

Ministry of National Defence
PORTUGUESE COMMISSION OF MILITARY HISTORY

ACTA 2024

*The role of the military in political transitions:
from the 18th century to the present day*

XLIX International Congress of Military History

1 - 6 September 2024, Lisbon

Volume II





The role of the military in political transitions: from the 18th century to the present day

Acta 2024

XLIX International Congress of Military History

1 - 6 September 2024, Lisbon - Portugal

© 2025 Portuguese Commission of Military History

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by:

Portuguese Commission of Military History

Av. Ilha da Madeira, n.º 1, Room 332

1400-204 Lisboa - Portugal

Coordinator and editor: Jorge Silva Rocha, PhD

Cover Design: Jorge Silva Rocha

Book cover images: Alfredo Cunha (*front*) and Eduardo Gageiro (*back*)

ISBN: 978-989-8593-31-3

DOI for this volume: <https://doi.org/10.56092/VXIU5336>

Printed in Portugal by Rainho & Neves - Artes Gráficas

TWO JEWISH OFFICERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE RETURN OF THE FRENCH 3RD REPUBLIC, JUNE – AUGUST 1944

Benny MICHELSON (Israel)

The Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II who opened to the public in Latrun during 2023, highlights one-and-a-half-million Jews who fought in World War II.

Two Jewish officers, one American and one French, assisted to the establishment of the French government – De Gaulle administration – during allied armies advance along France territory 80 years ago.

General situation

On 3 June 1944, two days before D-DAY – operation OVERLORD - the French Committee for National Liberation (Comité français de la libération nationale - CFLN) in Algiers becomes the Provisional Government of the French Republic (Gouvernement provisoire de la République - GPRF), which shows the Allies that there is a wartime government led by General De Gaulle.

"National liberation cannot be distinguished from a national insurrection", stated De Gaulle in April 1942. He repeated this in 1943 and again in 1944, while insisting on the fact that it had to be carried out in an orderly and controlled manner. This was indeed the aim of the measures implemented in Algiers concerning the organisation of civil and military mechanism devoted to the seizure of power and the restoration of republican legality in metropolitan France during the Liberation.⁽¹⁾

1. Christine Levisse-Touzé, **The return of the Republic**, Chemins de Mémoire, Ministère des Armées.

In addition to the restoration of the Republican State, the Order of 21 April 1944 sets out the role of the Military Committee for Action in France (*Comité militaire d'action en France - COMIDAC*), presided by De Gaulle, in "conducting operations in occupied territories", with General Koenig, head of the French Forces of the Interior (*Forces Françaises de l'intérieure - FFI*), as the military representative in London. One month before, it had been announced that COMIDAC was taking command via a clandestine national military delegate—General Chaban-Delmas—who was appointed in April 1944.

Alexandre Parodi, a member of the Council of State, appointed also in April 1944, promoted to a "member of the GPRF and Commissioner of State delegated to the occupied territories" on 14 August. As the direct representative of De Gaulle, he makes preparations for the establishment of the provisional government in the capital city of Paris.

The National Resistance Council (*Conseil National de la Résistance - CNR*), presided by Georges Bidault since 1943, establishes itself as the Resistance's most representative body and asserts its independence. It has joined forces with the Communist-dominated Military Action Committee (*Comité d'action militaire - COMAC*), with a view to leading the military action in France. Despite participating in the GPRF since April, the Communist Party seeks to exert an influence in the French capital with its members in positions of power, which causes concern in the GPRF. Neither Chaban-Delmas nor Parodi were worried about the Communists seizing power.⁽²⁾

From the international perspective, De Gaulle considers it to be vital for French troops to go into combat in Paris before the Allies. He worried about the Americans establishing an Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT) after the bitter lessons learned during the invasion of North Africa – operation TORCH (November 1942).

The multitude of major problems which pressed upon the U.S. Army during the first year of the war left little time for concern over the onset of civil affairs responsibilities in French North Africa. Because this area appreciated as friendly territory, and arrangements for civil affairs administration could be placed in the hands of the French, it seemed possible to allow civilian agencies to take over the handling of the economic problems which would normally have been the responsibility of military authorities in Washington.

Experience with North Africa has indicated that in any military operation which results in occupation of substantial areas of inhabited territory, provision must be made as part of the military plan of attack, for the welfare of the civil population over which jurisdiction is thus obtained.

The Military Plan must make adequate preparation for the following:

- Feeding the civilian population.

2. Christine Levisse Touze, *ibid.*

- Health of the civilian population.
- Housing for the civilian population.
- Maintenance of order and security.
- Acquisition of raw materials available.
- Restoration of civil control over the area in question.

Restoration of civil control over the area in question may be effected in several ways:

1. restoring sovereignty to the native population;
2. delegating sovereignty to civil agencies of the occupying forces.

It assumed that there will be a considerable period of time following the invasion and preceding the time when sovereignty should be delegated to civil instrumentalities of the governments of the occupying forces.⁽³⁾

In December 1943, De Gaulle gives General Leclerc and the French 2nd Armoured Division the task of liberating Paris and establishing a base for a French government.

The positive welcome given to De Gaulle by the people of Bayeux on 14 June 1944 and the appointment of the civil authorities, stave off the possibility of an AMGOT. In mid-August, the breaching of the Falaise pocket and the landings in Provence cause Eisenhower to postpone the liberation of Paris and bypass the city in order to prioritise the efforts on the Eastern French Front. He was anxious to avoid Paris becoming a “new Stalingrad” due to the logistical problems associated with resupplying the population.

Col. David Marcus

Chief of planning division in Civil Affairs Department within US MOD (no. 2 in the hierarchy) was sent to Europe to observe and report to the Pentagon on the operations of G-5 (Civil Affairs) units at all levels, particularly those occupying the first liberated towns of France, and to assess the political atmosphere in the U.S.-liberated areas, especially the extent to which the population accepted De Gaulle and his followers. French internal politics dominate much of G-5's attention, as it had since Operation Torch a year and a half before.

In spite of Marcus obvious intelligence and deep involvement in the French politics, For the rest of June (after debarkation), elements of a dozen G-5 detachments, assigned to various units, arrived in France. During the day, Col. Marcus drove around the First Army area, from Carentan east along the line of invasion beaches and villages just

3. Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, **Civil affairs: Soldiers become governors**, Center of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington, D. C., 1992, P.64.

inland, visiting the 4th Infantry Division one day and VII Corps headquarters the next. Conscious of protocol, he paid his respects to the British Second Army also.⁽⁴⁾

On 25 June 1944, Col. Marcus received the anticipated recall order. General De Gaulle was coming to Washington, and General Hilldring (his boss) needed Col. Marcus report on the political situation. A week earlier, De Gaulle had assumed authority in Bayeux, appointed the previous Civil and Military governors. Strictly a British Second Army matter in that particular case, the French issue was rapidly becoming a front-burner Allied political problem requiring Col. Marcus's special skills.

Even before he was back at his desk in Washington, a heroic saga of martial deeds was germinating. Tracking Col. Marcus's paper trail from SHAEF to the 101st Airborne Division, General Hilldring had gone up the chain of command as far as Lt. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, chief of staff, SHAEF, to find Col. Marcus and get him back to Washington. Of course, he was never really "lost," and the urgency was probably sparked by the growing concern over what to do about De Gaulle and his requests from president Roosevelt, but that kind of special intervention set people talking.

When Col. Marcus return to Washington, he assures to the President that De Gaulle is positive received by the French population – and it influence the entire visit of De Gaulle in Washington. At the end of the visit (8 July 1944), President Roosevelt address De Gaulle: "In reply to your telegram of June 25 I am prepared to accept the Committee as the de facto authority for civil administration in France provided two things are made clear. First, complete authority to be reserved to Eisenhower to do what he feels necessary to conduct effective military operations and second, that French people be given opportunity to make free choice of their own government".

President discussed in general the terms of the agreements with special reference to the clear definition of the Supreme Commander's authority, and reports that de Gaulle was in agreement. De Gaulle and his party left very much pleased and relieved.⁽⁵⁾

General Darius Paul Bloch- Dassault

In mid-July 1944, parallel to De Gaulle visit to Washington, the Communist party, COMAC and the Paris Liberation Committee (Comité Parisien de la Libération - CPL)⁽⁶⁾ decide they want to make the French national holiday on 14 July a day of demonstrations to mark the start of the insurrection against the Germans in Paris. The tension rises between activists and the advocates of a waiting game.

The demonstrations were carried out also in response to General De Gaulle's call for action on 7 August: "French people standing proud and in combat [...] Refrain from

4. Steven L. Ossad, **out of the shadow and into the light**, *Army History* Winter 2016.

5. Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *ibid.*, p. 715.

6. created in October 1943 by André Tollet, a Communist Resistance fighter and trade union activist.

doing any useful work for the enemy". Followed by insurrectionary strikes called by railway workers on 10 August, by the police force on 15 August and the city's civil servants, postal workers and nurses on 18 August.⁽⁷⁾

On 18 August, the events in Paris can no longer be controlled from outside the city. Despite Koenig's instructions - brought from London by Chaban-Delmas - to slow down the movement, the insurrection was underway, as observed by Alexandre Parodi. "Paris was ripe for a major uprising".

In Paris, the chain of command had been simplified: Colonel Rol-Tanguy (Communist, FTPF), commander of the FFI in the Ile-de-France region and a renowned military leader, assumes the military leadership of the insurrection involving the armed forces of the Resistance, the FTPF (Francs-tireurs et partisans français – French Irregulars and Partisans)⁽⁸⁾, and all government forces, gendarmes and fire-fighters that Parodi has placed under his command in the interest of unity and efficiency.

The spontaneous occupation of the Préfecture de police (Police Headquarters) on 19 August by 2,000 police-officers supported by Rol-Tanguy, comes soon after the general mobilisation order, typed out by his wife Cécile, which clearly sets out everyone's roles: patrols and the occupation of public buildings and factories... culminating in "opening up the road into Paris for the victorious Allied armies and welcoming them to the city".

Paul Bloch, after commanding a tank battalion in WW1, promoted to the rank Brigadier General in March 1933, Deputy to the General Inspector of Artillery in Paris, he was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces in January 1935, Major General in March 1936 and then Army Corps General in 1938. In his various posts, he stubbornly defended the cause of battle tanks.⁽⁹⁾

At the outbreak of the Second World War, he commanded the V Army Corps, at the head of which he entered the German Saar region in September 1939. In January 1940, he was appointed Superior Commander of the anti-aircraft land forces and anti-aircraft defense.

After the defeat of 1940, Lieutenant-General Paul Bloch distinguished himself in the Resistance under the pseudonym of "Char-dasso" (tank) then "Dassault".⁽¹⁰⁾ Although sought after by Gestapo, became one of the organizers and leaders of the resistance soldiers to the enemy, member of the staff of the Francs-Tireurs and Partisans (FTP). In this capacity, in April 1944, he established the General Instruction on the conduct to be taken in the different areas of the territory in the event of Allied landings, instruction

7. Christine Levisse Touze, *ibid*

8. led by Charles Tillon, a national leader.

9. Claude Carlier, *Général Paul Dassault : l'armement et les études techniques de l'État-Major de l'Armée (1931-1945)*, Juin 2011, pp. 93-102.

10. Pierre Tardi, *Notice nécrologique sur M. Paul Dassault*, Comptes rendus de l'Académie des sciences, 28 Juillet 1969.

the prescriptions of which are made valid by the COMAC for the entire French Forces of the Interior (FFI). Through his personal action, he contributes to bringing about the reunion of all the troops of the Resistance in the French Forces of the Interior - FFI.

During the liberation of Paris, he took the initiative, with the help of a few Resistance engineers, to use the Parisian underground tunnels preparing and developing the flooding of all infrastructure of the main fortifications built by the Germans in view of a prolonged defence.

On 20 August 1944, CERAT (Alexandre Parodi), and Chaban-Delmas, appointed General Bloch Military Governor of Paris: "Lieutenant General Dassault will assume the duties of Governor of Paris, until the installation of the Governor appointed by the GPRF who will be carried out after the arrival of the Allied troops in Paris".

General Dassault then moved clandestinely into the Hôtel National of the Invalides where he set up the general staff and the services of the French Army that General Koenig was able to use as soon as he arrived. That position was very delicate one and with great importance because Bloch was one of the few persons who knew very well the senior Army officers served for Vichy government and those loyal to Free France and De Gaulle. In that capacity he succeed to re-organize the GHQ and the General Staff - appointed the wright person to the wright duty.

During a reconnaissance that he carried out personally during the period of the liberation fighting of the capital, he was arrested by the Germans, but managed to escape at the disarray that reigned at the time in the opposing ranks and to be regained his duties as Governor.

On 25 August 1944, a decree signed by Parodi stipulated that "General de Army Corps Dassault, previously designated to perform the functions of Military Governor of Paris until the arrival of General Koenig, was placed, (until General De Gaulle decided to intervene), at the head of the Grand Chancellery de la Legion D'honor".

On November 5, 1945, a decree, signed by General De Gaulle, specified that "the decision dated 25 August 1944 entrusting provisional title the functions of Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor to General Bloch, known as Dassault, is confirmed" and he was promoted to four stars General.

While serving as Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honor until November 1954, General Dassault chaired and took part in the work of the Scientific Committee for National Defense (CSDN) that he had been tasked with creating. He was also the representative of the Ministry of National Defense at the Atomic Energy Commission (CEA). A member of the Academy of Sciences since June 15, 1953. General Paul Dassault died on May 30, 1969.

A Republican government established was on 26 August-13 October 1944.

Bibliography

Carlier Claude, **Général Paul Dassault : l'armement et les études techniques de l'État-Major de l'Armée (1931-1945)**, Juin 2011, pp. 93-102

Christine Levisse-Touzé, **The return of the Republic**, Chemins de Mémoire, Ministère des Armées.

Coles Harry I. and Albert K. Weinberg, **Civil affairs: Soldiers become governors**, Center of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington, D. C., 1992.

Ossad Steven L., **out of the shadow and into the light**, *Army History* Winter 2016.

Tardi Pierre, **Notice nécrologique sur M. Paul Dassault**, Comptes rendus de l'Académie des sciences, 28 Juillet 1969.

Author's short CV

Col. (Res) in IDF. Former IDF Chief of Military History. At present, President of The Israeli Commission of Military History. Historian of the Armor Association. Historian of IDF Naval Commando. Historian of Teleprocessing Branch and Signal and C4I corps. Educated at the Military Boarding School at Tel Aviv (High School). 30 years in Military service (Armor and Intelligence corps). History studies, BA with distinguish, at Tel Aviv University. Military History studies, MA graduation with supreme distinguish Tel Aviv University. PhD Military History, Haifa University, More than 180 publications.

DOI for this text: <https://doi.org/10.56092/PUFA5461>