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POLITIZATION IN THE FRENCH ARMY:
13 MAY 1958

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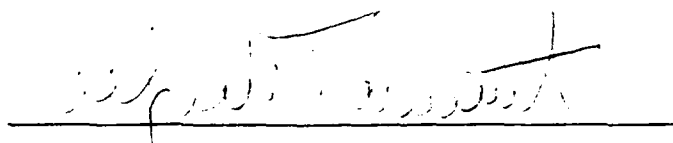
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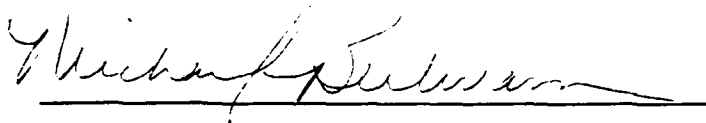
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INTRODUCTION

The role the French military has played in influencing French politics and shaping modern French society has been significant. Although the Army has rarely taken a directly active position, it has, however, strongly influenced the political process in France on several occasions. My general premise for this project is that the French military, in particular the Army, has strongly influenced political and social changes in modern France, at times directly and somewhat indirectly at other times, perhaps more so than what is acceptable of an Army serving a democratic polity. Specifically, my goal for this project is to analyze the conditions that lead up to the revolt undertaken by the French Army leaders in Algeria on 13 May 1958, the events themselves, and finally, the impact these events had on political-military relations in France's Fifth Republic.

Alistair Horne was attracted to the relationship between politicians and the military in France. He likened this relationship to two dancers "oscillating back and forth towards and away from one another. At times they are close to the point of total harmony (as in, though not always, the approach of war); at other times the Army broods in self-imposed isolation, or is regarded with anxious mistrust by the politicians -- with justification, or not." (Horne, 1984) This same relationship attracted my interest but in a different fashion. The level of politization in the French mili-

tary in a modern-day democracy deserves close examination. At times French commanders and senior military leaders have over-stepped their bounds, whether in an effort to protect themselves and their institution -- as in the Dreyfus Affair -- or in an effort to "save" the nation -- as was the case when Marshal Foch fought against the Versailles Treaty.

This project will consider the role France's military has played in political and social change in France. Traditionally, the military, specifically the Army, has remained neutral during periods of social crisis and political change as it carried out the orders of the government. However, in some cases senior military officers involved themselves directly in political matters that fell beyond the scope of their duty. These instances were neither numerous nor frequent, but they were significant. I selected the particular events or periods examined in this work because each either influenced the civil-military relations or caused some degree of social change in France while their impact continued to be significant for years, even decades, afterwards.

In chapter one I examine the events in which the Army's role was significant during the early years of the Third Republic. World War I is examined in chapter two followed by World War II and Indochina in chapter three. I have limited my background examination to the years from the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 through France's military involvement in Indochina following World War II. This is an extensive period and for that reason detailed accounts of the episodes

are not presented. I have, however, presented the significant information of the events or periods and footnoted the sources where more detailed information may be found. In chapter four I examine the civil-military relationships that led to the events of 13 May 1958, the revolt itself and finally the impact the revolt had on the early years of de Gaulle's Fifth Republic.

CHAPTER ONE:

The Formative Years: 1870 - 1914

Since the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, the French Army has served the First Republic, the Directory, the Consulate, the First Empire, the First and Second Restorations, the 'Bourgeois Monarchy' of Louis-Philippe, the Second Republic, the Second Empire, and since 1870 the Third Republic, the Vichy State, and the Fourth and Fifth Republics. While still trained in continuing the traditions of the Great Revolution, up to 1848 the Army was considered by most conservative Frenchmen to be excessively liberal in its longing for foreign adventure. Although it had complied with the orders of its political masters, both in 1830 and 1848, the Army's reluctance to fire on the revolutionaries helped bring down those masters, namely Charles X and Louis-Philippe. Then later, in 1852, when confronted with a choice of orders, it chose (by no means with total impropriety) to accept those of the lawfully elected President, Louis Napoleon, rather than of the equally lawfully elected Assembly, thereby assuring the success of the coup through which Louis Napoleon established his Second Empire. Thus, after 1851, the Army had come to be recognized as the defender of the legitimate hierarchy; a situation which suited the bourgeoisie, but alienated the Republican opponents of the Second Empire who saw the Army now as an instrument of authoritarian repression. Without doubt, under Louis

Napoleon the Army was widely used, just as it would be later on in the 19th century and early in the 20th century, in place of the police, to break strikes as well as to head off revolution. Conversely, the Army saw its own role as one of defending the Republic, rather than attempting to alter or influence its political structure in any way. Despite the fact that some 30 per cent of the officer corps came from the nobility, and might therefore have been expected to support a restoration of the monarchy, and the fact that many officers were lukewarm Bonapartists, the Army remained loyal to the new Republic.

A number of interrelated issues which address the question of political-military relations have arisen in the course of the two centuries since the Revolution. First, there is the precise function of the Army in the Republic associated with the fears of some Republicans of what it might become.

Second was the question of how much the French army has been 'separate' and isolated from the Nation, or integrated within it. The levels of isolation and integration have differed, at times drastically. However the degree of isolation or integration had nearly always been closely linked to the degree of anti-militarism or patriotism in French society.

Third was the on-going quandary the politicians faced over whether to create an Army that was politically reliable or militarily effective. Very closely related to this issue is the dilemma of whether France should have an *armée de*

métier or a national conscript army with overtones going back to the *levée en masse* of the Great Revolution (1792). The argument has generally polarized the Left and Right. The Left feared that the Government would use an *armée de métier* to put down the workers while the Right considered a conscript army to be a political instrument with socialist, if not revolutionary, purposes.

Fifth, one must also consider the remarkable swings in national attitudes in France towards the Army, often radical swings between wild-eyed patriotism and severe anti-militarism. Of course the other side of this issue is how the Army felt about the Government and its prevailing policies at any given time. Outside the periods of euphoria and enormous effort, it was, in the words of de Gaulle, thrown into a 'melancholy' which was a 'classically recurring situation'. (Horne, 1984)

Sixth, and finally, is the question of the Army intervening in what are properly civil functions and politicians interfering in strictly military matters and what effects these 'dabblings' had on political-military relations.

The present chapter will deal with developments leading up to World War I. In two subsequent chapters, World War I and its Aftermath and World War II and the era of decolonization will be examined.

Seven events or periods between 1870 and 1958 appear to have affected political-military relations and proved worthy of examination. They are the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris

Commune, the Dreyfus Affair, World Wars I and II, and Indochina.

FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR.

The thorough and devastating trouncing that France suffered at the hands of the Prussians in 1870 can be linked to three political and military explanations. First, political in-fighting between the elements of the Left and Right who served in the National Assembly under Louis Napoleon over the issue of the composition of the Army left the country without a consensus and therefore politically divided on the eve of war. Second, the lack of action and the then-current policies concerning universal service resulted in a devastating drop in the levels of training and preparedness in the French army prior to 1870; and third, the French military and political leadership were not prepared for anything other than domestic action.

Near the end of the Second Empire under Louis Napoleon's form of 'dictatorial republicanism' the issue of the composition of the Army was an extremely emotional one. The Left supported the concept of universal service because they felt that a conscript army offered the best protection against a military coup by the Right that would attempt to return the Pretender to the throne and erase the progress the Republicans had thus far made. Furthermore, a conscript army represented an assurance against carrying aggression outside

of France. As Alistair Horne noted, "Most Republicans agree with ... Jules Simon, who declared during the debate on the Draft Law of 1867, just three years before war began, 'We want an Army of citizens which would be invincible on its home soil, but incapable of carrying a war abroad'." (Horne, 1984). In fact, the further to the Left in the political spectrum a member of the Assembly was, the more fervent was his anti-militarism.

The Right, on the other hand, favored a strong, professional army capable of being equally invincible abroad as well as at home. They mistrusted the concept of a conscript army because it maintained the threatening presence of *levée en masse* that had contributed to the overthrow of the monarchy nearly a century before. An *armée de métier*, maintained the Right, would provide the necessary security against a foreign threat as well as a domestic one.

Few Frenchmen realized the threat France faced on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War. Prime Minister Ollivier encouraged the nation's illusions by announcing that he accepted war "with a light heart", and his war minister, Marshal Leboeuf, even more recklessly assured parliament that the Army was ready "to the last gaiter button". (Wright, 1987) But the Army had, in fact, sunk into a period where it lacked efficient, vigorous, and imaginative leadership and the quality of the individual soldier was extremely poor.

Throughout the Second Empire, the Army cadres remained 'loyal' and 'reliable' but they had slipped into a period of

routine-mindedness and arrogant complacency that contrasted sharply with the tough and keen mentality of the Prussian staff. Another factor may have been that the French Army did not have a general staff to coordinate and harmonize the maneuvers of the various divisions in order to attain the national objectives. As for the soldiers, universal service in France was a farce. A system of substitution whereby the moderately affluent bourgeois could, for a modest sum of perhaps 1500 francs (Horne, 1984), purchase a substitute in order to avoid his military service (the same system remained prevalent in America as late as the Civil War). As a result the Army's ranks were filled with the poor, uneducated, lower classes while the élite remained untouched. As one can easily see, this is a very dangerous mixture -- an overly confident, complacent leadership coupled with an untrained, ill-equipped force. The ease and rapidity with which the Prussians overwhelmed the French army proved this weakness.

Finally, the shortsightedness of France's politicians and military leaders resulted in their lack of preparedness for anything more than a domestic war. "'France' said de Gaulle, 'armed for a local war, was plunged into a war of nations.'" (Horne, 1984) Caught up in the emotion of the period as Parisian crowds called for a move on Berlin, the over-confident French army departed for war with maps of Germany, but not of France.

France's political institutions were just as responsible for this crushing defeat as the military. The shortsighted-

ness of the politicians practicing the compromise politics that have become the trademark of democratic polities essentially killed the effectiveness of the Draft Law of 1867. The creation of the *Garde Mobile*, as the law envisioned, would have provided the military a force designed to counter the Prussian reservists. However, the concessions required to pass the law were such that when it finally emerged in 1868 there was scarcely any progress over the existing policy.

The lone case of any political-military confrontation occurred after the war when Marshal Bazaine, commander of the French forces near Metz, was tried and sentenced to death for capitulating to the Germans. He was undoubtedly the scapegoat for both the military and the political ineptness prior to and during the war. Furthermore, he represents the sole case of a French senior officer making a military decision, contrary to his orders, from political motivation. He detested the new Republican government that was established upon Louis Napoleon's capture and rejected its authority. At his trial he declared, "I had no government, I was, so to speak, my own government." (Horne, 1984) Due to his immense popularity as a fearless soldier his death sentence was later commuted to life in prison.

With the exception of this case, no significant civil-military confrontations occurred during the Franco-Prussian War. However, the war is significant because the resulting losses of Alsace and Lorraine to the Germans ignited an ember

of *revanchisme* in France. After 1870 the recovery of the lost regions became an essential aim of the Republicans, who never quite resolved the contradiction in which this placed them. On one hand they encouraged military training, but on the other they were suspicious of the Army, or at least of professional soldiers that would smoulder for nearly half a century until the First World War.

Following the catastrophe of the approaching crisis, the Paris Commune, France would made a miraculously rapid recovery. Central to that recovery was the reinvigoration of the Army, the symbol of France resurrected. "Everything was rotten in France," Thiers had told officers during the war, "only the Army remained clean and honourable." (Horne, 1984) Hence what better starting point for a spiritual spring cleaning than the Army? Hand in hand with a wave of piety in the nation, a new mood of dedication ran through the whole army, determined to erase the blemishes on its reputation; while the loss of Alsace-Lorraine gave it a new sense of purpose, *la Revanche*. A brief Golden Age opened (and lasted some twenty years), in which the nation lent its wholehearted support to military revival. Whereas in the provinces there had been anti-war riots in 1870, with even cries of "Long Live Prussia!", after 1871 Alsace-Lorraine began to ring the changes; so that by 1880 the popular belief was that the Army was no longer "theirs" but "ours". (Horne, 1984)

PARIS COMMUNE.

While Paris lay under siege during the Franco-Prussian war, groups of ardent revolutionaries emerged on the political scene far to the left of the newly formed Republican Government. Considering themselves to be the true heirs to the *levée en masse* of the French Revolution, these groups transformed themselves from anti-militarists and opponents of the 'strong' national army into staunch supporters of continuing the war and demanded it be fought to the bitter end. This transformation took place in a large part due to their fears that the moderate bourgeois Republicans would make a deal with the Prussians, ending the war and restoring the pre-war status quo which they greatly hated. They were successful in persuading the moderates to continue the war, thanks to two serious revolts which took place in Paris.

The inevitable fact that France would lose this war was confirmed on 27 January 1871 when the armistice was signed. Elections soon after the war brought Adolphe Thiers and his conservative Republican government to power and ignited these extreme Left groups, now referred to as the Paris 'Reds' into taking over the capital city and declaring it a 'Commune'. Thiers, realizing the imminent danger at stake, withdrew his Government and the Army to Versailles.

As tensions heightened and the government began to consider taking steps against the Communards, the Army's reliability appeared extremely questionable. One soldier was

recorded as saying, "If they make me march against the Parisians, I shall march ... but in no case will I fire against them." (Horne, 1984) From that point on Thiers and the army generals had to move with great caution so as not to demand too much of the Army; even up to the middle of the fighting the Army's value remained questionable. Within two months, however, a remarkable transformation had occurred, the regulars now appeared prepared to crush their fellow countrymen with intense brutality. Their march on Paris and termination of the Commune with the massacre at the Wall of the *fédérés* left no doubt as to the Army's allegiance.

What brought about this transformation in the Army? Three explanations offered by Robert Tombs and later noted by Alistair Horne were the following:

First of all the Army saw itself as representing order against the mounting anarchy of the Commune. Predominantly bourgeois, the officers feared and hated the Communards' seizure or destruction of private property, culminating in the wilful conflagration of large parts of Paris during the final *semaine sanglante*. Secondly, it represented the nation against faction. Thirdly, it held itself to be the champion of liberty against tyranny. (Horne, 1984)

Comparable explanations will again become prominent during the wars in Indochina and Algeria some eighty years later as the Army declares itself to be fighting in defense of democracy and against the spread of Communism.

The Commune of Paris is important in our consideration of political-military relations because it illustrates that although the reliability of the Army was initially in doubt

as France faced the possibility of civil war, in the end it fulfilled its mission, although somewhat overzealously, to defend the Republic.

BOULANGER.

The fast-burning star of General Georges Boulanger is of interest to this project because during his relatively short-lived rise to popularity, two significant political events occurred. First, Boulanger was responsible for the oftentimes confusing transition of the political Right from a primarily monarchist ideal of government, or "strong man politics" to a libertarian ideal of negative government. Furthermore, a new rightist group appeared in French politics -- more authoritarian, more violent, and more emotional in nature. This new group's militant spirit led it to adopt the "superheated patriotism" and blind confidence in the Army which had once been the monopoly of the Jacobin Left. Second, the Army, though it strongly supported the General, remained aloof from the actual political scene and in no way influenced the outcome of this episode within the Third Republic.

Named Minister of War in 1886, largely due to the influence of Radical leader George Clemenceau, Boulanger was a self-declared, devout Republican who was considered the most likely candidate to topple the existing government which had lasted for nearly ten years. As Minister of War, Boulanger

quickly gained popularity throughout France and with this increased popularity his support from the Left diminished. He won the Army's affection by instituting reforms designed to improve the soldier's welfare, most notably reforms in barracks conditions and food; his reinstitution of military parades rallied the general public behind him as he would head the processions mounted on horse-back, undoubtedly playing on the French emotion that longs for a strong-leader image; patriots loved him for his strong, outspoken position against Germany and his support for *revanchisme*; and finally, he won over business men and some workers by ordering the Army into action against worker strikes and subsequently ordering soldiers to share their rations with the striking workers once the conditions were pacified. (Wright, 1987)

Fringe elements from the Left and ever increasing numbers from the Right rallied behind Boulanger as he personified the images that both camps were seeking. His rapid growth in popularity became threatening to the governing conservative Right and when the center-left coalition that had named him Minister of War lost its power Boulanger was reassigned to an obscure provincial command out of the limelight. His political followers, however, were not so easily intimidated and soon Boulanger was winning regional by-elections quite easily. The government sternly reminded Boulanger that active duty military officers were not permitted to run for public office. However, in every instance the General had voluntarily given up his newly won post immedi-

ately after the elections. In order to punish Boulanger, the government retired him -- an ill-fated action since this released him to freely seek election, which he wasted no time in doing.

Boulanger set his sights on the general elections in 1889 and the Conservatives, thanks to the General's intense nationalism and his denunciations of the opportunist bourgeoisie that had governed France for the previous ten years, saw their prospects of victory growing bright. The propagandist tone he adopted for his campaign however, and the new nationalist tendency he represented, gained him wider acceptance, first by the Bonapartists and then by the whole Rightist bloc. Backed by Monarchists and Bonapartists, with considerable support in the Army and the Church, Boulangism, they thought, might eventually lead to the restoration of the monarchy. The General had campaigned against the impotence of the parliamentary system, the ineffectiveness of governments that were constantly being defeated, the backstage intrigues and the disrepute into which the State had fallen at a time when the German menace should have imposed national discipline. The attitudes of the conservatives and those of the extreme nationalists prevailed sending the Monarchists into retreat. "The young rightists who were just about to attain their political maturity realized that the longing for a monarch no longer stirred French hearts." (Gorce, 1963)

More radical factions within the Boulangist camp, headed by the Paul Déroulède and his nationalist *Ligue des*

Patriotes, did not want to wait for the general elections. They felt a coup d'état would be more responsive to the needs of the Republic rather than allowing the ineffective system of government to continue. Boulanger, however, denounced these tactics preferring to rise to power by legal means.

More important than Boulanger's denunciation of a coup plan, especially in terms of this project, was the reaction of the Army. As Alistair Horne notes, "What is truly important in this episode was the Army's total disinclination to follow whatever lead Boulanger might have offered." (Horne, 1984) Although the former Minister of War was strongly supported by soldiers and lower ranking officers, commanders and senior leaders of the Army remained neutral throughout the period, as would be expected of a democratic Army, allowing the "democratic" process to run its course.

Despite his firm conviction for upholding the laws of the Republic, Boulanger ended up a 'casualty' of republican politics when he committed suicide on the grave of his mistress after being intimidated out of politics by some underhanded political maneuvering.

The significance of the Boulanger Affair for this project is that in spite of the widespread fear among the Left that a military coup designed to overthrow the Republic was imminent, the Army remained indifferent to the political turmoil the Affair created. There was never any inclination to support any form of a coup or to overturn the existing government by force of arms.

THE DREYFUS AFFAIR

The Dreyfus Affair is arguably the most complex and significant event that has affected political-military relations in France from its occurrence in 1894 through today. Its adverse impact on French political-military relations and the enduring myth that it left behind were two of the most important aspects of the Affair. Its immediate effect was to bring the Left, namely the Radicals, into power and to keep them there almost continuously until World War I. Likewise, it is perhaps the best case in which the Army, particularly the General Staff, indirectly affected significant change in France's political and social climates during the Third Republic.

When considered independently, the Affair consisted of a scandalous cover-up at the highest levels of the Army's General Staff in an attempt to justify the wrongful conviction of Captain Dreyfus for treason. However, on a larger scale, it became the spark that would ignite social and political tensions in France that would endure for the next fifty years. For twelve years the Dreyfus Affair tore French society apart, rekindled old divisions between the Left and Right that had been healing since 1871 and exposed some new ones -- particularly anti-militarism and anti-semitism.

In October, 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an officer of the General Staff, was arrested and charged with treason.

The renowned *bordereau*, the document that would be the sole shred of evidence against Dreyfus, had been found in the German Embassy in Paris by a French agent. Reportedly, the hand-written *bordereau*, which listed several highly classified military documents the author was prepared to deliver to the Germans, was matched to a sample of Dreyfus' hand-writing. Furthermore, Captain du Paty de Clam, the officer who dictated the text of the sample to Dreyfus, noted that "his hand trembled" as he wrote (Gorce, 1963), clearly indicating his guilt. A military court-martial quickly, and quietly convicted Dreyfus. After being stripped of his rank and his place in the Army, Dreyfus was sentenced to life imprisonment under the severest possible conditions -- solitary confinement on Devil's Island. Throughout the entire proceeding Dreyfus maintained his innocence.

Although Dreyfus was convicted and disgraced under dubious circumstances, no political party felt inclined to take up his case. The Moderates and Republicans, who were in power, were quite happy to remain neutral and were strongly disposed to accept the views of the General Staff. The Radicals, anxious to avoid being involved in a scandal which might bring shame on the Republic, took no interest in the Affair; neither did the Socialists, who on principle paid no attention to the disputes between bourgeois groups. Why should they have cared? "Let him be shot if he is guilty!" proclaimed leftist leader Jaurès. (Gorce, 1963) More traditional in his approach, Jules Guesde, leader of the pro-

Marxist and militant Socialist faction, refused to concern himself with this dispute between sections of the bourgeoisie. Proponents of the extreme Right, nationalistic and anti-semitic, were of course delighted. On the extreme Left, the anti-militarists found it amusing. Even three years later, "The mass of the people were not interested by Dreyfus," Theodore Zeldin writes, "he was hardly mentioned at all in the election of 1898, which was fought, if anything, on the issue of the price of bread." (Zeldin, 1979a) However, ardent critics of the Army, such as Gohier, continued to consider the Army as "the eternal enemy of the people." In his book, *L'armée contre la Nation*, he states that the Jewish question had nothing to do with the Affair because there were Jews in both camps. Furthermore, the Dreyfus Affair was nothing more than an incident in the midst of much more serious events by which the Army was preparing to rise up against the Republic. "The Third Republic exists no longer." he wrote, "In France, the reign of law is finished ... the caserne is now the Palace of Justice ... Despotism of the sword has commenced ... The supreme power, in France, no longer belongs to the Ministers; it is now in the hands of the generals." (Gohier, 1899)

Over the next four years, staff papers continued to disappear. Incredibly, the wastepaper basket at the German Embassy produced another document, an express letter called a *petit-bleu*, addressed by name to a French officer named Esterhazy. In researching the case, the new head of

Intelligence, Colonel Picquart, discovered that the handwriting on the *petit-bleu* was amazingly similar to that on the *bordereau* used to convict Dreyfus. But Picquart, an anti-semite himself, was also a man of honor who could not accept the wrongful conviction of an innocent man, even if he was a Jew. He presented his findings to his superiors and urged them to reopen the Dreyfus case. Their refusal to reconsider the new evidence, coupled with Picquart's reassignment to Tunisia and the appearance of segments of what he knew in the press, raised public concerns over the matter. Politicians and the public, previously disinterested in the Dreyfus case, quickly became alarmed at the thought of a scandal involving the high command that documented the anti-semitic sentiments within the Army. The Affair erupted in January, 1898, when, after the acquittal of Major Esterhazy (who all evidence later pointed out to be the spy) for his involvement in the *petit-bleu* incident, the well-known novelist Zola published an open letter to the President of the Republic, entitled *J'accuse*, in which he accused the War Office of a judicial crime.

The right-wing of the Government and the Army fought back even though it meant producing some of the secret evidence against Dreyfus -- all of which, with the exception of the *bordereau*, had been manufactured after Picquart began making his initial inquiries. Zola was subsequently tried and found guilty but he evaded prison by fleeing to England.

Picquart was charged with indiscipline and dismissed from the Army. Surely this should close the case.

But in August, 1898, the Affair came back to life when a new counterintelligence officer accidentally detected the forged documents that Major Henry had manufactured in Dreyfus' file. Henry confessed to the crime following which he committed suicide in his cell; Esterhazy fled to England. The Army could no longer avoid a retrial as the issue had become so intensely heated between the Left and Right, Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards, Jews and anti-Semites, that France was on the verge of civil war.

A year later, in August, 1899, Dreyfus was returned to France to face a second court-martial, open to the public this time. The retrial was moved to Rennes in order to escape some of the intense publicity and emotion that was rampant in Paris. In an incredible verdict, the military judges found him guilty again, but with extenuating circumstances -- the Army would never acknowledge guilt for the false accusations and conviction. Dreyfus was promptly offered a pardon by the President of the Republic and was fully acquitted of the crime several year later by a civilian court.

The Affair soon laid bare all the converging factors of the political crisis which had become increasingly unavoidable because of the evolution of the parties over the previous years. In a relatively short period of time the Affair intensified far beyond the simple issue of the guilt or inno-

cence of Captain Dreyfus. Across France attitudes polarized and hardened. The Right, defending the Army which was partly Monarchist and largely Catholic and from whose closed ranks the scandal had sprung, tended to identify itself with nationalism even more vigorously since the Church's reconciliation with the Republic had induced much of the conservative rural electorate to cast their votes for moderate Republicans rather than for pacified, former Monarchists. The Progressives, who made up Parliament's Right center, fought more and more frequently with the Radicals on such matters as the proposed income tax and trade union regulation. But, bearing in mind the basic patriotism of the French public, they naturally feared what might come of any exaggerated exploitation of the Affair by the nationalist Right. Everything led them to believe that the General Staff's assumption of Dreyfus' guilt was justified.

The Dreyfusards, seen as Republican and liberal, stood for justice and individual liberty and were supported by the intellectuals.¹ However, the Radical factions opposed one another on a non-related issue. The more fervent of the two remained faithful to the Jacobin tradition of *la cause française*, while the other became increasingly aware that the

¹ To intellectuals, the Affair long remained the test case to determine a man's basic political allegiance. An intellectual was sometimes defined as a person with highly developed critical faculties. He was associated therefore with the Left. This was the case at the end of the nineteenth century, when the word was first adopted in France. Clemenceau heralded the literary supporters of Dreyfus, who signed a manifesto in his favor, as 'the intellectuals'.

Socialists were outbidding them for public support. Despite the bitter debates, anti-militarism became the single theme that unified all the elements of the Left.

The Army's relations with Republican politicians soon reached the lowest level since 1871 as the Radicals in particular -- their power much enhanced by the Affair -- questioned whether an authoritarian and introverted army with foremost interest in the sheltering of its own could co-exist with a democratic regime. Their conclusions gave the politicians the opportunity to reclaim much of their authority that had been lost to the Army during the Golden Age of military resuscitation that had followed France's defeat at the hands of the Prussians some twenty-five years earlier. The authority of the Minister of War and that of the National Assembly was strengthened at the cost of the newly constituted command structure. In *M. Bergeret*, written by Anatole France at the height of the Affair, a character speaks of the Army as representing "all that is left of our glorious past. It consoles us for the present and gives us hope of the future." (Horne, 1984) But this was hardly a majority view at the time. The Army had now ceased to be *the* institution that was considered to be above all faction.

Throughout this entire process the Army refrained from direct action against the political system as it isolated itself further from the Nation. The point came when, as an institution, it had reason to feel its whole being was under attack from the Republicans, and rumors spread of a potential

military coup. Paul Déroulède, the fiery revanchist who had been an ardent supporter of a coup d'état during Boulanger's rise in popularity, grabbed the bridle of General Roget, commander of troops at the funeral of President Félix Faure, shouting, "Follow us, General, for the sake of France!", but the General refused to follow, making it perfectly clear that the Army would not violate its charter. (Horne, 1984) Without doubt, on a personal level, officers were ready to believe anything -- and, within limits, to do anything -- rather than see the General Staff put to shame by this Affair. On the other hand, they remained faithful to the traditional notion of the Army's political neutrality. While no doubt deploring the evolution of the Republican regime, they refused to act as an instrument; overthrowing the government was never an option. Although there were certain officers who were guilty of indiscretion and covering up the Affair, as an entity, the Army, once again, did nothing more disloyal than to grumble.

Upon the conclusion of the retrial, General Galiffet, the new War Minister summed up the spirit that prevailed in his order of the day: "The Army belongs to no party, it belongs to France ... the incident is closed." (Gorce, 1963) Unfortunately, that was not the case.

CHAPTER TWO:

World War I and Its Aftermath

WORLD WAR I

The primary difficulty in political-military relations during World War I was determining the roles of the government and army leadership, and more precisely, which institution would establish the over-all objectives and who would fill the role of Supreme Commander. Although the president, prime minister and National Assembly had no intention of leading soldiers on the battlefield, they often questioned the doctrine and tactics employed by the Army's senior leadership. Likewise, when war was declared, the National Assembly and the Government gave extraordinary powers to their military Commander-in-Chief, thus negating their own role in determining policy during the war and providing an avenue for the military to directly determine national policy. Taking back these powers proved to be an arduous task since the military's senior leadership did not give up its new power easily; neither during the war nor after the war during the negotiations of the Versailles Treaty.

On a philosophical level, World War I was the "Great War" that would put an end to the oppressive systems of government in Europe. The French Republic was locked in combat against the old traditional monarchies of Germany and

Austria-Hungary with its Republican Army confronting an army of emperors, kings and princes but allied with equally monarchist Russia! The violation of Belgian neutrality reinforced arguments made by the Left calling for action. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had tried to crush little Serbia and now the German Empire was violating international law by renouncing all treaties while ignoring any calls for moral justification for its actions. On the Left, there was an almost immediate and genuine fusion among the different factions with respect to the old liberal principles that condemned monarchies and favored the defense of small countries and weak nations. Left-wing opinion soon adopted the notion that the war must lead to the liberation of the last nationalities oppressed by the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. Republican France fighting for the rights and the freedom of peoples, that was France's role as most leftist Frenchmen undoubtedly saw it.

Conservative right-wing opinion, with its Monarchist and clerical tradition, rediscovered the expression of "eternal France"; the France of Joan of Arc and St. Genevieve rising up against the modern "Huns". Now, perhaps for the first time in two generations, all conservative families could love the whole of France without the restrictions, hesitations and frustrations brought about by a secular, anti-clerical Republic. Nationalist and conservative opinion had long awaited the rebirth of this France which the war now brought -- a France that was unified and unmindful of the class struggle, and freed from Party squabbles.

Closer to home, the return of Alsace-Lorraine from German annexation was the true war aim for France itself.

The *Union Sacrée*, France's unprecedented political coalition, was formed to prosecute the war. At its head was Raymond Poincaré, a staunch *revanchist* from Lorraine and a symbol of reawakened patriotism. Poincaré had been elected President in 1914 with the entire country wholeheartedly behind him. The *Union Sacrée* was backed by politicians from all points along the political spectrum -- even the left-wing pacifists, despite the assassination of the great Socialist leader, Jaurès, on the eve of war. The willingness to form such a coalition demonstrated a degree of unity which France had not seen since Napoleon I (nor has it been seen again since). The unique mood of the *Union Sacrée* had been set in June, with a declaration by a Radical Deputy, André Hess:

...When the cannon speaks, it is best that the politicians fall silent. The outcome of the war depends on rapidity of movement and decision, and that rapidity is to be found in a single man rather than in the deliberations of a cabinet.
(Ambler, 1966)

This attitude survived until 1915 when a crisis erupted between the Army's high command and the Government concerning which body would establish the national objectives and prosecute the war.

During the grim days that followed the declaration of war, two factors notably saved France; one was the *Union Sacrée* for the remarkable patriotic bond it formed between all political parties on the eve of war, the other was the

grand and steady figure of General Joffre, of whom Horne remarked in *The Price of Glory*, "the war was very nearly lost with him, but ... would almost certainly have been lost without him." (Horne, 1962) It is also important to note that his appointment, in 1911, came about more for his qualities as a good Republican instead of military brilliance.

In June, 1915, during the worst week of the battle, the *Union Sacrée* nearly broke down when the Government held its first Secret Session of the war. The first speaker was an ex-sergeant, André Maginot. He fiercely attacked General Headquarters for its unpreparedness and apathy. Maginot was followed by Abel Ferry who noted, "There are two Frances, two Frances who struggle separately, each in its own zone. There are two ministries: a Ministry of War in Paris and another ministry in the zone of the armies at Chantilly." (Horne, 1984) In spite of the *Union Sacrée*, almost immediately after the war broke out, a marked cleavage became evident between General Staffs, who were overwhelmed by work and absorbed in a task on which everything depended, and the politicians, who suffered from the sense of their own inactivity since responsibility for the conduct of operations had to be left to the military leaders. The anxiety and feverishness on behalf of the political leaders, as General Headquarters viewed the matter, reflected a lack of solidarity with the Army while it fought the war.

This split was worsened by the initial defeats suffered by the Army and the departure of the Government and the

National Assembly for Bordeaux. A rumor, circulated at General Headquarters, claimed some deputies were saying that Joffre had threatened to execute Lanrezac, who was at the head of the Fifth Army. It was known, too, that Clemenceau attributed the Army's setbacks to the "generals from the Jesuit warrens" and, in particular, to General de Castelnau. The military's reaction, when these usually false rumors were heard, was to condemn outright all the politicians whose gossip could only hurt the morale of the rearguard.

After the victory of the Marne, the General Staff was astonished that the government did not make a greater propagandistic use of the successes gained. On the other hand, overly exaggerated rumors of the deputies' luxuries in Bordeaux quickly reached the Front and for the rest of the war Bordeaux became a dirty word. In the Government's absence, the *Grand Quartier Général* assumed responsibility for the entire conduct of the war. A Deputy later remarked that it had truly become a 'ministry' in its own right. Never since Bonaparte had one Frenchman been so all-powerful or so popular as Joffre. (Horne, 1962)

Tactically, the French were very nearly defeated by the Germans shortly after the war began. By the autumn of 1914, a continuous static front had been established from Switzerland to the Belgian coast. Only the reinvigorated French Army,² transported to the battlefield by every avail-

² It was also very fortunate that the Russians had unexpectedly attacked East Prussia before their complete mobilization had been

able means, saved Paris from German occupation. By June, 1915, the battle of the Marne, which practically took place within sight of the Eiffel Tower to the east of the capital, was won. However the short war that all expected became a war of attrition as each army dug in and the advent of trench warfare came to pass.

The high cost of this very slow paced, trench warfare, in terms of matériel and lives, began to evoke a sense of 'defeatism' among many of the deputies, especially those who were losing the most economically. In a short time, this sentiment was even felt within the Army's high command and talk of a negotiated peace increased. The very thought of this disgusted the Left and inspired these normally anti-militaristic politicians to become extremely nationalistic and determined to see this war through to a successful conclusion. This new-found inspiration resulted in important political and military leadership changes.

Very much at the eleventh hour, France finally found the winning combination. US entry into the war in April 1917 had strengthened the crumbling *Union Sacrée*, but -- with Russia out of the war due to the October Revolution, thus allowing the Germans to concentrate all on the west -- the situation was still very desperate. Parliamentarians had long feared

completed, thus forcing Moltke to transfer two army corps from the West to the East at an extremely crucial moment.

that allowing Clemenceau to get his hands on the power he had so long been denied would be equivalent to creating a dictatorship. But now circumstances offered no alternative. In November 1917, the 76-year-old "Tiger" became Prime Minister with a simple program: "Home policy? I wage war! Foreign Policy? I wage war! All the time I wage war." (Horne, 1984)³

Clemenceau's conviction to prosecute the war to a successful end even took priority over his lifelong distrust of the Army's conservative and clerical establishment and he now aimed his considerable force at crushing the wobbly Left, his own former allies. Furthermore, he also revived Talleyrand's famous edict that war was much too serious a thing to be left to the military. At a meeting of the Supreme War Council on 14 March 1918 there was a fiery exchange between Foch, the supreme allied military commander, and Clemenceau over the use of the new General Reserve. Clemenceau eventually overruled Foch shouting at him, "Be quiet. I am the representative of France here!" (Horne, 1984)

Thus, Clemenceau took back the role of leading the nation returning France's political institutions to the helm. France had begun the war with the politicians of the *Union Sacrée*, in their weakness, granting Joffre *carte blanche* to run what amounted to almost a military dictatorship, it ended with a powerful Jacobin Republican Prime Minister, with all but total powers, fully in control of both the Assembly and

³ Also see Cobban, 1963, and Wright, 1987.

the military. Despite the enormous popularity of Foch and Pétain, when armistice came in November, 1918, France had probably never been in less of a mood to follow 'the man on horseback'.

In terms of political-military relations, France was fortunate that her foundations still proved to be fundamentally sound despite the effect of the intervening years of unpopularity and neglect. For all the success of France's mobilization in 1914, the military reforms of the *Réveil National* had come very late, and in some respects the corruption of the preceding two decades had penetrated too deeply. This was especially the case with regards the quality of the Army's high command and its doctrine of warfare.

During the critical years before 1914, a concept of the offensive -- *l'attaque à outrance* -- had permeated the French army. In 1909 a senior representative of the General Staff had thanked God that the Army had no heavy artillery; the strength of the French army remained in the lightness of its guns. Of course, this principle stemmed to some degree from the lessons learned in 1870 where the Army was deemed to have failed by being too defensive-minded.

In 1911 the issue of civilian versus military 'control' in determining the overall objectives for the Nation was debated in the Assembly and, as with nearly all the issues of the day dealing with the military, controversy arose. When questioned on these issues during a session of the National Assembly, the Minister of War, General Goirand, explained

that in time of war, the Supreme Commander is the Minister of War; the individual who bears this title is, in peacetime, only the Inspector General of the Army and, in wartime, becomes Commander of the armies of north and east. This response brought out a violent reaction from portions of the Assembly because it inspired the belief that opposing this policy revealed a systematic distrust of the entire military and, especially, distrust of the very idea that a general could really be Supreme Commander.

Only one speaker rose to defend the role of the government questioning who would have overall command should a war involve several fronts simultaneously. Furthermore, who would determine the overall objectives? He concluded by proposing that, in wartime, the supreme responsibility should be vested in a limited government -- a form of the future war cabinets.

The solution adopted as a result of these debates relied on the hypothesis that the war would be restricted to French forces, with or without allies, and the German armies, along their common borders. Therefore, a General-in-Chief, named in peacetime and exercising the functions of head of the armies during wartime, would command the totality of military operations in the northeast. The government would see to the overall conduct of the war. The relevant ministers, helped by general staffs stationed in Paris, would take charge of the recruiting and instruction of the forces, the manufacture

and provisioning of matériel, and the economic and moral mobilization of the country.

This system functioned very effectively until the beginning of 1915. The failure of the Dardanelles expedition to secure the straits leading to the Black Sea threatened to reverse the Allies' advantage in the Balkans and highlighted the weaknesses of the French system in a multi-theater war. It became imperative that France devote forces to the region in order to reinforce the allied positions. General Sarrail was named Commander-in-Chief in the east under continuous protest from Joffre, the General-in-Chief, who argued that the focus had to be maintained on the northeastern front in France and it had to be supported at all costs. The resulting crisis revealed the unsuitability of France's system of command to deal with the problems posed by multiple war fronts. Already Joffre's opponents had used a technical criticism concerning the apportionment of military responsibilities as an issue to challenge the authority of the General-in-Chief. A memorandum dated April 20, 1915 (suspected to have been written by General Sarrail or a member of his staff) reminded Assembly members that the Constitution provided for the President of the Republic to be commissar of the armies. He was the natural intermediary between the Nation and the Army and after nine months at war he could no longer relinquish his responsibility.

Nearly a year later, Briand arrived at the best possible theoretical solution of the problem of the relations between

government and high command during a world war. Briand's plan was to restructure the French high command in order to provide for unity of command between the Allied forces which, up to then, had been lacking. Joffre was regarded as the only man who had the essential personal authority needed to meet the challenges of the position. Later that year, in December, 1916, the two critical functions of the high command were clearly established, but the responsibilities that normally would be reserved for France's supreme military adviser were enormously reduced. Joffre would have a mere consultative role to play and the government would be under no obligation to take his advice. He would simply transmit the decisions made by the War Cabinet -- established by Briand within the Council of Ministers -- to the allied commanders. Rather than taking a position with virtually no responsibility, Joffre resigned instead on December 26, 1916.

While the reforms of December, 1915, had not gone far enough in reorganizing and differentiating the main tasks of the high command, those of 1916 went beyond what Briand had been aiming at and brought about the opposite of what he desired. Now, instead of having a military adviser whose competence and authority would have enabled the government to impose the overall directives on those in charge of operations, there was now a vacuum separating the government and the generals in command on the various fronts.

The situation became even more complicated when General Lyautey, the War Minister, resigned after having assumed the

responsibilities of Commander-in-Chief of the Armies in addition to his functions as War Minister. He soon found the two roles incompatible when he refused to give technical explanations during a secret session of the Chamber of Deputies. "'All that remains to be done," protested an opposition deputy, Raffin-Dugens, "is to abolish Parliament.'" (Gorce, 1963)

An immediate solution had to be found. Creating the post of Chef d'État-Major Général in May, 1917 filled the void. The functions the new position was designed to fulfill extended from the technical elaboration of operations to the recruiting and training of manpower, general services, military organization of the territory and missions abroad. Pétain was first appointed, but on May 15 he replaced General Nivelle in command of the armies of the northeast and was replaced by Foch.

Nearly three years had been required to permit a rational solution to the problem of the relations between government and high command. Ideological prejudices, psychological inflexibilities and political calculations had all played their part. But these elements never gained the upper hand, except at the worst moments when, late in 1916, Joffre was obliged to resign. Modern warfare, with its vast geographical reach, and its human and industrial dimensions, had affected the whole apparatus of the State. At no moment was the Army, as a whole, in conflict with political authority. Traces of distrust, spite and bitterness remained in the at-

titude of the General Staffs, but ultimately, the deep sense of identification between the Nation and its Army had not been shaken.

Between 27 November 1918 and 16 June 1919 the Allies, France, the United States and Great Britain, negotiated among themselves to determine the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. These negotiations brought about one of the most intense conflicts between France's high command and political leadership. From the beginning, Marshal Foch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, proposed that Germany should lose control over the Rhineland region. Initially, he argued that relatively independent states should be established on the left bank of the river which would be bound to the western countries by economic accords and treaties of military alliance which would automatically side them with France should hostilities be renewed between France and Germany. Then, after much reflection on the problem of security, Foch revised his proposal insisting on establishing the Rhine as the military frontier of Germany. This solution could only be obtained, he maintained, if the countries on the left bank of the Rhine were independent and entirely freed of German sovereignty. He set aside his notion of a military alliance with these states and replaced it with a proposal of permanent military occupation by the Allies of the Rhineland and a customs union with the western countries. One month later, on February 18, Foch revised his position one last time. His new belief was that Germany should be deprived of all

sovereignty, not only over the left bank of the Rhine, but also over the territories occupied by the Allies since the armistice. Thus, from the standpoint of French security, he outlined a very clear policy: France should demand the political separation of the Rhineland from Germany.

Initially, Clemenceau endorsed Foch's proposals and submitted them as France's demands for the Versailles Treaty. However, neither President Wilson nor Prime Minister Lloyd George could support such a proposal. The British opposed any policy of autonomy for the Rhineland territories recalling that the basis of the peace treaty was to be Wilson's Fourteen Points and any such division of German territory was in conflict with the right of peoples to decide their own destinies. In Lloyd George's opinion, if Germany were divided, the attempt would be made later to re-establish national unity, leading to another war. Furthermore, he could not accept a permanent military occupation of the Rhineland by the Allies because the basic foundations of British politics was to avoid long term commitments on the European continent. The Americans also maintained that no agreement, even provisionally, that separated the Rhineland regions from Germany could be accepted. In regards to the question of western security, France would be guaranteed of automatic and immediate assistance in the event of an unprovoked aggression by Germany. Clemenceau's virtual acceptance of the Anglo-American proposals surprised Foch. He felt that Clemenceau had abandoned the needs of France for security -- the Rhine

did constitute a solid barrier -- giving in to Wilson's and Lloyd George's promise that, Foch believed, was easier made than kept. It became clear that the two men did not share any common solution to the issue. As a result, the Army, led by Marshal Foch, intervened directly in the delineation of policy and influenced it in the direction desired by the military leaders.

First, the Marshal approached President Poincaré to secure his support. The President was opposed to the agreement reached with the Americans and British by Clemenceau, but his notions also differed from Foch's. Poincaré believed that the occupation of the Rhineland and the payments for reparations should be connected. Once the total cost of reparations was satisfied, the occupation would be lifted as opposed to Foch's concept of permanent occupation. Regardless of their individual differences, the President was opposed to the present treaty proposal and therefore, Foch believed he could count on Poincaré's support. When Foch asked the President to intervene in the negotiations Poincaré replied that it was the government's task to negotiate. The Marshal urged Poincaré to invoke Article VI of the Constitution of 1875, which stipulated that the President of the Republic negotiates treaties, but the President categorically refused due to the Third Republic's tradition that vested the real executive power in the Prime Minister and the government. Next Foch, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, asked to address the Council of Four before

the issue was decided any further. In part of his address, Foch presented an explanation of his proposal followed by another explanation of why the concept of abandoning the Rhine as a barrier was an "unthinkable monstrosity" because it would give Germany the possibility of resuming an aggressive policy. His primary audience, Wilson and Lloyd George, paid only casual attention to Foch and stated after his address that it was pointless to insist otherwise because they had made up their minds; no one supported Foch's proposals.

Faced with defeat at the hands of the Allied leaders, Foch moved his attention to the French delegation, of which he had been a part at the beginning of the negotiations. Clemenceau retaliated by declaring that Foch was no longer considered a member of the French delegation and that as Commander-in-Chief he was subject to the decisions of the Allied Powers.

Still refusing to give in, Foch turned to the press. On 18 April *Le Matin* and London's *The Daily Mail* ran articles that explained Foch's point of view and had clearly been inspired by him. Reports stated that proofs of the articles were corrected by one of Foch's own staff officers. (Gorce, 1963) Both Wilson and Lloyd George were outraged by Foch's intervention while Clemenceau maintained that, though his actions were regrettable, it was imperative that the country's picture of this "man of victory" not be destroyed. When Clemenceau confronted Foch over this episode the General denied ever having any idea of disobeying the orders of the

head of government. He had acted entirely in good faith and asserted that a Marshal of France, and military adviser to the government, had the duty to express his mind and make no secret of his feelings.

The Council of Ministers was Foch's next target. He asked to be informed of the decisions provisionally adopted by the government, hoping to renew the pressure on Clemenceau to fight for France's security. The Prime Minister's response was to deny Foch's request reminding him that he was not a member of the government and had no right to be informed of their decisions. The President, Poincaré, differed with his prime minister stating that the Marshal should be informed so that he might give his opinions upon which the Council of Ministers would deliberate. Foch then presented his views on the necessity of permanently occupying the Rhineland and withdrew. In the end the Council, at Clemenceau's urging, dismissed his argument as they deliberated over the text of the treaty. Foch, in response, threatened to resign from his post unless the text was modified. The three Allied leaders, in the meantime, decided to replace Foch with Pétain should he, in fact, resign.

Foch, however, opted for a new tactic. Rather than resign, he made a surprise request to address a plenary session of the Peace Conference. His discussion focused on the incompatibility between the treaty's proposed text and what Foch feared would happen in regards to evacuating the Rhineland and payments of reparations by Germany; essen-

tially, once the region was evacuated after fifteen years, the payments would stop. Therefore, Foch presented additional arguments in favor of occupying the Rhine; evacuating the region, he maintained, opened the door for renewed aggression placing France in a position of inferiority.

Since the Allied and German delegations had met in order to sign the treaty during the session which Marshal Foch addressed, it goes without saying that the Council of Four rejected Foch's request for another revision. The final text called for the permanent demilitarization of the Rhineland which would eliminate the risk of a sudden attack. Furthermore, the guarantee of automatic and immediate assistance from the United States and Great Britain assured France of massive support which would doubtlessly sway any threat of German aggression. The treaty also stipulated that if Germany did not fulfill its obligation, the evacuation of the Rhineland, set for five-year stages, would be delayed and continued occupation or reoccupation of the region would be legal if Germany seriously infringed the treaty or if the guarantees it contained, namely the treaties of alliance with the United States and Great Britain, were terminated. The French Council of Ministers, as well as most politicians, agreed that Clemenceau had secured all he could for France in light of the American and British opposition to a political separation of the Rhineland.

The entire structure of the provisional peace treaty almost collapsed during the last days of May, 1919, when a

Rhineland separatist movement proclaimed the independence of the Rhineland Republic. It appeared certain that French military authorities had aided the movement against the objections of the American commander at Coblenz. It had become apparent to the British and American leaders that the French general no longer hesitated to intervene openly in order to provoke the political independence of the Rhineland. It was no longer a matter of discussing the more or less deliberate interventions of Marshal Foch. Now, for the first time, the political neutrality and the national discipline of the Army were in doubt.

The responsibility of occupying the largest part of the French zone on the left bank of the Rhine belonged to the French Tenth Army, commanded by General Mangin. His experiences as a colonial officer prior to the war lead him to take a deep interest in the Rhineland which had been "entrusted to him, in part, by Marshal Foch." (Gorce, 1963)

Mangin felt that, although the decision to abandon political autonomy in the Rhineland had been made nearly a month earlier, the issue was still critical and he believed it was still possible to get Clemenceau to alter his decision. But it did not; his support of the separatist movement only enraged Wilson and Lloyd George who in turn called for reducing the occupation of the Rhineland to eighteen months. Clemenceau, in turn, refused to accept the new proposal arguing that France was also an essential member of this union between Great Britain, the United States and France and he

must safeguard French interests. He further ordered General Mangin to cease all his activities in support of the separatist movement and to limit his activities to those required by his military post.

The existence of the separatist movement in the Rhineland caused Foch to renew his campaign aimed at revising the peace treaty. He argued that the military situation, in the event of renewed hostilities, was changed with the emergence of this movement; surely the Rhineland Republic would side with the the Allies should fighting erupt. The Allied leaders were not impressed, however, with his new arguments asserting that Foch was altering the picture of the military situation solely to persuade the governments to create a new policy aimed at destroying German unity.

The need for further negotiations, as well as the entire crisis, was settled on 23 June, after three months, when the German National Assembly accepted the Versailles Treaty. Essentially, the position of the French government had not changed since the end of April when the Council of Ministers contented itself with the assurances of American and British alliances, the demilitarization and occupation of the Rhineland region, and the disarmament of Germany. From then on, Foch's interventions were in vain. The crisis had been serious, to the extent that it had clearly placed the government in opposition to several of the Army leaders, at a time when they enjoyed immense prestige. But the vote to ratify the peace treaty illustrated a unanimity of opinion that, as

a member of the League of Nations, France should play the greatest possible part in preventing German military resurgence while supporting the newly created states of eastern Europe. It also underlined the importance of France maintaining firm alliances with England and the United States.

Foch's trepidation and Mangin's audacity had aroused no support of any significance among the political parties. Nothing could have stirred public opinion to back the direct intervention of the military leaders against the peace treaty. The skepticism concerning the solutions proposed and the anxiety felt at the political 'vacuums' that the treaty had created in Europe were nothing compared to the intense desire to finally escape from the endless discussions that had preceded the signing of the treaty, nor for the acute awareness that France, by herself, could no longer impose her will.

World War I was the first instance where the French military directly intervened in political functions. However, the Army was not solely responsible for their actions. Upon declaring war, the government established the precedent of granting extraordinary powers to the senior Army leader in order to prosecute the war; essentially putting themselves outside the decision cycle. Taking back those powers, as Clemenceau discovered, was not an easy task.

CHAPTER THREE:

World War II and Decolonization

WORLD WAR II.

Clearly, World War II is the best example of senior military officers' direct involvement in the political processes of France. On one hand we have Pétain and Weygand, both of whom were called upon by the crumbling Third Republic government once again to "save" France as the Marshal had done at Verdun; on the other hand is de Gaulle, who, as a relative newcomer to the Government and of flag officer grade, was so deeply concerned with the political path down which France would be guided that he essentially mutinied against the legally appointed government. The social and political cleavages that resulted from this struggle over the leadership of France would have a significant impact on political-military relations well into the 1960's. As Ambler expressed it, "World War II was the beginning of the end for the French military tradition of unquestioning obedience to civilian authority." (Ambler, 1966)

The unexpectedly rapid and humiliating defeat of 1940 produced a series of events which called into question the foundations of military discipline in France. First the French Commander-in-Chief, General Weygand, refused to continue the war in North Africa as directed by the Prime Minister, subsequently contributing significantly to the

demise of Reynaud's government. Next, General de Gaulle rejected the authority of the new Pétain government, appealing to the Army and nation to follow him. Then, during the ensuing years, as Vichy succumbed more and more to German control, many French military officers were forced to choose between traditional military discipline and de Gaulle's campaign. And finally, the liberation of France and the subsequent purges of "collaborators" seemed to prove that unquestioning obedience to the government of the day was no longer the most viable solution for protecting military honor.

In addition to General Weygand's clashes with economy-minded ministers over defense budgets, de Gaulle, then a Colonel and a tank regiment commander, campaigned vehemently to convince the General Staff to reconsider their position concerning the potential for tank warfare, which he foresaw as the key in modern battle tactics. With the exception of these two officer's efforts, there was little in the comparatively peaceful nature of official French political-military relations in the 1930's which forewarned of the crisis of June, 1940. Both the General Staff and the political leaders supported such fundamental principles of national security policy as the primacy of defense and reliance on a short-term conscript army. With the outbreak of war, however, tensions mounted as the weakness of the French military gradually became apparent.

In an attempt to avoid the conflicts which had developed between government and high command in World War I, the

National Assembly gave the responsibility for operations to the high command and reserved the general conduct of the war for the government and, ultimately, itself. Yet fear of concentrated military authority inhibited the completion of Reynaud's plan for a tight centralization of defense institutions under the Ministry of Defense and a Chief of Staff of National Defense.

French conduct of the war was thrown into further disarray by the entanglement of political and military rivalries. All went smoothly between Gamelin, the Army's Commander-in-Chief, and the government so long as Daladier was Prime Minister, because both men were in full agreement on the primary importance of defense. But when Reynaud replaced Daladier as Prime Minister in March, 1940, tensions mounted rapidly. Reynaud had no confidence in Gamelin; but he did not dare relieve him because of his government's dependence on the Radical Socialist party led by Daladier -- Gamelin's defender. Reynaud's attempt to intervene over the conduct of the campaign in Norway was met by a firm protest from Gamelin, who considered the Prime Minister's actions as an encroachment on his powers over operation. The law of 1938 had not settled the long standing problem of distinguishing between policy and strategy, especially at a time when political-military relations were characterized by mutual distrust.

The ensuing French defeat in the Netherlands enabled Reynaud to remove Gamelin, as well as Daladier, who had been

kept on as Minister of National Defense for political reasons. However, by replacing Gamelin with Weygand, he unknowingly recruited a much more dangerous rival than Gamelin had ever been. Only the day before the Prime Minister had called upon Marshal Pétain to join the government as vice-president of the cabinet. Thus, the two men who would do the most in bringing about the fall of the government were sought out by Reynaud himself.

On 10 May 1940, the Germans launched their *blitzkrieg* which broke through the French front in the Ardennes; within six weeks the battle for France was over. The German advance came with such astonishing quickness that Weygand soon became convinced that defeat was inevitable and an armistice was the only hope of French salvation. Reynaud, though lacking in political support, was determined to carry on the war -- from North Africa, if necessary. A bitter conflict between Reynaud and his Commander-in-Chief, a conflict which had been brewing since shortly after Weygand's assumption of command, broke open during a series of critical and dramatic cabinet meetings between 12 and 16 June. With Pétain's support, Weygand reported that only an armistice could save the Army from complete disintegration and the nation from anarchy. On 13 June, after discussing the issue of displacing the Government, both Weygand and Pétain announced that they would not leave France if the government decided to move to North Africa. The Commander-in-Chief was informed afterwards, by a cabinet member, that moving the Government across the

Mediterranean was a political question beyond the scope of the military. When Reynaud suggested that the Army in the *métropole* might capitulate while the Government moved to North Africa to carry on the battle, the General bluntly replied, "I will refuse to obey an order of that nature." (Ambler, 1966) Not only did Weygand refuse to take the Army to North Africa, he now refused to allow the government to leave France without calling for an armistice. He did so in the name of protecting the honor of the Army. Weygand had twisted the very concept which had for so long suggested unquestioning obedience to civilian authority in order to justify open rejection of that authority.

Once again the harried Prime Minister dared not replace his insubordinate military chief, fearing the fall of the government would ensue. He finally surrendered to the "defeatists" during a stormy cabinet meeting during which he resigned upon losing majority support in his cabinet to Pétain and the military chiefs. Lebrun, the President of the Republic, delayed recognition of Pétain briefly, then, on Reynaud's advice, appointed him as Prime Minister. The Marshal's list of ministers included Weygand as Minister of National Defense, General Colson as Minister of War, and Admiral Darlan as Minister of the Navy. The following day Pétain announced to the nation that the government had addressed a request to the enemy for armistice negotiations. The armistice and the abdication of the Assembly to Pétain by a vote of 569 to 80 followed shortly thereafter. Despite

the climate of demoralization and fear that was prevalent in France during the last weeks of the Third Republic, it was clear that Pétain enjoyed wide support in the National Assembly, as well as in the nation as a whole. Rumors of a threatened military coup in June, 1940, were unfounded. It was political strength, not threatened violence, that brought Pétain and Weygand to the head of government in France.

Despite the gravity of Weygand's indiscipline, the French military tradition of subservience to civilian authority suffered more in the years to follow from de Gaulle's famous appeal from London on 18 June. Pétain's political victory over Reynaud had spared Weygand from acting on his threat to disobey an order to surrender the Army if the government should move to North Africa. De Gaulle, on the contrary, as under-Secretary of State for national defense and as a firm supporter of Reynaud, found himself on the losing side in the struggle for control of the French government. On the morning of 17 June the recently promoted General left Bordeaux by plane for London. The following day de Gaulle launched an appeal to French soldiers and technicians to join him in England to keep alive the flame of French resistance.

The historic radio appeal was more than a simple call for volunteers for a French expeditionary corps. It was the first step in de Gaulle's campaign to turn the French Army and nation against their new government leaders and the armistice policy. He then refused to comply with a direct order from Weygand, now Minister of National Defense, in-

structing him to return to France. By mid-July de Gaulle was publicly accusing Pétain of treason. The Pétain government, in return, was quick to brand de Gaulle as a mutineer and condemned him to death *in absentia*. (Horne, 1984)

Praiseworthy as de Gaulle's decision was from the standpoint of fighting Hitler, an example was set of a soldier who decides for himself where the interests of his country lie and revolts against constituted authorities if they see those interests differently from himself. Despite the climate of demoralization and fear that was prevalent in France during the last weeks of the Third Republic, it was clear that Pétain enjoyed wide support in the National Assembly, as well as in the nation as a whole. Faced with the contradictory appeals of Pétain and de Gaulle, the vast majority of officers unhesitatingly accepted the authority of the Marshal and his Government. In the three months following de Gaulle's 18 June appeal, his movement only attracted three generals (all from colonies), one admiral, three colonels, and a few junior officers. Even among those French troops located in Great Britain at the time of the armistice, de Gaulle succeeded in recruiting less than a quarter of the enlisted men and an even smaller proportion of the officers, giving him a total force of only seven thousand men by the end of July, 1940. (Gorce, 1963)

In his book, *The French Army in Politics*, Ambler notes three factors that contributed to de Gaulle's limited success. First, Pétain's government had the advantage of appar-

ent legality and hence profited from the power of military discipline and the officer's desire to be "covered." After all, it was the Marshal's leadership that had been accepted by public opinion and the majority of politicians. Second, military discipline and dedication to Pétain was supported by an Anglophobia which thrived in the Navy and was appearing as well in the Army, where the British were resented for failing to commit all of their military strength to the battle for France, and later, for supposedly coveting French colonies. Convinced that Germany had won the war, the majority of French officers saw little reason for deserting their homeland in order to fight in favor of the British and their empire. Third, most officers found the values that Pétain's government represented to be another worthy reason for obeying the Marshal. A discredited French Republic suffered repeated disgraces at the hands of the armistice government, even to the point that its once cherished motto was replaced. As could be expected, "work, family, country" was more appealing to the military members than "liberty, equality, fraternity" had ever been.

The full extent of the ties between the Vichy regime and the military -- particularly the Navy -- was evident in the large number of officers recruited for political and administrative positions. Army and Air Force officers were recruited only slightly more than under the Republic. Most importantly though, military officers had retaken the position

of Minister of War, which had been almost exclusively a civilian domain since the end of World War I.

Along with greater access to public office, military officers who had long felt themselves unjustly criticized, mistrusted, and denied their due respect, now enjoyed a privileged place in official French society. With the chamber and the parties dissolved and the Marshal in power, the infuriating voices of anti-militarists were finally silenced. A flurry of parades and military ceremonies helped officers to forget their recent humiliation in battle. Obedience to civil authority was no longer simply a passive, professional duty, as it had been under the Third Republic: the officer's subservience to governmental control now took on a positive, political character.

Contrary to the universal expectation in Vichy in July, 1940, Great Britain did not collapse, and the French armistice policy soon began to lose the semblance of wisdom which had previously surrounded it. The Vichy regime, fearing the ultimate effects of de Gaulle's appeals from London, ordered, in Constitutional Act Number Eight dated 14 August 1941, that all military personnel would henceforth be required to swear an oath pledging loyalty to the Chief of State.⁴ Yet the majority of officers who remained in the

⁴ The military oath of allegiance had been abandoned since 1870; its revival now had the effect of intensifying the *crise de conscience* undergone by many officers who were forced to choose between traditional discipline and renewed resistance against the Germans occupying significant portions of their homeland.

Vichy army had no need of an oath to insure their obedience to Pétain's regime.

The Vichy regime complemented the oath by instituting vigorous punitive measures against those who joined de Gaulle. The law proclaimed the death penalty for all military personnel who left French territory between 10 May and 30 June 1940. General Catroux, General Legentilhomme, and Colonel de Larminat, along with de Gaulle himself, were condemned to death *in absentia* at the hands of military tribunals.

The Syrian campaign during the spring of 1941 left an indelible mark on the French military conscience. After failing to persuade the Vichy military commander in Syria, General Dentz, to renounce his loyalty to Pétain, de Gaulle was forced to appeal to the British to join him in attacking his fellow countrymen. A battle ensued and the Vichy troops put up stiff resistance to the Allied invasion. Over a thousand Vichy soldiers and eight hundred of de Gaulle's Free French soldiers were killed during the fight.

Following the liberation of France, General Dentz was tried and condemned for his role in the battle for Syria. His defense was simple -- and truthful -- he had obeyed his orders. The public prosecutor countered the General's defense by arguing that given his grade and the role he fulfilled, he should have evaluated the orders he received more closely. This lesson, one in which military officers learned

that in some circumstances obedience may dishonor the obeyer, was one the French Army would not soon forget.

At the time the Syrian campaign did not seriously shake the traditional discipline of the Vichy army, for the great majority of officers and men escaped to France in unbroken units, still convinced that a soldier's duty was to obey his superiors and his government.⁵ Such an escape was more difficult, though still not impossible, in November, 1942, when the American invasion of North Africa and the subsequent German occupation of the Vichy zone critically undermined the authority of Marshal Pétain.

Throughout the Vichy army, in France as well as in Africa, officers demonstrated a rather consistent reluctance to disobey their superiors, despite the confusion in November, 1942 when the Allies invaded North Africa and Vichy forces were called upon to defend French soil against Allied as well as German forces. Armed resistance was considered to be futile among senior officers in the *métropole*, though plans were prepared for preserving the armistice army in case of German occupation of the Vichy zone. On 9 November the order went out to all army units to retreat to designated points in case of German advances across the Vichy border. The next day, however, orders for displacement were can-

⁵ The continuing sense of discipline and loyalty to Pétain was illustrated by the choices of the officers and men of the Vichy troops: only 5,668 of the 37,736 joined de Gaulle's Free French forces. See Ambler, 1966.

celled, leaving French units sitting peacefully in their garrisons when the Germans occupied the Vichy zone on the following day. With one exception, all armistice army commanders complied with orders received. Only General de Lattre de Tassigny, commander of the Montpellier Division, vainly attempted to lead his troops to a predetermined mountainous retreat. He was betrayed by a subordinate, captured, and imprisoned, though he later escaped and joined de Gaulle in time to become the illustrious commander of the First Free French Army. Plans to keep the armistice army away from the Germans collapsed in the face of Pétain's hesitation and weakness, Bridoux's determined collaborationist policy, and the army's continuing loyalty to the aging man who was still "The Marshal." As a result, from the dissolution of the armistice army by German order on 27 November 1942, until June, 1944, France was left without a French Army on French soil.

Finally, as the last year of war revealed a new and enduring estrangement of Army and Nation, so it was in that period that a final serious blow was struck against the military tradition of unquestioning obedience. Liberation was the occasion for a massive *réglement des comptes* as communist partisans took control in many areas. There were undoubtedly some regular armistice army officers among the estimated ten

thousand⁶ victims of summary executions. More significant for the future of the Army, however, were the sanctions taken against all military officers who had not joined the resistance by the time of the Normandy landings. In the fall of 1944 all such officers who could not present proof of acts of resistance outside the *maquis* were placed on inactive status. By the end of 1947 almost three thousand army officers had been purged or "separated" from the active roles for collaboration or failure to join the resistance. Among them were at least a few who felt honor bound by their oath of allegiance to the Marshal. The often inconsistent nature of the purges and separations produced widespread protests and resentment, not only among the victims, but also among their friends and fellow officers who remained on active duty.

Would it be correct to say that the primary causes of postwar political-military clashes were due to the collapse of military discipline in World War II? Ambler denies that, but these World War II experiences undoubtedly lowered military resistance to a praetorian urge produced primarily by other factors. Military discipline was hardly in ruins in 1945, despite frequent confusion of the war years. Throughout the war, most French officers had simply followed orders from their superiors. Besides, the core of the postwar French Army consisted of the 120,000-man armistice army

⁶ The original estimates were extremely inflated. Over the years this figure has constantly been revised downward from an initial estimate of one hundred thousand.

of Africa, which also provided the vast majority of important commanders during the liberation and after. Ambler further argues that if there had been no lengthy and frustrating colonial wars after 1945, civilian control could have been restored over a disciplined military establishment. (Ambler, 1966)

INDOCHINA.

For the French Army, the war in Indochina was essentially a continuation of World War II primarily because the Army had been involved in small scale operations in the region since the Japanese occupation in the early 1940's. But this war had very different consequences for the Army and politicians; it resulted in a cleavage of such seriousness that it would ultimately topple the Fourth Republic.

The war in Indochina, considered as a fight to contain Communism -- the West's new enemy -- represented an opportunity for the Army to regain the prestige it had so unexpectedly lost in 1940. For Frenchmen in general, civilians and politicians alike, the war in the Far East was essentially out-of-sight and out-of-mind. They neither understood this new style of guerilla war nor did they consider it to be a priority; closer to home political, social and economic issues were considered more important. As a result of this lack of support, the Army -- particularly the colonial forces, withdrew from society, just as it had done following

the Dreyfus Affair. One glaring exception was that rather than totally isolating itself, as before, the Army became more active politically.

The beginning of hostilities in Indochina seemed to be a reflection of the events that took place in metropolitan France. The Japanese General Staff had long known that the railroads connecting Chinese territory with the port of Hai Phong in the Gulf of Tonkin were being used to transport American matériel to Chiang Kai-shek's armies. The French Governor General of Indochina, General Catroux, had constantly denied the Japanese permission to inspect the Tonkinese railroads. But on 19 June 1940, shortly after France's capitulation to Germany, Japan sent the General an ultimatum giving him twenty-four hours to accept the closing of the frontier with China accompanied by Japanese supervision in Indochina. France's military force in Indochina was incapable of resisting the Japanese aggression and attempts to win assistance from her western allies failed. On 20 June the American government informed the French Ambassador in Washington that the United States was unable to go to war against Japan. Scarcely a week later, the British General Staff in the Far East declaring that it was not in any position to offer the General military support and the British government had no desire to declare war on Japan.

The Vichy government dismissed General Catroux for having contact with the British General Staff and replaced him with Admiral Decoux. The Japanese, in turn, demanded the

right to send troops through Indochina and to exercise surveillance over all the airfields in the Peninsula. In spite of Admiral Decoux's recommendations against it, as he believed that Japan would not dare to attack Indochina, the Vichy government decided to accept the Japanese terms. To ensure total capitulation, the Japanese launched an attack on the French garrison at Langson. From that time on, Indochina was much more subject to Japanese policy decisions than to French authority.

Since they could not possibly fight the Japanese the French military cadres in Indochina limited themselves to fighting, alongside the police, against the various nationalist groups that were supported and armed by the Japanese. The struggle appeared to have the justification of patriotism, but, in actual practice, it made future dialogue with the nationalists even more difficult.

Until the end of 1943, the Vietminh's determination to overthrow the colonial regime did not prevent it from cooperating closely with the French Service de Renseignements and making numerous appeals to French patriots eager to take part in the common struggle against Japan. Ridding Indochina of the Japanese aggressors came first, the colonialist French would be next. However, on 8 December 1943, the Free French Government of de Gaulle publicly declared from Algiers its intention to reestablish French authority in Indochina, but nothing was said about the Peninsula's political future.

The only clear decision that General de Gaulle had made was that French forces would actively participate in the fight against the Japanese, because this was the only way, he believed, by which France could regain a foothold in Indochina, regardless what political developments might take place. Thus, a mission of primary importance was given to the Army. Unfortunately, it was not able to intervene until after the Japanese capitulation because the Allies had refused to transport the French troops offered by General de Gaulle to the east. The British and Chinese entered Saigon and Hanoi before the French.

The choice, as it happened, did not lie entirely in the hands of the French. Japanese policy in southeast Asia, in the last phase of the war, sought to strengthen the local nationalists everywhere and to annihilate the bases of European colonization, in order to prevent the return of the colonial powers even after the defeat of Japan. In Indochina, indications grew more frequent that the Japanese General Staff would not tolerate the French administration of Admiral Decoux for much longer and would put the Vietnamese nationalist groups it had been supporting in its place. Regardless of what actions the French took, it appeared unlikely that they could remain in power to the very last day of the Japanese occupation.

It was in France's best interest to postpone a confrontation as long as possible to make time for aid from the Allies to arrive, but also so the French forces stationed in

Indochina would not be entirely destroyed before they could fight the Japanese. But the impatience of the French officers aching to return to the conflict, the lack of prudence of the General Staff, and almost complete indiscretion in planning -- despite the repeated warnings given by the Allied General Staffs and the French Services de Renseignements -- tipped off the Japanese. On March 9, 1945 they attacked. Within twenty-four hours the French Army in Indochina no longer existed despite the desperate resistance put up by several garrisons. General Sabatier and General Alessandri escaped with a few thousand men, whom they led into China. Everywhere else, massacres brought to an end the French administrative and civilian presence in Indochina.

These defeats had a serious effect on the state of mind of the army later, when more and more numerous military cadres were sent to serve in the Far East. The French Army's return to combat in Indochina following victory in Europe did not have the fortunate psychological effect for its forces it should have had. Instead, it became the theme of countless polemics. For some, especially those close to General Leclerc and Admiral d'Argenlieu, Admiral Decoux's regime had compromised French authority beyond repair due to his collaboration with the Japanese. France had thus lost face in the eyes of the Indochinese peoples, some of whom had been able to fight Japan openly and, in so doing, gained the sympathy of the Allies. For others, the situation in Indochina was such that nothing could be done except to maintain the French

influence against all and in spite of all, in order that no new power, especially a communist one, should take over.

Thus, it was on the territory of the former French colonial empire that the Army had to assume the burden of this anti-communist war. In Indochina it learned concretely that the continuance and success of the Army were tied up with the defeat of communism. Thus in the mind of French officers there was established a direct and unequivocal relationship between the warfare of a colonial nature, which had originally been undertaken to maintain the French position, and the resistance put up by the western world to the plans of international communism. This attitude strengthened from 1950 on.

The officers arriving from France, where they had seen the army collaborate ever more closely in the Atlantic coalition, discovered in the Far East the same adversary that they were told they were confronting in Europe. In their minds there was no contradiction, or even any essential difference, between the mission entrusted to the army on the Rhine and the Danube and to the expeditionary force in Indochina. In the one region, the task was to prepare for a conflict with the Soviet Union; in the other a conflict was already under way against an advance guard of the Communist forces. Everything conspired to convince the army that Indochina was one of the hot spots in the Cold War. In these conditions, any criticism directed against the war in Vietnam appeared to threaten the resistance being put up by the French army, on

behalf of the western world against international communism. Criticism was in itself a sign of defeatism, and would soon be regarded as proof of treason.

For the Army, the history of the war in Indochina soon became the story of a unit that had ventured to a far-off land and had been forgotten by those who had sent it to fight and die. Its members became alienated from their own people, after they had been treacherously betrayed, first by the opponents of the war and then by the whole of public opinion, which was angered by the setbacks experienced, wearied of the financial burden, and disgusted by the stretching out of the conflict.

Isolating itself, the Army bitterly recriminated against the home country which seemed to have forgotten it. It was convinced that the war in Indochina was being ignored by French public opinion. Each officer, on his return from the Far East, had the greatest trouble in explaining to his family, friends and acquaintances the nature of the strange conflict he had been waging, in which the relative strength of the forces involved appeared to have no effect on the real outcome of the engagements. The frightful sacrifices made by officers and men, in a harsh climate and against a faceless adversary -- no one in France seemed to pay any attention to it. The press worked as one to maintain a relative unawareness of the real conditions in which the war was being fought; it was as if Indochina belonged to another world.

The soldier's feeling of malaise soon gave way to bitterness, revulsion and hostility. As their period of leave drew to an end, officers now sensed a kind of relief. Among their comrades, in the rice fields and on the high plateaux, they "belonged," they understood each other instinctively. But their own country had become foreign to them.

The National Assembly debated the war only at long intervals and it did not become a central concern for Frenchmen until it was approaching its end, and especially when the battle of Dien Bien Phu raised it to its most tragic and spectacular dimensions. Frenchmen were too preoccupied with pressing political, economic and security issues for Europe to give the events in Indochina anything more than casual notice. Important developments were occurring in the French Union.⁷ Public opinion was weary of the war; the PCF undertook a deliberate campaign opposing it. The Party used the press, especially their own papers, *L'Humanité* and *France Nouvelle*, to publicize all that was wrong about the war and

⁷ The Union was to consist of the French Republic (to include Algeria and the overseas departments and territories), French colonies in Black Africa and those 'associated states' which chose to join; Tunisia, Morocco, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, although governed by France, were legally foreign countries. The President of the Republic was *ex officio* President of the Union, though the Associated States had no say in his election; and the Union's High Council was to 'assist the government', which was responsible to the French Parliament Alone. These institutions had little life in them. Tunisia and Morocco would not join. Others resented the centralized constitution, especially Article 62 by which the Union's resources were pooled for a defense policy controlled exclusively from Paris. France promised in January 1954 that the Union would be based on liberal Preamble rather than the centralizing text of the constitution. It was too late; by 1956 all the Associated States, except Laos, were fully independent. (Williams, 1966)

the widespread support against the war. Party leaders openly criticized and denounced government policies and military actions. French support, the Party maintained, should be wholly behind Ho Chi Minh rather than Bao Dai, the French installed emperor. Demonstrations and strikes were sanctioned in which France's involvement was strongly protested. At Marseille in December, 1949, the dock workers were instructed to refuse to load armaments onto any vessel destined for Indochina.

The call was to abandon the fighting and return to the negotiating table. This mood grew stronger when the Vietnam National Congress resolved against remaining in the French Union in its existing form -- although, too late, a new doctrine of the Union's constitutional status was slowly being evolved in Paris. Even men of the Right began to ask why France should divert her forces from Europe to a Far Eastern war where victory could bring no credit.

In terms of European security, the first proposal for a European army had been made. It coincided remarkably with the first serious criticism of the Indochina war and with the early rumblings of the coming storm in the North African protectorates in late 1950.

The French forces in Indochina felt not merely the irony and sadness of soldiers whose country has forgotten them, but also a distrust, closer to contempt, of the hierarchy on which they depended -- the generals. The "affair of the gen-

erals,"⁸ which took place in August, 1949, raised serious concerns among most officers. Senior military and political officials were selling official reports to the representatives of the Chinese delegation and Vietminh. It was apparent that the "courier," a man with a criminal record who appeared to be nothing more than a shady racketeer, could exercise significantly more influence in political circles than the Army's Chief of Staff.

Thus the "affair of the generals" revealed the existence of close though sometimes mysterious ties between opposing political factions, rival generals and conflicting interests. The Cochin Chinese had their Socialists and their Radicals, who in their turn had their military men. Bao Daï and his associates had their *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* and their *Rassemblement du Peuple Français*, which in their turn also had their military men. This is a very rough description of the actual situation, but it had sufficient consistency to impress most of the officers posted in Indochina. They henceforth regarded the war, and the suffering it caused, as a mere mask over a shady universe inhabited by plasters and the Parties' campaign chests, ministerial portfolios and the stars that denoted a general. The corruption within its own

⁸ The affair involved the report General Revers had written after returning from an inspection tour in Indochina. The contents of the report were passed on to the Chinese and Vietminh delegations and it ultimately was broadcast in Indochina over Vietminh radio. It was later established that the General had handed over the report via a courier. See Gorce, 1963 and Williams, 1966 for excellent discussion of the affair.

senior ranks concerning this war gave rise to an almost entirely new feeling in the military mind, that of a still purely verbal but scarcely concealed rebelliousness against the military leaders, who were more or less identified with the political leaders and judged, like them, to be responsible for the war's blunders and setbacks.

The first signs of revolt appeared in the spring of 1954. Laniel's government was intensely unpopular among the Left and particularly within the Army. The European Defense Community was condemned by numerous generals, headed by Marshal Juin, who quarrelled publicly with Plevén, the Minister of Defense. During the battle for Dien Bien Phu, Plevén and Laniel were assaulted by ex-soldiers and serving officers at a war memorial ceremony with the police showing little enthusiasm in their defense. Soon, however, the military enthusiasts of the Right acquired a new target for their hatred -- Mendès-France.

In May, Dien Bien Phu fell. Five weeks and three votes of confidence later the Laniel government was voted out. President Coty summoned Mendès-France, the Radical leader, who promised to resign either if he owed his investiture to Communist support or if he failed to make peace in Indochina within a month. He needed 314 non-Communist votes to win, to everyone's surprise, he received 320. (Williams, 1966) The deputies were sufficiently impressed by the Prime Minister's sudden popularity in the country to give him massive majorities for his settlement in Indochina.

In the eyes of the veterans from Indochina and the military as a whole Mendès-France's settlement was seen as selling out the Army . Defeat in Indochina added a new dimension to the problems the Fourth Republic was experiencing: the anger of the army officers over the futile sacrifice of their comrades and their determination never to allow its repetition. By 1956 officers such as General Faure were already conspiring against the regime, and in 1958 President Coty was officially warned by the senior commanders four days before 13 May that the army would not tolerate a 'government of scuttle'. By sabotage, blackmail and insubordination the administrators and soldiers tried to eliminate, and succeeded in restricting, the freedom of action of their political masters.

The Army was traditionally officered by old Catholic families with no great love for the Republic, but despite occasional distractions, it had accepted loyally, for generations, that its highest duty was unconditional obedience to any legal government -- although in 1940 it was taught a different lesson.⁹ In the Fourth Republic, as in the Third, there were complaints of political interference with military promotions. Marshal Juin repeatedly encouraged military opposition to government policy, especially over the European Defense Community. But these incidents, however uncomfort-

⁹ In 1940 the Army learned that there were higher duties than obedience to the legal government.

able or discreditable for a government, were not dangerous for the regime.

Indochina taught the leaders of military opinion that warfare could not be divorced from political direction either in the field or in the capital, and made them contemptuous of politicians who would neither fight the war seriously nor end it honorably.

The French Army left Indochina with a bad conscience gnawing at them over what they considered a base betrayal of the Catholic population there. If the *sale guerre* had turned its French Army leaders into superb warriors, it had, however, also made them highly political animals. And the peace, the first since September 1939, would last just three months and four days.

Until World War II the French Army maintained its traditional role of faithfully serving the legally elected political authorities of France without regard to their political orientation. Critics considered events such as the Dreyfus Affair to be ample evidence that the Army was inherently untrustworthy and simply waiting for the opportunity to overthrow the Republic in order to reinstate either a dictatorial or a monarchical system of government, but the facts simply do not support such a hypothesis. However, after over one hundred years of remaining more or less politically neutral, it took only twenty short years, between the fall of the Third Republic and the creation of the Fifth Republic, for

military leaders to shed their apolitical customs and take an active role in bringing to power a leader they considered worthy of the position of President of the Republic.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Algeria

The previous three chapters focused on the impact of several events on civil-military relations and the Army's reaction to those events during the preceding eighty years; this last chapter will concentrate on the event that toppled the Fourth Republic and its aftermath.

Treize mai has been considered as the point at which the French Army shed its tradition of obedience and intervened directly in the politics of the Nation. Before one can understand the events and individual actions that took place on that fateful day, it is necessary to understand the situation in Algeria prior to the coup.

THE WAR THAT COULD NOT BE LOST

Scarcely four months after ending the war in Indochina by a cease-fire, the French Army was committed to another "revolutionary" war, this time in Algeria. The war in Algeria has been touted as the war that, "even against the will of God or man, could not be lost." (Kelly, 1965) But more importantly, it was the straw that broke the Army's back in terms of intervention into politics and traditional obedience to the government.

There were three primary reasons for which the French Army could not afford to lose this war. First, still reeling

from their recent defeat in Indochina and the subsequent erosion of public support, the prestige of the Army had reached its lowest level in nearly half a century. Therefore, a critical objective for the Army in this war was to restore the prestige it had lacked for so long.

The years of fighting in Indochina had further isolated the Army from the Nation. In February, 1947, when the Indochinese war was still young, a national poll found that a small majority of the respondents favored the use of force to put down the Vietminh rebellion. But two months later 55 percent of all respondents favored negotiations against 29 percent who favored continued use of force. (Ambler, 1966)

The same pattern of oscillating public support for the Algerian War was evident in polls conducted by the same institute as previously. Between April, 1956, and January, 1958, about half of the respondents felt that the goal of maintaining *Algérie française* was hopeless and that France would be out of Algeria within five to ten years. As for preferences in the conduct of Algerian policy, by January, 1958, 56 percent of all respondents favored negotiations with the rebels -- an option the Army found absolutely unacceptable -- while only 26 percent opposed such negotiations. (Ambler, 1966)

What opinion polls could not measure was the intensity of feeling among the respondents, which was remarkably low, in regards to the colonial war. Only the extreme Right and extreme Left generated much excitement over the wars in

Indochina and Algeria. The troublesome effect this attitude had on the Army was evident in the editorial an officer wrote in the *Message*, an Army paper, two months prior to 13 May 1958. He wrote:

Let us say it clearly: If the Nation were to disinterest itself in the Algerian War as it disinterested itself in the Indochinese War, the Army could not alone support the weight of the struggle without grave risk for our institutions themselves. (Gorce, 1963)

The Army's use of torture in Algeria severely diminished public support for their "cause." During police actions, resorting to torture had been routine and condoned by senior officers and government officials who believed that a victorious army would not be reproached for such excesses. However, this issue produced the most passionate controversy and violent attacks on the French Army. Local initiative and weakness of governmental controls led to a clash between the Army and "the system."

The Army's use of torture began in 1956 when subordinate officers in the field zealously attempted to gain valuable information. By 1957 it had become a frequent and even systematic practice in some units, notably in Algiers, where the special police powers had been delegated to the Army by the Mollet government. The governmental officials allowed Massu's *paras* to continue their use of torture because of their success in at last destroying the FLN terrorist network in Algiers even though official government statements continued to affirm that the use of torture was forbidden, rare in

practice, and punished whenever proven. The protests in metropolitan France against the alleged incidences of torture only confirmed, in the minds of many officers, the opinion that the national spirit was failing under the onslaught of the Left, and that the Army was now the Nation's only guardian.

Second, losing the war in Algeria would jeopardize the very existence of the French Empire and the grandeur of France. The Army's administrative involvement in North Africa dated back to 1832, when the future General Lamoricière was put in charge of the "special bureau for Arab affairs." His task was to maintain relations with the tribes "with prudence and success" and, after 1840, to ensure the permanent pacification of the tribes by means of an honest and coherent administration and to prepare the way for French colonization and commerce. This was the origin of the officers' corps which, thanks to the "Arab bureaux" and "native affairs", would create its own customs and traditions as well as an entire way of living and exercising command. They shared the common desire that had led them to give up their former posts and to enter a world dominated simultaneously by tradition and by freedom of action. Each officer received the same authority, but all of them established their own independent policy. (Gorce, 1963) Whole classes of officers lived out the adventure of soldiers who were administrators, builders and judges who concerned themselves strictly with "native affairs" rather than traditional soldiering. This

"freedom of action" created a sentimental attraction for North Africa among most officers. The Maghreb remained the sanctuary where the Army still was glamorized with the prestige of its noble institutions, whereas in France itself there was nothing but the monotonous, impoverished existence in the garrison. They looked on Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia as the firm, indisputable bastions of French power in Africa and they believed that French authority in the region was both natural and necessary. The French Army very naturally came to the conclusion that in all conceivable circumstances its power must be maintained in the Maghreb.

The loss of the Protectorate in Morocco in March, 1956, was a heavy blow to the traditional mentality of the colonial army. Since it came at a time when the Algerian revolution had already assumed serious proportions, the Maghreb seemed seized by a concerted revolutionary movement that not only threatened the national honor and heritage but jeopardized the Army's overseas sphere of action. The Army's horizon seemed doomed to shrink to the garrisons of France and Germany. For a whole generation of officers who, during World War II and then in the Far East, had lived a life marked by departure, new surroundings, adventure and combat, the future threatened to be a sort of bourgeois retirement in the outmoded setting of European barracks. If Algeria, too, were to be lost through blunder or bargained away by a "gutless" government like those of Mendès-France and Faure, the Army, through no fault of its own, would be thrust back

on the *métropole* where it no longer had the sense of belonging and where its spirit and particularity would be snuffed out. Hell would open, and the soldier would be drowned in the aimless, godless, and self-seeking national life, the life of "la bagnole et le métro à six heures." (Kelly, 1965)

Indeed, in Algeria the Army was entering the last stage in the history of its colonial missions. A kind of anguish prevented the military cadres from accepting, without rancor or hesitancy, the idea of the return to an uninviting homeland. There was nothing political about such a feeling, which involved neither an ideological choice nor rebelliousness vis-à-vis the regime. But it forged a new link between the Army and the Algerian adventure.

Third, the French Army fought this war for seven years, more or less convinced that Algerian nationalism was directly or obscurely linked to the expansion of the worldwide Communist movement and this was one of the fundamental tenets of the doctrine of *la guerre révolutionnaire*.

The Communist Party in Algeria was an adjunct of the *Parti Communiste Français* and not directly involved with Algerian nationalism in the beginning. However, it did make certain concessions to the blossoming revolutionary movement. At the outbreak of war the Communists willingly opposed French authority. Their involvement is suggested by a mysterious trip Benoît Franchon, chief of the Communist labor union, the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), made to

the Aurès region in October, 1954. (The initial attacks were conducted in the same area one month later)

The Communists had several assets that were extremely attractive to the nationalists. In addition to their extensive international network and command of vital funds, they possessed a daily newspaper, the *Alger Républicain*, which would serve as a major outlet of FLN expression until shut down by the authorities in 1955. Joint action was also undertaken by Communist and nationalist terrorist cells; at the height of the terror it was not uncommon for the Sûreté to uncover FLN bombs with timing mechanisms coming from Communist sources of manufacture.

However, the PCA made its inevitable attempts to dogmatize and direct the revolution; the FLN grew wary and resisted this pressure. The Algerian Communist Party, never more than 12,000 strong, was soon engulfed in the generalized nationalist feeling. At first, like Messali's *Mouvement Nationaliste Algérien*, it attempted to retain its particularity by establishing a unique guerilla zone; but by 1 June 1956, in the more promising interests of infiltration, this idea was abandoned, and the Communist "Freedom Fighters" were directed to integrate with the Army of National Liberation.

By 1956 the Communists had succeeded in going underground in the Algerian liberation movement. As fighters and terrorists they were welcomed by the FLN; as agitators they were muted, because the Algerians promoted their own forms of agitation and propaganda. Still, it is clear that the

Communists never came close to capturing either the leadership or the ideological direction of the movement. (Kelly, 1965)

In early 1954, the General Staffs were aware that in a very short period North African nationalism would present both a military and a political problem. Since that summer, a kind of cleavage had developed between those who at any price wanted to avoid starting in Africa what had turned out so badly in Asia, and those who regarded the defense of the Maghreb as the first national imperative. Military leaders knew they could not win a war against terrorism and guerrilla tactics using solely military means; it would require a strong, unified political front as well. The lack of guidance from Paris concerning policies and objectives frustrated military and civilian leaders in Algeria. Drawing from their experiences in Indochina, French leaders implemented a vigorous program of military "pacification" aimed at protecting the civilian population while smothering pockets of resistance in the outlying, rural regions.

The *Sections Administratives Spécialisées* (SAS) and the *Sections Administratives Urbaines* (SAU) were formed to address the administrative problems in Algeria which, according to former civilian leaders, had become a military problem. Their primary mission was to reestablish contact with the rural and urban populations respectively -- contact that had been abruptly breached by the end of 1956 when the FLN had almost succeeded in creating lasting racial hostility -- or

to forge a new kind of rapport that had never really existed between Frenchmen and Muslims.

In the early phases of the "pacification," between 1956 and 1957, the new SAS officer often faced very special conditions. Sometimes the heavy hand of the FLN ruled by night, terrorizing the people to prevent them from making any contacts with the French. In other instances, whole villages had fled and had to be enticed back to their domiciles. To obtain any degree of success, precise local military operations demonstrating that the French could effectively control a given area by night or day were needed.

Once the "pacification" of the region had been effectively achieved, the SAS had to supervise the reorganization of the "normal" life of the community, develop work projects for the people, and see to the distribution of food and medical aid. In effect, the SAS supplemented the "pacification" system by recreating maximum self-sufficiency in the villages.

Essentially the same system was utilized in urban areas. The 'Battle of Algiers', fought by General Massu's famed Tenth Paratroop Division, illustrates the controversial methods employed to make "winning the hearts and minds" of the people successful.

The FLN knew the critical importance of spreading terror and disorder at the very nerve center of the French military and administrative network. Creating panic in Algiers was clearly worth a score of victories elsewhere.

By the spring of 1956 a powerful and concentrated terrorist organization was operating. It had seized control of the Casbah from the forces of order. Not only did this demonstrable strength permit the FLN's network to collect important sums of money through intimidation of the local population, but it led to intensive propaganda and terrorist activity which, by early 1957, had brought both European and Muslim Algiers to an almost intolerable state of nervous tension and seemed to have alienated the two communities beyond repair.

On 5 November 1956, French and British forces went ashore at the north end of the Suez Canal, allegedly to restore order in the canal and Sinai areas following Israel's precautionary attack on Egypt. In undertaking this action, France had three main goals: the assurance of normal sources of petroleum, which would be jeopardized if the oil-exporting states came under Nasser's domination or if he closed the canal to traffic; the protection of the friendly state of Israel; and, most importantly, the possibility of striking at the heart of the Algerian rebellion's major supply base.

After anticipation of an enormous strategic success, the abandonment of the Suez operation due to pressures from the United States and the UN was more than bitter for the French forces. It shook the regime, and made the Army resolutely suspicious of its Anglo-Saxon allies, not to mention the United Nations.

Among those forced to retire in disgrace with victory almost in sight was General Jacques Massu's Tenth Parachute Division. It was this highly frustrated unit which, a few months later, would turn the tide of the terrorist battle in Algiers through recourse to various methods that were not an accredited part of regular warfare. Massu and his troops arrived in Algiers to take charge of the situation on 27 January 1957, at a time when the frenzy of rebel bombings was at its height, with cafés, dance halls, and busses blowing up at will. The attitudes of both communities (the European Algerians and the Muslim Algerians) were tensely hostile: there was the danger that the region might explode in revolution, or the equal possibility that the European civilians, blind with fear and fury, might take matters into their own hands.

In January 1957 there had been more than two hundred victims of indiscriminate bombing. The FLN's strangulation of business activity among the Muslims had been nearly complete. A general strike was announced for 28 January. The relentless efforts of Massu in compelling merchants to keep their shops open frustrated the strike attempt. From then on, the FLN control began to wane; orders for boycotts and economic sabotage were only partially carried out. The slow but inevitable deterioration of the rebel network proceeded. On 24 September, Colonel Godard personally received the surrender of Yacef Saadi, the rebel leader in Algiers. By mid-October the terror had been effectively checked.

Had the terrorists triumphed in Algiers in 1957 by forcing the two communities into civil war -- as they came close to doing -- the total perspective of the conflict would have been changed, and might have caused the French to lose heart and abruptly relinquish the territory, as had happened in Tunisia and Morocco. On the other hand, Massu's triumph over the rebel network supplied energy to the "pacification" and a false sense of eventual victory.

As a result of the victory of Algiers, the French military command and informed, active segments of the civilian population now believed that they had within their grasp the means to defeat the enemy anywhere at his own game. From this point on, dogmatism in theories of war and activism in civilian politics became intertwined and took on a common objective -- *Algérie française*. Soldiers and civilians now set in motion the extraordinary series of events that would for years keep Algiers at a boil and shake Paris periodically. (Kelly, 1965)

The straw that would break the Army's tradition of avoiding direct political intervention was cast in early in 1958. In retaliation for FLN raids launched from Tunisian bases, the French joint commander in Algeria, General Salan, approved an air attack on the Tunisian border town of Sakiet. The raid killed seventy-five persons and wounded over a hundred more, but it turned out to be morally disastrous. The attack took place on a market day and with children in a school believed to have been abandoned. Thus, the Army was

accused of breaking the international rules of warfare by attacking innocent civilians. Intended as a warning to the Tunisian government, the bombing was ordered without the approval of the French government, then headed by Gaillard. The government's directives granted the troops stationed along the frontier the "right of pursuit," however, disagreement still separated the Ministry of National Defense in Paris and the General Staffs in Algeria. The former would agree only to land operations immediately following attacks that had originated on Tunisian territory. The latter objected that such operations would inevitably be long drawn out and result in doubtful effectiveness, whereas aerial retaliations would be much more expeditious and would have a greater punitive value.

Military authorities had become virtual masters in Algeria and were apparently unwilling to risk a governmental veto on the Sakiet raid plan. Foreign Minister Pineau stated on 11 February that the bombing was "a deplorable mistake" which had not been authorized by the government. Yet, perhaps fearful of the Army reaction to a denunciation, Prime Minister Gaillard decided to accept responsibility for the Sakiet raid and apparently persuaded Pineau to deny the remarks made in his interview. Gaillard went so far as to accept the Army's story that most of the victims had been Algerian rebels.

The consequences of the raid were (1) an angry Tunisian protest placing in doubt the future of French bases in

Tunisia; (2) an American "good offices" mission; (3) a hostile French popular reaction against American interference; (4) a further weakening of the authority of the Paris government; and (5) a strong additional impulse to military and civilian activists in Algeria to stand up to Paris. (Ambler, 1966)

The Sakiet affair made French political milieux understand to what extent the Algerian War was isolating the country. The reactions of international opinion and the Anglo-American diplomatic intervention whose "good offices" might lead to political intervention in Algeria, harshly exposed this isolation. There was some measure of injustice in the situation, for the initial responsibility for the incidents of the Tunisian border belonged unquestionably to the FLN and the Tunisian government that tolerated its activities. The defeat of the Gaillard government in Paris was due as much to the sense of exasperation in political milieux as to any fear that was present. The ensuing crisis marked the Assembly's refusal to tolerate the rule of the most uncompromising supporters of a French Algeria. It was becoming clear that some action would be necessary to counter the "intermediate solutions" which, in the eyes of the military and of the European community in Algeria, were only the first phase in the process leading to independence. That action was carried out only three months later by the military leaders in Algeria.

13 MAY 1958

On the night of 9 to 10 May 1958, Generals Salan, Massu, Allard and Jouhaud sent a telegram to General Ely, the Chief of Staff for National Defense, and asked him to communicate their message to the President of the Republic. "The Army in Algeria is disturbed," they declared, "... concerning the French population of the interior, which feels deserted, and the Moslem French who, in greater numbers every day, have been once more placing their trust in France, confident in our reiterated promises never to abandon them. The French Army, as one man, would look on the abandonment of this national heritage as an outrage, and it would be impossible to predict how it might react in its despair." The four generals further requested General Ely to "call the attention of the President of the Republic to our anguish, which could be removed only by a government resolutely decided to maintain our flag in Algeria." (Gorce, 1963) Paris had been duly warned that if an "acceptable" government was not forthcoming, the Army was prepared to turn against its civilian masters in a reaction of despair.

Thus, May, 1958, marks the official entry into politics of the French Army as an institution when it rejected the authority of the Fourth Republic. It is significant to note that the authors of this telegram constituted the military hierarchy in Algeria. General Salan was the Commandant Supérieur Interarmées, General Massu commanded the Tenth

Parachutist Division which occupied Algiers and the surrounding regions, General Jouhaud commanded the Fifth Aerial District (the air forces), and General Allard commanded the Tenth Military District (the land forces). Equally significant was their intent to inform the highest officials of the Republic that the Army could no longer remain indifferent vis-à-vis the policy of French governments in Algeria and that should Algeria in fact be "abandoned," there could be no telling how the Army would react.

Actually, civilians, not officers, plotted the uprising of 13 May; there were some exceptions however. Gaullists, Poujadists, and other opponents of the Fourth Republic in both Algiers and Paris hoped to capitalize on the Algerian War and the bitterness it had produced among French settlers in Algeria and among the Army cadre. General Cherrière, a retired, but former French commander in Algeria, led a nameless and clandestine "counterrevolutionary" organization in the *métropole*. He was assisted by General Chassin, who remained on active duty until shortly before 13 May. Within metropolitan France, Cherrière and Chassin had the cooperation of the Veterans of Indochina, a group considered to be very volatile. In Algeria they claimed the support of the activist winegrower and former Cagoulard, Robert Martel. Among military officers on active duty, Chassin and Cherrière won the inherent support of General Miquel, commander of the Toulouse military region, and Colonel Thomazo, head of the

auxiliary territorial units in the Algiers area, both of whom were also solicited by Gaullist conspirators.

On 13 May, as the situation intensified, none of the "leaders" had much control over things. A day of demonstrations in honor of three French soldiers who were killed earlier by FLN activists had been ordered; it was to culminate in a ceremony at the monument to the dead. Generals Salan, Massu, Allard, Jouhaud, and Admiral Auboyneau appeared briefly at the ceremony amid cries of "the Army to power" and "Massu to power." At that point, without the knowledge of the Gaullist contingent of the Vigilance Committee, Martel and Poujadist leaders in the Committee launched an attack on the Government General Building. Pushing aside security police and a handful of paratroopers, who hardly resisted, a few hundred demonstrators smashed in the Government General gate with a truck and took over the building.

After the Government General Building had fallen to the activists, General Massu arrived, vented his anger at the leaders, then proceeded to negotiate a settlement. In order to prevent a catastrophe, Massu agreed to preside over the Committee of Public Safety, which included local activist leaders and those military officers who were most "acceptable" to the European community. Massu then telephoned Paris and spoke with Lacoste. The general declared the following:

We have organized a Committee of Vigilance in order to avoid spilling blood. I am the provisional President ... The

Committee will not make administrative decisions, this is not a *coup d'état*. We are here to affirm the desire of Algeria to remain French. ... For that, we want a government of Public Safety. The Committee is waiting for this government and as soon as it is formed, we will back off. (Debatty, 1960)

During the night of 13 to 14 May General Salan was vested with full civil powers in the city of Algiers by Gaillard and then, the following morning, by Pflimlin, Gaillard's successor. Salan then proceeded to tip-toe delicately between legality and rebellion, moving progressively toward the latter. The military commander continued to report to Paris and assure the Pflimlin government (which had just been invested) of his loyalty. Yet he maintained full power over the whole of Algeria without authorization from Paris. He called for a government of public safety in Paris; he publicly added his voice to the cries of "Vive de Gaulle" on 15 May before a crowd at the Government General in Algiers, he gave legal sanction to Massu's insurrectionary Vigilance Committee; he secretly contacted de Gaulle; and finally, he took command of "Operation Resurrection," designed to overthrow the Fourth Republic by force, if necessary.

Treize mai was the work of activist leaders of the local European population; yet these men were not responsible for either of the two major objectives the coup came to represent -- Gaullism and integration. The Gaullist objective was to reinstall their strong leader, de Gaulle, into power in order to rectify the mistakes of the weak Fourth Republic governments. They had widespread support among the military

thanks to Massu, a "Gaullist of 1940," and to de Gaulle himself, who spoke and acted discreetly and in time, and who, though not immensely popular among career officers, was nevertheless a military man. Faced with such opposition, Generals Cherrière and Chassin quickly lost any control they might have had over the uprising.

"Integration," with its aim of radical political equality of Muslims and Europeans in Algeria, was the price *pié* *noir* leaders were forced to pay for critical Army support. Integration as a theme was largely the product of the Fifth Bureau, which oversaw the "pacification" program. Working with Colonel Godard's networks within the European and Muslim populations in Algiers, seizing especially upon contacts with reservists, veterans, and local auxiliary territorial units, the Fifth Bureau helped to develop an attitude among the population which facilitated the uprising. In defense of integration, psychological action officers and officers of the SAU all cooperated in staging one of the most dramatic events of the May crisis. Colonels Trinquier and Godard personally went to the Casbah to negotiate and organize a Muslim demonstration for 16 May. Thousands of Muslims flooded out of the Casbah to join thousands of Europeans in a festival of integration. This was the greatest success French psychological action in Algeria would achieve. (Ambler, 1966) Muslims and *pié* *noirs* were sincerely moved at the time; but Algerian nationalism on the one hand and racism and privilege on the

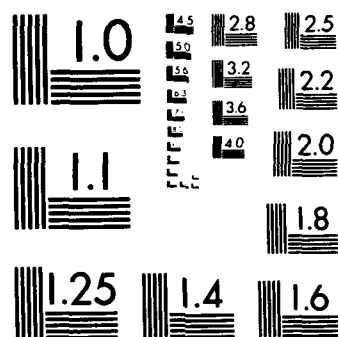
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other were too deeply rooted to be overcome for long by a revival meeting.

In metropolitan France, widespread support for the Army was apparent. Jules Moch, Minister of Interior, later told a Socialist Party conference, "Out of nine officers commanding military regions [in the *métropole*], at least four -- with authority over forty departments -- did not hide the fact that they were in sympathy with Algiers." (Kelly, 1965) On 15 May general Challe, deputy Chief of Staff for Defense, visited Mollet to inform him that the armed forces as a whole were sympathetic to the dissident generals in Algeria. After this announcement, General Challe was immediately assigned to Brest for having ordered twelve paratroop planes to Algeria on 11 May, though Challe insisted the planes were necessary reinforcements and not intended to support an airborne assault on Paris. The Chief of Staff for National Defense, General Ely, had urged Pflimlin to resign on several occasions; on 16 May he submitted his own resignation, purportedly because of the action taken against General Challe. Ely's successor, General Lorillot, followed his appointment with a quick cable to General Salan stating that he was accepting the position only in order to support the Army in Algeria and maintain the unity of the Army.

The government's few firm supporters in the Army were badly outnumbered. Operation Resurrection, the plan for an armored and airborne assault on Paris, would be devastating. The threat of the assault was more than a bluff, government

officials in Paris were subjected to a well-orchestrated campaign of mysterious radio messages, anonymous telephone calls, and rumors of impending invasion -- all designed to frighten the government into abdication. Command of the operation was given to General Miquel by Massu and Salan. He was to utilize the paratroopers under his command in the Toulouse military region supported by more paratroopers who would be flown from Algeria and an armored group in Rambouillet, near Paris. Had de Gaulle agreed to the landings (which he never did), or had he not been invested by the National Assembly on 1 June, Operation Resurrection probably would have gone into effect.

Army officers were clearly unwilling to come to the defense of *le système*. The defense of French Algeria had become a sacred cause for a large segment of the Army, integrally linked with safeguarding not only the French nation but also military honor, prestige, and power. The most serious military grievance against the "system" was its lack of determination in directing the fight in Algeria. On 4 June 1958, when de Gaulle arrived in Algiers as Prime Minister, General Massu introduced him to the Committee of Public Safety for Algeria with these words:

The rush of the Algiers crowds toward the Government General Building was intended to express refusal to continue to accept successive capitulations, the abandonment which appeared unavoidable, the acceleration of French decadence through the fatal and thoughtless action of irresponsible governments subject to the haggling and incompetence of the party politicians who made up the Parliament. (Ambler, 1966)

For Massu, as for numerous other military spokesmen, the Fourth Republic had long since lost its legitimacy.

The behavior of the Army in May, 1958, was not simply an obedient response to a few dissident commanders at the top of the military hierarchy. On the contrary, hostility toward *le système* was probably greatest among younger officers, especially in Algeria, who held positions below the highest command posts. In Algeria it was not Salan who formally joined the insurrection but Massu, whose captains, majors, and colonels had facilitated the organization of the European settlers for direct political action during the battle of Algiers. In the *métropole* General Ely and others like him leaned toward Algiers largely because of a fear of splitting the Army.

If the great majority of French officers had lost respect for the Fourth Republic, most of them probably would have hesitated to turn on their civilian leaders except for two factors: the choice brought about by the action of Massu and his officers in Algiers and the general dislike civilians, as well as military officers, had toward the "system." In 1958 the Fourth Republic found its authority in an advanced stage of disintegration, not only with respect to the Army, but also with respect to police, gendarmes, some civil administrators, and the French population in general. Even if Operation Resurrection had been launched, there probably would have been no civil war. Police and security troops in the *métropole* were strongly anti-parliamentary in outlook.

The Minister of the Interior quickly became aware of the humiliating weakness of the reliable assets at his disposal. He received overwhelming proof of his helplessness on 24 May when Massu and Salan sent a force commanded by Colonel Thomazo to Corsica in order to send a message to Paris. The "delegation" succeeded in recruiting the support of the paratroop forces stationed in Corsica; they then marched on the departmental capital of Ajaccio, where police and gendarmes put up no opposition as civilian demonstrators invaded public buildings and formed a Committee of Public Safety. Reinforcing gendarme units dispatched by air from Nice placed themselves under the orders of dissident military authorities immediately upon their arrival. The prefect of Corsica resisted, as did the deputy mayor of the city of Bastia; yet all but one of the six underprefects rallied to Algiers.

On 28 May, encouraged by President Coty, and despite the support of the National Assembly, Pflimlin resigned. Coty then threatened to resign himself if de Gaulle were not made premier. On 1 June the National Assembly installed de Gaulle as Prime Minister and gave him the task of furnishing a new constitution to be approved by referendum. The Army's intervention had clearly been successful, but it would become quickly evident that their objective of maintaining *Algérie française* was not de Gaulle's plan.

AFTERMATH

Shortly after being reinstated as Chief of Staff for National Defense in the summer of 1958, General Ely published an article calling the armed forces to obedience. He showered praise on the Army for having prevented a cleavage between Algeria and the *métropole* in May, 1958, and then dismissed the fears of those who saw the Army as a threat to civil authority: "The Army always remains in its place with a strong government and when it knows it is being commanded." (Ambler, 1966) Without doubt, de Gaulle was a strong political leader with firm popular and parliamentary support. However, in the first three years of the Fifth Republic, he would face two extraordinary challenges: an attempted repeat performance of *treize mai* in January, 1960; and an open, aggressive military revolt in April, 1961.

Until 16 September 1959, de Gaulle and the Army in Algeria coexisted without great mutual trust, but also without serious conflict. Government officials were annoyed at times by a tendency of military authorities in Algiers to act on policy matters without government authorization. And there were certainly some officers in Algeria who, like General Massu, felt the President was wrong in ordering military personnel out of all committees of public safety in September, 1958, and in transferring several officers out of Algiers, among them General Salan, who was recalled to Paris in December, 1958. However, a climate of inherent military

revolt began to form only after de Gaulle's announcement on 16 September, that the Algerian population was to be allowed to choose independence, association, or integration with France.

Shortly after that announcement, the Chief of the Fifth Bureau for Algeria, Colonel Gardes, persuaded General Challe, Salan's successor, to call together representatives from all army corps, zones, and sectors to inform them of the Army's intent to continue campaigning for French Algeria. Over the next several months, until his transfer in April, 1960, Challe publicly continued to defend the goal of French Algeria in his speeches and even in his formal directives. He was never reprimanded by de Gaulle for taking that position, though in his own statements the President of the Republic clearly avoided any commitment to integration.

De Gaulle increased anxiety in military circles in Algeria when in his press conference on 10 November 1959 he called for cease-fire negotiations with rebel leaders and promised that the self-determination referendum would be "entirely free" and open to all Algerians. This pronouncement had a stunning effect on the French Algeria partisans. By mid-January, 1960, General Massu was in an explosive mood. As "superprefect" of Algiers, in addition to his role as commander of the Algiers Army Corps, Massu felt that it was difficult for him not to engage in politics. "That was the role of civil authorities ... which I was [in his capacity as "superprefect"]." (Ambler, 1966) The general apparently was

unaware that, in principle at least, the prefect's job was in essence, apolitical. And, clearly, he no longer shared the same political opinions as de Gaulle. Massu's outrage was publicized in an interview in which he remarked, "We no longer understand his policy," and in when referring to the *treize mai* uprising, Massu suggested, "he was the only man at our disposition. But perhaps the Army made a mistake there. ... The first question to be asked is to know when a successor to General de Gaulle will arrive. ... The Army has the strength. It has not shown it so far. The occasion has not presented itself; but, in a certain situation, the Army would establish its power." (Ambler, 1966)

Naturally, after his remarks were published, Massu was recalled to Paris and relieved of his command. With Massu gone the only key military figure of the *treize mai* still left in Algiers was Colonel Godard, now Directeur de la Sûreté for all of Algeria.

Deprived of the last of their military defenders of the rebellion, leaders in Algiers rallied the auxiliary territorial units in that city and launched what was intended to be a repeat performance in "republic-busting." Military authorities in Algiers refused to allow an assault on public buildings; yet paratroopers ordered to the scene conveniently arrived too late on 24 January to assist security guards in a move to clear armed demonstrators. A fierce battle ensued between the well-armed demonstrators and the security police. Civilian casualties totaled 6 dead and 24 wounded, compared

to 14 dead and 123 wounded among the security guards. (Ambler, 1966) Thereafter the paratroopers moved in as arbitrators, more interested in forcing Paris to retract its self-determination policy than in routing armed demonstrators out of their barricaded positions. De Gaulle held firm, and a week after the crisis had begun, paratroop commanders on the scene finally began reacting as disciplined soldiers, rather than as arbitrators and negotiators. Shorn of tacit military support, the rebellion crumbled.

As in May, 1958, the leaders of the immediate uprising were not military officers but local civilian activists. But even more so than on 13 May, Army officers, especially those of the Fifth Bureau, were largely responsible for creating the means and the will for revolt. Auxiliary and locally recruited territorial units provided the weapons and most of the manpower which were turned on the gendarmes on 24 January.

When Prime Minister Debré arrived in Algiers on the night of 25 January, he was told by the generals on hand that the troops would never fire on the demonstrators. The colonels were even more blunt and rude. Argoud announced that Challe would be forced to take charge if de Gaulle refused to renounce his self-determination policy. Debré returned to Paris thinking that Algiers was in the hands of a "soviet of colonels."

Thereafter the insurgents' position weakened as a result of a series of developments. The Army attempted to organize

another massive Muslim-European rally similar to the one organized on 16 May 1958; it was a complete failure. Delouvrier, the Resident Minister, persuaded Challe to join him on 28 January in an escape from the city which neither man controlled. General Ely, reinstated as Chief of Staff for National Defense, arrived in Algiers and talked severely with the colonels, though earlier the same day he had urged Debré to make firm promises regarding the future of Algeria. Finally, and most important, de Gaulle addressed the nation and the Army on 29 January conceding to the latter the right to supervise future elections in Algeria and to select the proper means for restoring order in the present crisis. He was firm and convincing, however, in regard to those officers who wished to formulate the nation's Algerian policy, his warning was clear enough: "No soldier may associate himself at any time, even passively, with the rebellion without committing a grave mistake." His words had a powerful effect on a hesitant officer corps in Algeria. (Ambler, 1966) Shortly after the broadcast of his address in Algeria, while the Algiers colonels were realizing that it was all over, telegrams from unit commanders and SAS officers flowed into Delouvrier's office proclaiming Army loyalty to the head of the Republic.

In contrast to the *treize mai* crisis, this time the Army elsewhere in Algeria had remained loyal, with few exceptions. After the President of the Republic had spoken, the Tenth Paratroop Division was replaced by regular infantry troops,

the territorial units were called to active duty, and activist forces were left only to surrender or flee. De Gaulle's strong public support in the *métropole* and his commanding manner in addressing the Army and the Nation contributed to the realization that this time the unity of the Army could be preserved only through loyalty to the government. For the first time since 1956 Algiers no longer gave orders to Paris. But much remained to be done before Algiers both understood and obeyed Paris. (Pickles, 1963)

The Barricades crisis served as a warning to de Gaulle that the Army's loyalty could not be assured through generous delegation of civil powers. Prefects and sub-prefects gradually regained their civil powers wherever possible. The whole structure of the Fifth Bureau was dissolved. *Le Bled* officers were moved to Paris, and the very term "psychological action" soon became taboo in official military circles. Officers who had encouraged the insurrection or attempted to profit from it were removed from their posts. Among them were Colonels Gardes, who was the sole officer to be tried and subsequently acquitted, Argoud, Broizat and Godard. General Challe was transferred in April, 1960, because he had not been firm enough with his colonels and with the insurgents in January.

Transfers could not halt a renewal of anti-Gaullist conspiracy, however, as the President of the Republic spoke progressively of a future "Algerian Algeria," and then of an Algerian Republic." The group of military conspirators led

by Colonel Argoud acted on the sentiment of "halte à l'abandon", which was widespread in the Army particularly during the winter of 1960-61. General Challe resigned from active duty in December, 1960, in protest over de Gaulle's Algerian policy while other prominent leaders, including Marshal Juin, General Valluy and General Zeller, spoke out against the policy.

For the first time, a purely military conspiracy was bred and implemented by the colonels -- Argoud, Gardes, Broizat, Lacheroy, Godard -- and four generals whom they succeeded in recruiting to lead the coup -- Zeller, Jouhaud, Salan, and Challe. As in May, 1958, the professional officer corps as a whole was favorably disposed toward another military crusade to prevent Algerian independence, now more imminent than ever.

However, there had been a great change in the willingness of officers to act on their convictions in defiance of a vigorous, self-confident leader, such as de Gaulle, who had rapidly won the active support of the French population. Pflimlin had temporized, faced by the insurrection of 13 May; de Gaulle quickly labelled insurgents as such. On 23 April 1961, a day after Challe and his forces had staged a revolution in Algiers with the aid of the First Foreign Paratroop Regiment, de Gaulle addressed the Nation and the Army by radio, forbidding all Frenchmen, above all soldiers, to execute any of their orders. In effect, de Gaulle was saying that, by entering into a state of insurrection, those officers who

rallied to Challe would lose all command authority, leaving their subordinates under the orders of loyal superiors, or of the President as Commander-in-Chief. Again, as on 29 January 1960, it was difficult for officers to ignore such a commanding personality. Few officers were ready to oppose the Challists outright; yet few outside the Tenth and Twenty-fifth Paratroop divisions were willing to join the putsch against the express orders of de Gaulle. As a result, Challe was forced to press local military commanders to join him. With very few exceptions, military zone and sector commanders remained loyal to the government.

The final blow to the mutineers was the response of thousands of conscripts, who had posed no barrier to the *treize mai* uprising. In the *métropole* de Gaulle's pleas of "Françaises, Français, Aidez-moi!" were warmly received among trade unions, political parties, and the population in general; in Algeria citizen soldiers in many units pressed their commanders to declare against Challe, in the event the commander refused, they ceased to obey his orders. In a few cases conscripts even went so far as to arrest their officers. (Ambler, 1966) The putsch might well have collapsed eventually even without the obstruction of the conscripts; nevertheless, their attitude and passive disobedience clearly expedited its failure.

Challe's surrender on 25 April ended the immediate crisis, but not the underlying threat to military discipline. The Organization Armée Secrète (OAS), which had played a mi-

nor role in the putsch, under the leadership of General Salan now became the central organ of a clandestine and insurrectionary movement aimed at joining the Army and civilian partisans of French Algeria in a desperate campaign to prevent Algerian independence. In hopes of forcing the Army into alliance with the *pieds noirs* through provoking a bloody racial war between the Muslims and European communities in Algeria, the OAS proceeded to kill twelve hundred Muslims and two hundred Europeans by April, 1962. (Ambler, 1966)

It soon became clear, however, that if a military leader as prestigious as Challe could not outbid the Fifth Republic for the Army's obedience, neither could the less popular Salan. The insurrection of April, 1961, was more important than previous insurrections because it marked the point at which those sections of the Army which, for one reason or another, were determined to keep Algeria French realized beyond all shadow of doubt that their chief enemy was de Gaulle himself. Furthermore, it had revealed that military disobedience was once again considered a crime, despite the grandeur of its motives.

On 5 March 1962, as negotiations between the FLN and the de Gaulle government were reaching a successful conclusion, Army forces in Algiers finally opened fire on European demonstrators. Unable to persuade the Army to join with it, the OAS turned its terrorists on uncooperative army personnel, killing fourteen officers and sixty-two enlisted men by mid-June, 1962. (Ambler, 1966) These assassinations only served

to widen the rift between the OAS and the majority of the officers.

In the April putsch of 1961 open military revolt was explained by General Challe as strictly "apolitical" in nature. When the revolt failed, Challe surrendered, but General Salan escaped to take the lead of the OAS. Salan later told the court in his own trial:

At the moment when I was withdrawing into the night with General Jouhaud, I thought that nothing was more foreign to my life than politics. In agreeing to lead the clandestine struggle, it was not a political decision that I was taking. I was simply recalled to serve, not by an official convocation but by the oath which I had taken. (Ambler, 1966)

For Weygand, Massu, Challe, Salan, and other military men, patriotic motives and actions placed one above the tainted world of politics. The question remained; whose patriotism? When the official government version strayed from the doctrine of French Algeria in 1959 and 1960, and when the French electorate heartily approved that government version in the referendum of 8 January 1961, hard-core military activists concluded that the army should save the French despite themselves. But the path of military revolt against a popular government led only to failure, disgrace, and a widened gap between the French nation and its embittered and humiliated army.

After 1962 the officer corps was extensively reshaped. The elite paratroop and Foreign Legion regiments, having been deeply implicated in the 1961 putsch, were broken up. Their

officers were either purged or forced out in droves by such indirect pressures as blatant surveillance, frequent reassignments, forced separation from families, and passed-over promotions. The Army, however, remained conservative, though perhaps slightly less so than before, and more bourgeois than aristocratic in its composition compared with the past.

Algeria's independence brought an end to the Army's traditional imperial role, and to the circumstances which had goaded it to intervene in metropolitan politics. The Army did not come to rule during the crises of the Algerian War, but it was instrumental in changing the regime. The new regime had new strategic priorities and a new role for the armed forces. The Algerian War was the last battle of the old French colonial army, and with its end, a new role for the French armed forces began.

CONCLUSIONS

The Army's revolt on 13 May 1958 did not come about overnight, it was more akin to an explosion that follows years and years of mounting pressure. Moreover, it marked the beginning of three years of outright political intervention. The actions taken by the military leaders in Algeria constituted a complete lack of discipline and respect for the legitimate civilian government; it was the first instance of the Army taking such actions since the days of Napoleon. Three significant factors adversely influenced civil-military relations during the years prior to 1958: First, the anti-militarist sentiment created by increased popularity of left-wing political parties; second, the instability of the various governments of the Third and Fourth Republics and their subsequent lack of civilian control over the military; and third, the unpopularity of colonial wars with disastrous outcomes.

The most widely discussed cause of poor civil-military relations in France is the rise in popularity the Socialists experienced during the early years of the 20th century.¹⁰ Although the Left did not routinely hold the majority in the Parliament, it maintained, and when in power, it intensified

¹⁰ Zeldin, Gorce, Horne, Ambler and Crozier all commented, some more forcefully than others, on the anti-militaristic tendencies of the Left, of which the Socialists were generally the most militant.

its anti-militaristic doctrines -- except during World War I with Thier's participation in the *Union Sacrée*. The cleavage that anti-militarism created between the Army and the political institutions in France finally exploded in Algeria in the form of the revolt on 13 May.

In the Third Republic, the main advocates of pacifism and anti-militarism were the Socialists, who maintained that the Army was simply a tool used by the capitalists to keep the proletariat under their control. As anti-militarism inspired by the Dreyfus Affair peaked early in the 20th century, the Army reached its point of maximum isolation in its retreat from the politics. The officers led a life apart from the rest of society. *La pension*, the table reserved for lieutenants and second lieutenants, brought together a few dozen officers aging from twenty to forty-five in each regiment. "Not a word," declared Weygand, "was ever breathed of politics." (Gorce, 1963) They refused to talk politics because they all thought the same and any discussion would have risked casting doubt on sacred truths.

Prior to World War I *revanchisme* was the only relief the military had from anti-militarism. After winning the war and securing the return of Alsace-Lorraine, the Army had nothing to fall back on when its prestige diminished once again. Following nearly continuous fighting from 1939 to 1954 the Army had nothing to show but two tragic defeats; the first in 1940 at the hands of the German Third Reich, the second in 1954 at the hands of their own Prime Minister, Mendès-France,

who was considered to have sold out the Army in favor of a negotiated cease-fire in Indochina as well as the French people who, the Army believed, had abandoned their military. (Gorce, 1963)

The anti-militarism of pre-World War II had turned to public apathy in post-war France. This public apathy, abandonment, and betrayal in regard to defense of the empire had the effect of deepening the isolation of the French military community, an isolation in which military men, incapable of admitting the futility of their efforts and sacrifices, created their own vision of the world. French military defeats were seen as primarily the result of weakness and treason on the home front; yet military thinkers were at first reluctant to assign primary blame to national decay, for that would mean the end of the grandeur of France. As Ambler states, "Many tended to view the 'real country' to be healthy, only misled by the 'regime'." (Ambler, 1966) By 1958 the solution had become clear, France needed a new "system".

The French experience from 1945 to 1962 adds emphasis to the theory that military intervention in politics is closely related to the degree of legitimacy of the existing civilian political institutions, ie, the strength and depth of the national political consensus which supports them. (Kelly, 1965) Had government leaders in Paris enjoyed solid authority and the backing of a more united nation, in all probability there

never would have been a serious threat to civilian control in France.

The absence of a firm political consensus capable of lending legitimacy to political institutions may be a necessary condition for successful military revolt, as it was in post-war France; yet it is not sufficient in itself to produce a pattern of praetorianism, as French history in the nineteenth century reveals.

Ambler suggests that two factors which contributed to military indiscipline and revolt in France -- military hostility to *le système* and delegation of power -- are closely related to the weakness of governmental authority and to the underlying political discord.

When a nation lacks the stable bonds of a strong political consensus and when, as a result, political authority is uncertain, the relation of the military establishment to politics may take one of two forms, or may partake of a mixture of the two. If dissension is chronic, the military establishment itself may suffer the same lack of authority and unity which characterizes the society around it. On the other hand, if the military establishment is relatively cohesive, there is a tendency for officers to conceive of the military as an island of health, unity, and courage in a sea of corruption, conflict, and decay. (Ambler, 1966)

Such was clearly the case in France, especially among younger officers in the field. From the 1930's onward the rise of the French Communist Party had loomed large in most military eyes as a vicious internal threat to national security. After 1945 the consistent attacks on the Army by the French Communist Party and by other French anti-colonialists, the government's reluctance to silence these critics, and the

general absence of public support for colonial wars -- all were taken by military men as evidence of advanced dry rot in the body politic.

The precedent of delegating power to the military commander was established in 1914 when General Joffre was granted nearly complete authority to prosecute the war. The tradition was maintained when the government recalled Generals Pétain and Weygand shortly before World War II and subsequently voluntarily abdicated completely to the Marshal. In both cases metropolitan France was directly threatened and the political objectives were clear and universally accepted. However, beginning with Indochina and continuing with Algeria, the nature of the war and the objectives changed dramatically. The *métropole* was not in danger, therefore no special powers were conferred upon the military leaders. Suffering from lack of consensus with regard to war goals (which were nonexistent in the eyes of the Army) and from a generally doubtful authority, the Fourth Republic faced a dilemma in which delegation of power to the Army was especially dangerous for civilian control, yet unavoidable if any action was to be taken. Civilian administrators in the *métropole* protested at the very suggestion that they might be sent to Algeria. The government in Paris, hesitant to rely heavily upon conscripts in wars which were not strongly supported by the French public at home, fell back on the Legion and the *paras* to carry the brunt of the fighting. In the absence of national support for colonial wars, military leaders

became increasingly angry, undisciplined, and, in some cases, mutinous. Delegation of power to the military in itself need not be a threat to civilian control. However, when civilian governmental authority is indecisive, and military interests clash with government policies, delegating authority may have dangerous consequences for civilian control. Faced with a highly political style of war in Indochina and Algeria, on the one hand, and with a divided French nation which devoted little interest and gave even less support, on the other hand, French Army officers created an ideology to guide and justify their cause. They determined to save France despite herself.

In 1958 the Army was able to influence politicians unable to choose a prime minister to direct policy. In 1961 they failed to influence the new power in France. After that de Gaulle consolidated his position and redeployed the Army. Serious military intervention in the political life of France was over. By the time de Gaulle left office, the Army had already been given an opportunity to show that it had returned to its traditional obedience. At the height of the political crisis of 1968, as social and political unrest was expressed in strikes and demonstrations, de Gaulle flew to Baden-Baden to hold secret talks with General Massu, the commander of the French Army in West Germany and the general he had fired in Algeria. This visit could, perhaps, have been a ploy by de Gaulle to sound Massu's true feelings, but it was

more a maneuver to assure the loyalty of the Army as Bastille Day that year was marked by a general amnesty for those still serving sentences connected with the unrest in Algeria. Whatever the true purpose of the visit, the Army remained loyal to de Gaulle. Of course, in 1968 the challengers to the existing order were more easily identifiable with the Left rather than the Right in French politics; hence the Army was unlikely to be sympathetic to them. (Fells, 1992)

Clearly de Gaulle's reform of the armed forces has been successful. The Army had sought to justify many of its actions in Algeria by referring to the fight against Communism. The influence of the latter in Metropolitan France was taken as a clear indication of the degeneration of the French nation. The Army attempted unsuccessfully to impose its will in the political process and was withdrawn from Algeria. In the 1970's it had continued to take up the new duties assigned to it by de Gaulle. The promised nuclear arsenal became more of a reality, and overseas adventure came with French intervention in the political upheavals of Francophone Africa. By the 1980's, it seems, the armed forces of France once again merited the reputation of *La Grande Muette* given to it in the nineteenth century. At the moment it is hard to envision a likely set of circumstances which could plausibly be said to be a return to a past in which a French colonial army, seeking to regain its honor and put an end to a series of defeats for which it blamed inept politicians and the hos-

tility of a section of the metropolitan population, would take action against its own government. No doubt the future will be kind enough to bestow on France other politicians whom the Army will regard as inept, but the military intervention of 1958 also required for its success the presence of a paralyzed political system unloved by the population at large. The importance of this factor was clear from the failure of the coup staged by three rebellious regiments and four renegade generals in 1961. The main factor in the strained civil-military relations of the whole period was, of course the Algerian problem. Now the cause of French Algeria lies in the past. In France's modern Army, officers pushed beyond the limits of their endurance find relief by writing letters of resignation.

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