French by displaying the Soviet might and the domination of the man at its head."¹⁵⁸ The toasts undoubtedly had another

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 90.

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Ledwidge, *De Gaulle* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 191.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ De Gaulle, *Salut*, 90.

purpose as well. Many foreign diplomats were subjected to such bouts of marathon drinking in order to loosen them up, or so they testified, so that they would discuss openly their secret agendas and to treat the Soviet gang as old friends and drinking buddies from whom nothing should be hidden and to whom everything should be given.¹⁵⁹

In any event, De Gaulle was not impressed or changed by the Soviet actions. He could hold his own in a drinking contest and he was not about to waver from his position on Poland. After the toasts, everyone retreated to a salon where Stalin showed Soviet propaganda films.

While the dinner, toasts, and movies were going on, French officials continued to negotiate with the Soviets to reach some resolution on the proposed Franco-Soviet alliance. The Russians proposed to issue a communiqué that would simultaneously announce the establishment of official relations between Moscow and the Provisional French government and between the Provisional French government and the Lublin Committee.¹⁶⁰ The Soviets declared that the communiqué would be made public at the same time that the security pact between France and Soviet Russia would be

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 91.

announced. De Gaulle, however, refused to endorse the Soviet proposal. He did not want to commit France to Stalin's planned subjugation of the Polish nation.

During the film, de Gaulle again checked on the continuing discussions between Bidault and Molotov. Bidault reported that negotiations were still deadlocked. Bidault further declared that the signing of the pact hinged upon French acceptance of the "Lublin Committee" as the legitimate government of Poland.¹⁶¹ De Gaulle then declared to Bidault that the negotiations were fruitless and it was time to end them now.¹⁶²

Shortly after midnight after the film was finished, De Gaulle stood up, turned to Stalin, and bid him farewell. He then departed. As he made his way out of the Kremlin and to his car, according to de Gaulle, Molotov rushed up to the French leader with a look of utter confusion upon his face. Apparently, the Soviet foreign minister and Stalin, too, were shocked that de Gaulle was ready to leave without an agreement. Molotov knew that there was little time that remained to change positions and that Stalin would blame him for the failure. De Gaulle was aware of Molotov's situation, but still he calmly returned to the

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

French embassy to pass the night. He appeared quite willing to depart Moscow without a treaty if it meant recognizing the Lublin Poles. According to the French newspaper, *L'Humanité*, de Gaulle had already stayed in Moscow longer than he planned.¹⁶³ In short, he had the temerity to call Stalin's bluff.

At 2:00 AM on December 10 Bidault informed de Gaulle that the Soviets were ready to sign the treaty with a very different version of the text relating to the "Lublin Committee."¹⁶⁴ The new version of the text greatly diminished the over-all commitment of the French to the Polish Communists.

De Gaulle, however, still refused to sign the treaty because it contained a clause that required France to lend support to the Polish Committee of National Liberation or the "Lublin Committee." De Gaulle sent Bidault back to the Kremlin to inform Molotov and to again reiterate to the Soviets that the French Provisional Government would not extend any privileges or recognition to the "Lublin Committee." The only concession and publicity that de Gaulle would permit in regard to the "Lublin Committee,"

¹⁶³ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 8 December 1944, v1.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

Bidault told Molotov, was that "Captain Fouchet has arrived in Lublin."¹⁶⁵

After Molotov informed Stalin of de Gaulle's position, Stalin agreed to accept de Gaulle's point of view, except he insisted that the Fouchet mission be announced in concert with the publication and signing of the Franco-Soviet pact. De Gaulle again balked. He wanted to avoid any appearance of recognition by the French of the Lublin Committee, which might occur if Fouchet's arrival in Lublin were directly connected to the publication of a Franco-Soviet agreement. De Gaulle was sensitive to diplomatic protocol and to Stalin's effort to manipulate the Fouchet mission into some kind of French recognition of the Soviet-created Lublin provisional government.

Bidault was again sent back to the Kremlin to respond that the date of the pact would be December 10, 1944, and that Fouchet's arrival would not be announced until December 28, 1944.¹⁶⁶ Surprisingly, Stalin accepted this timetable.

With Stalin and de Gaulle now in agreement, Bidault and Molotov quickly wrote the definitive text of the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 93.

treaty, which contained eight articles, which are reproduced below:

- Article one stated that each party would render aid to the other, as well as aid the United Nations until final victory over Germany had been reached.
- Article two proclaimed that each party would not enter into separate negotiations or sign a separate peace with either the Hitler government or with any other government put into power to continue the German aggression.
- Article three stated that the contracting parties agreed to fight for the elimination of any new threat coming from Germany.
- Article four stated that each party would give the other mutual assistance if attacked by Germany.
- Article five outlined the agreement of the parties that neither of them would conclude any alliance or take part in any coalition that was directed towards the other.
- Article six pledged economic assistance to be given to either side after the war.
- Article seven stated that the treaty does not affect any other obligations in regard to third states and other published treaties.
- Article eight, the last article, declared that the pact would take effect immediately upon ratification and the tenets of the treaty would last for a period of twenty years.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷Bidault and Molotov, "France-Soviet Union: Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance," *The American Journal of International Law*, 39, no. 2 (1945) : 83-85.

De Gaulle arrived in Molotov's office at four in the morning on December 10, 1944, to sign the treaty officially for a ceremony that de Gaulle remarked in his memoirs as having "a certain air of solemnity."¹⁶⁸ Photographers were present to photograph the signing of the pact. Radio Moscow also broadcast the news of the Franco-Soviet Pact.¹⁶⁹ De Gaulle was surprised that a treaty of this significance was signed in a nondescript room next to the rooms where he had attended the dinner and through which guests continued to pass in and out. Stalin stood behind Molotov and de Gaulle stood behind Bidault as the two ministers of foreign affairs signed the pact.¹⁷⁰

After the treaty was signed, Stalin declared that the delegates needed to celebrate the occasion. Within a few moments tables were set up, and the leaders sat down to another supper. Stalin congratulated de Gaulle during the meal saying, "You have played well! Well done! I like dealing with someone who knows what he wants, even if he doesn't share my views."¹⁷¹ Stalin again brought up Poland and emphasized that it was the main issue for both sides.

¹⁶⁸ De Gaulle, *Salut*, 93.

¹⁶⁹ B.B.C. Monitoring Service, 11 December 1944, vii.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 94.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*.

De Gaulle listened patiently. Stalin then offered a toast in which he proclaimed that the czars implemented bad policy decisions when it came to other Slavic peoples. He said his position was different. He wanted all Slavic people to be free and independent, starting with Poland.¹⁷²

This verbal about-face took de Gaulle by surprise, who quickly replied that he indeed supported Stalin's new policy. Stalin smiled.

De Gaulle then took leave from Stalin, who remained seated at the table eating.¹⁷³ Thus the Franco-Russo Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance was signed and put into effect on December 10, 1944.

De Gaulle and his delegation left Moscow the following morning. Russian acceptance of the treaty was clearly indicated and referenced in de Gaulle's departure from the Russian capital. Again poor weather conditions prevented the French from leaving Moscow by plane, so the delegation was forced to leave by train. The French and Russian flag stood side by side in the station as Russian officials like Molotov and others bid their French visitors adieu.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁷⁴ W.H. Lawrence, "De Gaulle Treaty Parallels Russian Pact with Britain," *The New York Times*, 11 December 1944, p. 1.

The alliance with the Soviet Union was the first major international diplomatic act made by de Gaulle and his government since the liberation of France earlier that year.¹⁷⁵ The treaty gave something to both signatories. The French achieved a measure of international recognition and put in place some of the building blocks necessary for France to become an international force and player once again. W. Averell Harriman noted in his memoirs that de Gaulle's firmness with Stalin greatly increased his stature with the British and the Americans.¹⁷⁶ The Soviets gained an ally against Germany, and one that was not completely adverse to Communism. Both states also received assurance of mutual assistance against the German threat. The treaty also opened the door for future alliances and pacts with other French neighbors such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and near-by Czechoslovakia. Others, however, were not so optimistic about de Gaulle's stance on Poland. Beneath the cordiality of the reception in Moscow and the façade of the Franco-Soviet pact, de Gaulle saw the ruthless policy pursued by the Kremlin and the threat that it would imply for Western Europe in the very near

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Harriman and Abel, *Special Envoy*, 378.

future.¹⁷⁷ De Gaulle realized that he could not count on Soviet support in dealing with Anglo-Saxons, but he soon realized that he would need Anglo-Saxon help in opposing the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁸ George F. Kennan, an American Foreign Service officer in Moscow, remarked in his memoirs that "Russians, in the long run, would be no more inclined at present than they were a hundred years ago to accept the contradiction of the grant to Poland of rights which were not yet given in Russia, ... that the Russian police system would inevitably seep into Polish life unless sharp measures were taken on the Polish side to counteract them."¹⁷⁹

Only time would tell what was to happen to Poland. Regardless, de Gaulle went to Moscow and achieved his goals of French recognition on the international stage and defense for Poland.

¹⁷⁷ Francois Kersaudy, *Churchill and De Gaulle*, (London: Collins, 1981), 389.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs*, 209.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The importance of de Gaulle's visit to Stalin in December 1944 has never been properly stressed or analyzed. In many ways it was a microcosm that revealed Stalin's character and policy, the pivotal nature of the Polish issue, de Gaulle's character and approach, and the anguish between France's political and military impotence and desired international goals.

In regards to Stalin's personality and policy, the de Gaulle visit showed Stalin to be a wily, persistent, and shrewd politician. Stalin was a man who knew what he wanted and stopped at almost nothing to get his way. He pushed and squeezed as many concessions as possible from de Gaulle, never losing sight of the importance of a Franco-Soviet treaty directed against Germany and, in a sense, directed against England and the United States. The treaty was not in any way anti-English or anti-American, but it did separate France from the West, aligned Paris with

Moscow in a separate agreement from London and Washington, and gave Stalin some leverage with Churchill, who wanted a tripartite treaty uniting the Soviet Union, England, and France rather than a dual alliance tying together the Soviets and the French. The treaty also gave the Soviet Union an ally on the continent, providing a hospitable environment for Communistic ideals to grow.

Stalin also tried to persuade or cajole the French into recognizing his newly created puppet government in Poland called the Lublin Committee. De Gaulle was determined not to recognize the Lublin Committee, no matter what the cost. The French leader was prepared to leave Moscow without a treaty or pact if he was going to be forced to recognize the puppet government of Stalin. The de Gaulle visit, above all, demonstrated the central importance of Poland to Stalin and the Soviet Union. Poland was pivotal for Stalin because it was a buffer between the USSR and Germany and it was the most valuable country in Eastern Europe. Stalin wanted it as a satellite to exploit its resources and people and to expand his Communist revolution. If Poland were Communist, it would be unlikely that any of Poland's smaller neighbors could resist Communist influence and control, including the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and such

other countries as Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Poland, too, could be used to keep Germany in check, especially with Poland's border moving into East Germany to the Oder-Neisse line.

Although Stalin did not get de Gaulle to commit to recognizing his so-called Lublin Committee, he did clearly show that he would go to great lengths to control Poland and that the Red Army would be the decisive force in Poland's future. However, he also revealed that he was reluctant to crush Poland's independence without the sanction of his allies, including the French. Stalin would do what he wanted with Poland. He, of course, was most concerned about American and British attitudes on Poland since those powers, especially the United States, wielded vast military power that could thwart the Soviet Union's plan in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Stalin continued to control Poland through the use of his puppet government and continued to spread Communism throughout Eastern Europe.

The de Gaulle sojourn also demonstrated de Gaulle's character and policy. He was a man of uncommon strength of character. Although he was not Stalin's equal in any political or military test of strength, he was his superior in virtue and morality. He stood up to Stalin on Poland,

which was quite a significant example of courage and fortitude considering that he had no clout and was in Moscow as a supplicant. His consistency and support of Polish independence were in stark contrast to Roosevelt and Churchill, who did have the military power to challenge Stalin's planned partition of Poland.

On the other hand, de Gaulle was a symbol of France's tragedy and dilemma. It had been a great power, was used to the trappings of power, and wanted to resume its position in the postwar world as a great power. However, France was a weak and battered post-war country. The Germans had pummeled the French and then showed that many of the French were weaklings, collaborators, and cowards as they rallied around the Nazi-imposed Vichy government of Pétain. De Gaulle found it difficult to overcome that reality, not only in his dealings with the Allies, but throughout his political life in France. The British and Americans basically dismissed the French or, at best, put up with them as spoiled ingrates who had to be watched and pushed to the background, never reaching the power France once had. The Soviets were willing to stroke French pride, but only to achieve their own purposes of isolating Poland, irritating the English and Americans, and creating the

possibility of a more favorable environment for the expansion of Communism in France.

De Gaulle did his best, though, to square the circle. He acted like the leader of a great power - to the great irritation of England and America - exhibited the old French traits of valor and integrity in the face of overwhelming intimidation, and stood as a symbol of what France had been - noble, strong, and reliable. Long after the war in the late 1950s, he became the president of France and did momentarily renew the French character, but France's day had passed. It was a country without power, but with overwhelming ambition. All of this was reflected in de Gaulle's visit to Moscow in 1944.

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